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**HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES**

(HANSARD)

Monday 25 June 2018

House of Commons

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The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

EDUCATION

The Secretary of State was asked—

Special Educational Needs: Support Services

1. **Anne Marie Morris** (Newton Abbot) (Con): What steps he is taking to ensure that children with special educational needs are able to access support services that are close to home. [906000]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Nadhim Zahawi): Children and young people should receive the right support to meet their special educational needs. In most cases, that can be provided close to home through the schools and services in their local area. Services must be jointly commissioned, with a published local offer kept under regular review.

Anne Marie Morris: Yet 41% of pupils attending special schools in Devon have to travel more than 10 miles to reach their school. How will the Minister support those children in Devon, to ensure that SEN provision is locally available and of a high quality?

Nadhim Zahawi: I thank my hon. Friend for her question. If a local authority identifies a shortage of special school places, resulting in a significant number of children with special educational needs and disabilities having to travel a long way, they need to consider creating or expanding specialist provision. We announced £50 million of funding in May this year, and Devon will receive £2.8 million from 2018 to 2021.

19. [906021] **Marsha De Cordova** (Battersea) (Lab): My mum fought for me to receive a mainstream education, knowing that I, like the majority of children with special educational needs or a disability, would benefit from that. However, in 2016, for the first time in more than 25 years, more children with SEND were educated outside the mainstream education system. In response, the UN raised concerns about an education system that segregates children with disabilities in special schools. What will the Minister do to reverse that concerning trend and instead build a more inclusive education system?

Nadhim Zahawi: It is important to ensure that children with SEND who want to and can be in mainstream education are able to. For example, 72% of children with autism are in mainstream education. We recently announced 14 new free special schools. As I said, it is

important that, where councils need further provision to help to maintain children in mainstream education, they are able to create that.

Robert Halfon (Harlow) (Con): Every year, 3,285 children with special needs are excluded from our schools—that is roughly 17 a day—and 833 children with special needs are given fixed-term exclusions. Does my hon. Friend recognise that that is a major social injustice? I know that he has his review, but surely the Department's priority must be to address that.

Nadhim Zahawi: I thank my right hon. Friend the Chairman of the Education Committee for that question. I do recognise that, which is why the Government have announced an exclusions review, led by Ed Timpson.

Nic Dakin (Scunthorpe) (Lab): Further to the previous question, what are the Government doing to address the issue of academies excluding people with special educational needs, which is contributing to the rise in exclusions?

Nadhim Zahawi: We are looking at different groups and the proportion of those being excluded, which I hope will come out through the Timpson exclusions review. We are also talking to Ofsted about the issue of off-rolling.

Rebecca Pow (Taunton Deane) (Con): Some 1.4 million children in this country display some kind of speech, language or communication disorder. That is 10% of children, as was highlighted recently in the excellent Bercow report, the second one on this. Given that children entering school with lower than expected communication skills tend to do less well academically and feature more highly among excluded children and young offenders, can the Minister give an indication of how the recommendations in the Bercow report might be implemented in our education system?

Nadhim Zahawi: I spoke at the launch of the—

Mr Speaker: Ten years on.

Nadhim Zahawi: Ten years on from the Bercow review; I am grateful to you, Mr Speaker. We are looking very carefully at the recommendations of that report. One thing we are already doing is working with Public Health England to ensure that the health workers who go to see parents at that crucial young stage are trained in speech and language therapy.

Children's Academic and Practical Skills

2. **Mr Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): What steps he is taking to ensure that all children have continuing opportunities to develop academic and practical skills. [906001]

The Secretary of State for Education (Damian Hinds): Schools must provide a broad and balanced curriculum that prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.

Mr Sheerman: The team on the Front Bench could not beat Panama or any other country in terms of effort and talent. Is not it a fact that the earlier young children are able to use both their academic and technical skills, the better, and that this Government have cramped the

curriculum? Is not it also true that we can only deliver T-levels with the support of the further education sector, which is being destroyed by Government policies and underfunding?

Damian Hinds: In a wide-ranging question, as they say, the hon. Gentleman presents a number of different aspects, ranging from the World cup to T-levels. He is right about one thing, and that is the earlier children acquire skills and knowledge the better. That is why it is so important we have managed to narrow the attainment gap both in the early years and in primary school.

Sir David Evennett (Bexleyheath and Crayford) (Con): May I welcome the advances the Government have achieved in this field and my right hon. Friend's positive approach, contrary to what the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr Sheerman) said? What more can be done to tackle the skills shortage in the construction sector?

Damian Hinds: My hon. Friend raises a very important point about the construction sector, and of course we have considerable requirements because of the need to accelerate residential development. One of the first T-levels will be in construction, and we are working closely with the sector to bring that on.

Sir Vince Cable (Twickenham) (LD): Is the Secretary of State aware of the concern in the creative industries about the contraction in the number of pupils in maintained schools studying performing arts, and how does he intend to address that problem?

Damian Hinds: The right hon. Gentleman is correct about the importance of the performing arts. In fact, the number of children taking a GCSE in arts subjects has not really moved very much, but we very much believe in a broad and balanced curriculum, with the breadth of opportunities he would want.

Charlie Elphicke (Dover) (Ind): In the funding of these opportunities, where an academy runs up a debt because of the Department's failure to supervise the academy sponsor, does my right hon. Friend agree that the Department should take responsibility for that debt, rather than leave it with the school, as appears to be the case with the Goodwin Academy in my constituency?

Damian Hinds: Where it does become necessary to re-broker an academy, as it does on occasions—my hon. Friend and I have had an opportunity to meet to discuss this—there is a bespoke approach to make sure that the settlement for the new arrangement with the new trust is sustainable.

Lucy Powell (Manchester Central) (Lab/Co-op): Heads have recently warned that the new GCSEs are “inhumane” and that the “collateral damage”, as they call it, will be the less able pupils. Given that the Health and Social Care and the Education Committees recently found that one of the top causes of child mental ill health is the new exam regime, when will the right hon. Gentleman's Department take action to assess the impact of the new GCSEs, and will he ensure that private schools that are opting out of the new GCSEs at the moment will be forced to take them as well?

Damian Hinds: We take the mental health of children and young people extremely seriously; hence the recent Green Paper and the whole programme of activity. To be fair, I do not think that the concept of exam stress is entirely a new one, and at this time of year there obviously is heightened stress among some young people. But the new GCSEs and A-levels have been designed and benchmarked against the leading systems in the world to make sure that we have a leading exam and qualification system.

Michael Tomlinson (Mid Dorset and North Poole) (Con): Whether it is for academic or practical skills, reading and literacy are vital. In contrast to the hon. Member for Huddersfield, does the Secretary of State welcome the fact that pupils in England are outperforming their peers right across the world when it comes to reading and literacy, according to the latest PIRLS—the progress in international reading literacy study—figures?

Damian Hinds: I very much welcome that. It has been very encouraging to see how, particularly through the focus on the phonics programme, our young readers have improved in their reading so much, and that is reflected in those international comparisons.

Kelvin Hopkins (Luton North) (Ind): The two colleges serving my own constituents are both suffering severe financial pressures. My hon. Friend the Member for Huddersfield is absolutely right: further education is fundamental to providing ongoing education in both practical and academic skills. When are the Government going to look at FE in general and particularly at the two colleges serving my constituency?

Damian Hinds: There are of course two enormous programmes of benefit to FE colleges. First, there is the apprenticeships programme. Through the levy, the total funding for apprenticeships by the end of this decade will be double what it was at the beginning. The other programme—the hon. Member for Huddersfield and I touched on this briefly—is T-levels, which will bring another half a billion pounds of funding.

Social Work Profession

3. **Alex Burghart** (Brentwood and Ongar) (Con): What progress his Department has made on strengthening the social work profession. [906002]

The Secretary of State for Education (Damian Hinds): The crucial role of social workers should be recognised and celebrated. We are improving initial education standards and providing professional development. We have established an independent regulator, focusing on better standards.

Alex Burghart: As the Secretary of State will know, one of the reasons that we need to improve the quality of social workers in our country is to ensure that children in care can move on into employment and further education. Can he outline what more the Government are going to do to ensure that those children get the support they need?

Damian Hinds: My hon. Friend is right to emphasise the importance and challenge of that transition. Care leavers can access a personal adviser until they are 25. They can get a £2,000 bursary if they are in higher education,

and a 16-to-19 bursary of up to £1,200 from the college if in further education. Care leavers aged 16 to 24 can receive a £1,000 bursary in the first year of an apprenticeship.

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck (South Shields) (Lab): The Department's own figures show a gap of over 10,000 in the overall children's social care workforce. Unison analysis shows that children's services have experienced a funding shortfall of £600 million, with more cuts to come. Will the Secretary of State explain why he is happy to see hundreds of millions of pounds cut from vulnerable children, yet he is outsourcing £73 million to train as few as 700 new social workers and introduce an unpopular accreditation scheme?

Damian Hinds: The hon. Lady is right to identify the importance of funding and resourcing for children's social work. The spend on the most vulnerable children has been going up. There are some 35,000 child and family social workers and that number has increased a little between 2016 and 2017.

Care Crisis Review

4. **Bill Esterson** (Sefton Central) (Lab): If he will make an assessment of the potential merits of the recommendations for his Department in the Family Rights Group report, "Care Crisis Review: Options for Change", published in June 2018; and what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on that report. [906003]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Nadhim Zahawi): The sector-led review is an important contribution to the family justice system. Across government we will consider its findings and recommendations carefully. My counterpart in the Ministry of Justice and I are due to meet the Family Rights Group to discuss the report in more detail.

Bill Esterson: Now that the Government have admitted that cuts to the national health service were a political choice, not an economic necessity, will they admit the same when it comes to local government, especially children's social care? Will the Minister read the report from the directors of children's services, take the action that is needed to end the crisis in children's social care, and make the priority looking after our most vulnerable children, not tax cuts for the very wealthy?

Nadhim Zahawi: There is some great work taking place in children's social care across the country. Money, of course, is a consideration, but good leadership, and strong and confident teams are making a huge difference. Across government, as has been mentioned, we are spending £1.4 billion on the troubled families programme.

Mr Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con): What steps are the Government taking to encourage innovation in children's social care?

Nadhim Zahawi: I am grateful for that question. We have two programmes: first, the What Works programme in children's social care and, secondly, a £200 million innovation programme to look at what really works and then scale it up.

Lucy Allan (Telford) (Con): Does the Minister agree with the basic premise of the care crisis review that, if more money were spent on early intervention and family support, fewer children would go into care, and does he agree that that would be a good thing?

Nadhim Zahawi: I thank my hon. Friend, who has been a great advocate of early intervention. She is absolutely right. On top of the £1.4 billion programme for troubled families, the Government are looking at reducing parental conflict. We know that many children in need have suffered from domestic abuse. The landmark Bill that we are bringing forward bears witness to our hard work across government to deliver this. However, she is absolutely right to say that early intervention is important and the Government take that very seriously.

Childcare Settings: Financial Viability

5. **Dan Carden** (Liverpool, Walton) (Lab): What assessment he has made of the effect of the Government's policy on funded childcare on the financial viability of childcare settings. [906004]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Nadhim Zahawi): The rates that we provide to childcare providers were based on the review of childcare costs, which was described as "thorough and wide-ranging" by the National Audit Office. We have recently commissioned new research to further understand providers' care costs.

Dan Carden: Last week, the National Day Nurseries Association found that nurseries faced an annual deficit of £2,000 per child on the 30 hours of childcare policy. That means that nurseries are struggling financially; a skills shortage as workers quit the sector; and fewer nurseries for parents to send their children to, or more nurseries with under-qualified staff. When will the Minister conduct an honest review of the chaos that he has caused across the sector?

Nadhim Zahawi: Thirty hours is a success story. The summer numbers are 340,000 children aged three and four benefiting from 30 hours a week free childcare. For those parents taking advantage of that, that is a £5,000 saving a year. We are conducting a review to look at the economics of the model, as we have done in the past, when we raised the hourly rate from £4.65 to £5. It is a huge success story, and clearly the hon. Gentleman is running scared.

Bob Stewart (Beckenham) (Con): May I ask the Minister to explain how the Government intend to increase free childcare for foster carers, which is a great idea?

Nadhim Zahawi: My hon. Friend is right. We have listened carefully, including to many views in this Chamber, and we have delivered. As of September, foster carers who qualify for the 30 hours a week free childcare for three and four-year-olds can take advantage of it.

Emma Reynolds (Wolverhampton North East) (Lab): The Minister will know that nursery schools, as distinct from nurseries, provide first-class education in deprived areas in the early years. However, their funding is still in doubt beyond 2020. When will the Minister make an

announcement about these nursery schools and put nursery schools in Wolverhampton, which provide good and outstanding education, on a sure financial footing?

Nadhim Zahawi: There are 402 maintained nursery schools. The hon. Lady has championed their cause and I have seen at first hand the great work they do. She is right that the funding goes up to 2020. Clearly, we have to see what happens, but they are a very important part of the mix of provision.

Alex Norris (Nottingham North) (Lab/Co-op): Childcare is a critical enabler to allow parents to access further education. Nottingham College, in a move reflective of the exceptionally difficult landscape facing further education, has chosen to shut its nursery in my constituency. That is wrong, and I am campaigning with local residents and councillors to keep it open. Does the Minister agree that access to childcare is an important driver of accessing further education?

Nadhim Zahawi: I do agree that access to childcare is very important. I will look at the specific details the hon. Gentleman mentions, but suffice it to say that we are investing £50 million more to help schools to open a nursery setting.

Tracy Brabin (Batley and Spen) (Lab/Co-op): May I push the Minister further on the report from the National Day Nurseries Association, which was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Dan Carden)? Not only is there, as mentioned, an annual funding deficit of £2,000 per 30-hours child, but a third of nurseries are having to limit the funded places they offer and a third of nurseries are being paid late for the work they do. To support our childcare providers, will the Minister tell us how many local authorities will see a real-terms funding increase in the next academic year?

Nadhim Zahawi: The hon. Lady rightly speaks about the important research by the NDNA. Our own research demonstrates that 80% of providers are willing and able to offer places, and one third have actually increased their places.

Cold Water Shock: Mandatory Teaching

6. **Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi** (Slough) (Lab): Whether he plans to include mandatory teaching on cold water shock as part of compulsory swimming and water lessons. [906005]

14. **Mrs Sharon Hodgson** (Washington and Sunderland West) (Lab): Whether he plans to include mandatory teaching on cold water shock as part of compulsory swimming and water lessons. [906015]

The Minister for School Standards (Nick Gibb): In the new national curriculum, which we introduced in 2014, maintained primary schools are required to teach swimming and water safety. Pupils are required to be taught how to swim competently, confidently and proficiently over a distance of at least 25 metres, covering a range of strokes. It also requires pupils to be taught to perform self-rescue in different water-based situations.

Mr Dhesi: No doubt the Minister agrees with the Prime Minister, who told the House last week, when I raised with her the case of Michael Scaife, who tragically drowned in Slough, that she recognises there is more to do on water safety education. The curriculum swimming and water safety recommendations were made nearly a year ago. On this, the last day of the Royal Life Saving Society's annual Drowning Prevention Week, will the Minister agree to prioritise the implementation of those recommendations?

Nick Gibb: We were all very sorry to hear about the tragic death of Michael Scaife, who drowned while trying to save a friend. The Government take swimming and water safety very seriously, which is why we improved the national curriculum and why we support the National Water Safety Forum's national drowning prevention strategy. The group the hon. Gentleman refers to published its report in July 2016. We then established an implementation group and the Government are currently reviewing the recommendations that came out of that report.

Mrs Hodgson: The children's Minister—the Under-Secretary of State for Education, the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Nadhim Zahawi)—was the founder and the first chair of the all-party group on water safety and drowning prevention. Like me, he had constituents who tragically lost their lives, which was why the group was set up. Ross Irwin in my constituency drowned in Christmas 2016 and two schoolgirls drowned a couple of years previously in the same river, the River Wear. So I know this is an issue very close to the Minister's heart and a number of colleagues from across the House have had constituents dying in such circumstances. Given that almost a third of all pupils leaving primary school are unable to swim and do not have basic water safety skills, will the Minister make it his personal ambition to ensure that every child leaves school knowing the dangers of open water and cold water shock, as well as knowing how to swim?

Nick Gibb: I pay tribute to the hon. Lady for the work that she has been doing over several years to ensure that children are better informed about the dangers of water and how to be safe in and around it. I thank her for her campaigns and that of the father of Ross Irwin, to whom I also pay tribute. Thanks to the Royal Life Saving Society and Sunderland City Council, there are now improved water safety measures in place at the Fatfield riverside on the River Wear. We take these issues very seriously, which is why we improved the curriculum and why this Government asked an independent group of experts from across the swimming sector to submit an independent report, setting out how we can improve swimming and the swimming curriculum in our schools.

T-levels

7. **Mr Marcus Fysh** (Yeovil) (Con): What progress his Department has made on the introduction of T-levels. [906006]

17. **Sir Robert Syms** (Poole) (Con): What progress his Department has made on the introduction of T-levels. [906018]

22. **Mary Robinson** (Cheadle) (Con): What progress his Department has made on the introduction of T-levels. [906024]

The Secretary of State for Education (Damian Hinds): We have made good progress. We have announced the providers who will deliver the first three T-levels from 2020. We published the outline content for them, developed by panels of employers, and have begun the process to select an awarding organisation to develop them.

Mr Fysh: Why, with its huge success in piloting industry work placements and its leadership of best practice in the area, has Yeovil College been left out of the T-level pilots, and how can the Secretary of State help to make up for its and my disappointment?

Damian Hinds: We have thus far selected a relatively small number of colleges to teach the first three T-levels from 2020. This is an ongoing programme and more T-levels and colleges will come on stream in the years to come. We expect to launch the process to select providers for 2021 early in 2019.

Sir Robert Syms: I welcome the introduction of T-levels, which could be a game changer for the British economy. What other sectors are the Government talking to about introducing T-levels in future years?

Damian Hinds: Eventually, as per the Sainsbury report, we will be looking right across industry and the requirements for technical and vocational education and training. We are looking at the combination of T-levels and apprenticeships to deliver learning across those routes. These are just the first three for 2020 and there will be a further 12 to come very soon.

Mary Robinson: Small businesses account for 60% of all private sector employment in the UK. What support will the Government put in place to encourage and enable small businesses to offer T-level work placements?

Damian Hinds: Industrial placements are at the heart of the T-levels programme. We are investing £5 million in the National Apprenticeship Service to make sure that it can be a one-stop shop. We have published “How to” guidance for employers, and we continue to work closely with bodies such as the Federation of Small Businesses and small employers themselves to establish the support that they need to offer these placements.

James Frith (Bury North) (Lab): I refer Members to my entry in the Register of Members’ Financial Interests. What is the Government’s plan for mandatory work placements as part of their new T-level when the number of learners exceeds the placements available from local employers? Answers that include “remote learning” or “online” will not be accepted.

Damian Hinds: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for laying out his acceptance criteria for my response. The simple point is that we are working hard from now, not starting in 2020, to build up the availability of industrial placements, because they are such an important part of the programme.

Helen Goodman (Bishop Auckland) (Lab): I hope that the Secretary of State will do a bit better than he is doing on apprenticeships, which have collapsed in my constituency in the last two years, going from 350 starts to 50. Will he consider being more flexible about the time release rules for employers?

Damian Hinds: We think the quality requirements for apprenticeships are absolutely central, and that includes the 20% off-the-job training requirement, as well as the minimum 12-month length. We should also bear it in mind that over the last few years there has been further strengthening of the overall employment market, so today the proportion of young people who are unemployed and not in full-time education is down to 5%, as opposed to 8-point-something per cent. at the change of Government. The apprenticeship programme remains absolutely vital to building up the skills level of the nation.

Gordon Marsden (Blackpool South) (Lab): The Secretary of State might be content with T-level progress, but I am afraid that many in the sector are not. There is no clarity on work placements, on bridging options post-16, on the transition years that some need or on where T-levels sit in the post-18 review. The Department’s own research warns that having a single awarding body for T-levels risks system failure, and Ofqual says the same, while his own top civil servant advised a year’s delay, which he rejected. Is he content just agreeing with himself, or would he be happy with a process for T-levels with the wheels coming off—a magical mystery tour for young people that risks becoming a ghost train?

Damian Hinds: Dear oh dear! Gordon! I do not quite know where to go with that question, because I do not recognise its premise. I spend a great deal of time talking to employers, providers and others throughout the sector about this programme, and if the hon. Gentleman consults the Sainsbury report, he will see the overall blueprint. It is absolutely clear where T-levels fit in with the overall skills landscape, including levels 4 and 5, which also need improving. T-levels are fundamental to building up the country’s skills base, and I would expect to see him supporting them.

Education Settings

8. **James Cartlidge** (South Suffolk) (Con): What steps his Department is taking to ensure that children educated in all settings are safe and receive a good education. [906007]

The Secretary of State for Education (Damian Hinds): We continue to support schools in meeting their wide range of safeguarding duties, and as part of the integrated communities strategy, I have announced measures intended to safeguard children across the spectrum of educational settings, including out-of-school settings and home education.

James Cartlidge: The Bridge School, a specialist school in Ipswich, in my constituency, offers education to pupils of all ages with profound and severe learning difficulties. Following growing concerns about specific safeguarding issues, an Ofsted report was undertaken and found the school to be inadequate on every count,

which is almost unprecedented. There is now a real sense of instability at the school. Given the vulnerable nature of the children, will the Secretary of State meet me to discuss what can be done?

Damian Hinds: Of course I understand that, and of course I would be happy to meet my hon. Friend. Where a maintained school is judged inadequate, my Department has a legal duty to issue an academy order, and the regional schools commissioner is considering all further options available to support the school through this transition.

Ruth George (High Peak) (Lab): Schools in High Peak tell me that the vast majority of their applications for education, health and care plans are refused, meaning that children with very serious special needs, including autism, are left struggling and teachers are left trying to cope with them in large classes. What is the Secretary of State doing to assess the number of children with special needs who receive no support and to ensure that local authorities receive sufficient provision to support them all?

Damian Hinds: The education, health and care plans are an important step forward from the previous system, bringing together, as they do, the education, health and care considerations. If the hon. Lady has specific cases, we will of course look at them.

Robert Neill (Bromley and Chislehurst) (Con): The Department's highly unusual application to the court for a closure order for the Darul Uloom School in Chislehurst has not only received wide publicity but raised concern among residents and, no doubt, parents. Will the Secretary of State update us on the position and meet me to discuss the way forward for this school, which has a long-standing poor record in academic matters?

Damian Hinds: Again, I understand those concerns, and of course I will be happy to meet my hon. Friend. We did apply to the magistrates court for an emergency order to close the school in his constituency. At a hearing last Friday, the school agreed some significant assurances, including—crucially—that the two individuals associated with the case would have no further involvement. The school will remain closed until a new trustee is appointed, who will be approved by the Department for Education.

Carol Monaghan (Glasgow North West) (SNP): One group that is under-represented in tertiary education are care-experienced young people. Care leavers in Scotland will now be supported with a grant of £8,100 through college or university. Will the Secretary of State join me in congratulating the steps the Scottish Government are taking? It was good to hear about the support packages he mentioned earlier for young people leaving care, but will he now consider a more realistic level of funding to allow these young people to access tertiary education?

Damian Hinds: I will always keep an open mind about what more we can do to help care leavers—that is at the heart of the care leavers covenant—and of course I will continue to look at what the Scottish Government do, as well as others.

Martin Vickers (Cleethorpes) (Con): At the weekend I was contacted by a constituent who chairs one of the maintained nursery schools in north-east Lincolnshire. She expressed views similar to those expressed by the hon. Member for Wolverhampton North East (Emma Reynolds) about funding. Will my right hon. Friend confirm his continuing support for maintained nurseries, and will he ensure that funds are in place to provide the certainty that they require?

Damian Hinds: The Under-Secretary of State for Education, my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Nadhim Zahawi), talked about the maintained nursery sector earlier. I can confirm that we greatly value the role played by maintained nurseries, and will continue to work with them to ensure that they play that role as effectively as possible in our diverse early-years sector.

Peter Kyle (Hove) (Lab): Children are not safe when they are being taught in schools where water pours through the ceiling when it rains, as happens in one school in my constituency. What is the Secretary of State doing to end the drought in capital funding for schools, particularly those like the one I have just mentioned?

Damian Hinds: I should of course be happy to look into the case that the hon. Gentleman has raised. We have allocated a total of £23 billion of capital for school buildings, but it is difficult for me to comment on that specific case from the Dispatch Box without knowing the details.

Mike Kane (Wythenshawe and Sale East) (Lab): Information released accidentally from Ofsted shows that only 4% of schools in the most deprived areas achieve “outstanding” ratings, compared to 58% in the least deprived. Inspections are measuring deprivation rather than the quality of teaching and learning. Does the Secretary of State not agree that that is morally repugnant?

Damian Hinds: At the heart of our priorities since May 2010 has been raising standards for all children while also narrowing the gap, and I welcome the narrowing gap that we have seen in both primary and secondary schools. Is there more to do? Yes, there is, and that is at the heart of our opportunity areas programme, which—as the hon. Gentleman will know—identifies the pockets of under-achievement that may exist even in otherwise more affluent regions, and seeks to establish what area-specific conditions are required.

Northern Powerhouse Schools Strategy

9. **Imran Hussain (Bradford East) (Lab):** What steps he has taken to implement the recommendations set out in “Northern Powerhouse Schools Strategy: An independent review” by Sir Nick Weller, published in November 2016. [906008]

The Secretary of State for Education (Damian Hinds): As recommended by Sir Nick Weller, we have implemented a range of measures in the north to improve teaching and leadership capacity, recruit and retain teachers, and

close the disadvantage gap. In 2017, nearly 400,000 more children were in good or outstanding schools in the north than in 2010.

Imran Hussain: When the strategy was announced, £80 million of funding was attached to it, but just months later that was rowed back to £70 million. Now, according to the vice-chair of the Northern Powerhouse Partnership, nothing at all has been spent. Can the Minister tell me how much has been spent so far, and how much of that has been spent on recruiting teachers in Bradford in particular?

Damian Hinds: We continue to spend on a range of programmes in the north, and some of the results are reflected in the figures I have just given. Bradford is of course one of the opportunity areas to which I referred, and £1.5 million has been provided to fund school improvements there. We are seeking to support the work of Bradford for Teaching, and Academy Ambassadors is working to further strengthen multi-academy trusts across the north. Altogether, more than £767 million of additional pupil premium funding was allocated to schools in the north, which over-indexed on pupil premium funding in comparison with the rest of the country.

Andrew Bridgen (North West Leicestershire) (Con): The Government did indeed commit themselves to spending £70 million on improving educational attainment in the north. Can my right hon. Friend confirm that they have in fact spent considerably more than that?

Damian Hinds: I am happy to confirm that we remain committed to all areas of the country. In English education there is nothing as simple as a north-south divide. There are areas of educational under-achievement in the north, the south and the middle. We need to seek them out wherever they are, and provide the support and accountability that are needed to ensure that those children too can thrive.

School Budgets

10. **Rushanara Ali** (Bethnal Green and Bow) (Lab): What estimate he has made of the number of schools that will have a cash terms reduction in their budget in 2018-19 compared with 2017-18. [906009]

The Minister for School Standards (Nick Gibb): Through the national funding formula, we are giving every local authority more money for every pupil in every school in 2018-19 and 2019-20. However, we have always made it clear that local authorities remain responsible for determining schools' final budget allocations in these transition years, in consultation with their schools.

Rushanara Ali: I thank the Minister for his answer, but I am horrified by what it contains, because the reality is that in my constituency, in the Borough of Tower Hamlets, there will be £28 million of cuts by 2020 in an area with the highest child poverty in the country. Where is the fairness in that, and will the Minister and the Secretary of State show some guts and stand up to the Prime Minister, perhaps like the Defence Secretary, and call an end to the billions of pounds of cuts in national funding of education?

Nick Gibb: Under the national funding formula we prioritise children from disadvantaged backgrounds; that is a key element of the way we allocate funding in a fairer way. In the hon. Lady's constituency, the average per pupil funding for primary schools under the national funding formula when it is fully implemented will be £6,140, compared with the national average of £4,193 per primary school pupil. For secondary, the hon. Lady's schools will be funded at £7,965 per pupil compared with the national average of £5,380.

Philip Davies (Shipley) (Con): The Minister knows that I have written to him and met him to discuss some of the budgets of schools in my constituency, which seem to be going down, at variance to the impression the Government would give; and those schools where the budget is going up seem to have their costs increasing at a faster rate than the increase in funding they are getting. Will the Minister look again at the schools budget in the Shipley constituency? Will he perhaps write to me with his understanding of what each school is getting this year and in the next financial year compared with the last financial year, and will he commit to making sure they get adequate funding? And if he is looking for a pot of money, perhaps the overseas aid budget would be a good place to start.

Nick Gibb: Of course I will write to my hon. Friend as he asks, but I have to say that we are spending record amounts of money on schools, some £42.4 billion this year. There has never been a sum as high spent on schools in our history, and it will rise again next year to £43.5 billion, and we announced an increase in school funding last July to the tune of £1.3 billion. That was the result of successful negotiations with the Treasury.

21. [906023] **Frank Field** (Birkenhead) (Lab): All Birkenhead schools, like schools throughout the country, suffer real cuts in their budgets. Will the Minister meet me to seek ways by which we automatically enrol all poor children for free school dinners, and, as importantly, the Government's initiative, the school premium?

Nick Gibb: The right hon. Gentleman makes some interesting points and I will take advice on his suggestions, but I must say that we have guaranteed the pupil premium to the end of this Parliament: it is over £1,300 for every pupil eligible for free school meals attending a primary school, and nearly £1,000 for every disadvantaged child attending a secondary school.

Nigel Huddleston (Mid Worcestershire) (Con): Does the Minister agree that there is nothing morally superior about maintaining a blatantly unfair existing system, and is it not fair and reasonable therefore to target increases in school funding on schools, such as those in Worcestershire, that have been relatively underfunded for decades?

Nick Gibb: This Government have grasped the nettle and are introducing a fairer, more transparent funding system, which the previous Labour Government shied away from.

Angela Rayner (Ashton-under-Lyne) (Lab): The Chancellor gave a guarantee that not a single school would lose a single penny—no ifs, no buts, no small

print, but an ironclad, copper-bottomed guarantee. Now he is trying to wriggle out of it like a second-hand car salesman. If Private Pike is prepared to go to war to get funding for defence, why is the Education Secretary waving the white flag rather than meeting his guarantee on schools?

Nick Gibb: The national fairer funding system is giving every local authority in the country more money for every pupil in every school in 2018-19 and 2019-20, and the Institute for Fiscal Studies says that school funding will be maintained in real terms per pupil in those two years. But we have always been clear that for these two years we will allow some discretion to local authorities as to how they allocate that funding to each of their local schools, and that is why the points the hon. Lady made arise: because we have given discretion to local authorities.

Academy Trusts

11. **Justin Madders** (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab): What steps he is taking to respond to poorly performing academy trusts. [906011]

The Minister for School Standards (Nick Gibb): As the Secretary of State outlined in his speech to the National Association of Head Teachers, we will support and hold to account trusts with poor educational, financial or governance performance. We will continue to act swiftly and robustly to turn around academies that Ofsted has judged inadequate, bringing about leadership change if that is necessary.

Justin Madders: I thank the Department and the Secretary of State for agreeing to meet me and colleagues last week to discuss our concerns about the performance of the University of Chester Academies Trust. Now that they have heard our concerns, can the Minister assure us that they will deal with these matters as swiftly as possible?

Nick Gibb: Yes, we will. The University Church of England Academy was judged to be inadequate by Ofsted in April last year. There was then a question of whether the multi-academy trust could provide the support that that school needed. Following a recent Ofsted monitoring visit to the academy, the Department took the view that insufficient progress was being made and that the leadership of the trust was not taking sufficient action. That is why my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State wrote to the hon. Gentleman confirming that the academy was going to be brokered to a higher-performing multi-academy trust, and we will do that as swiftly as possible.

Neurodiverse People

12. **Mr Paul Sweeney** (Glasgow North East) (Lab/Co-op): What steps his Department is taking to improve the learning experience for neurodiverse people. [906012]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Nadhim Zahawi): I witnessed at first hand the work of the Autism Education Trust at the Rise School in Feltham, in helping to train schoolteachers, receptionists, caretakers

and others across the teams in schools. About 175,000 people have been trained to recognise and help children with autism.

Mr Sweeney: Rossie Stone set up Dekko Comics in my constituency two years ago after suffering from dyslexia throughout school. He found that by creating a gamified version of school lessons, he was able to improve his academic performance rapidly. Will the Minister consider how using gamified methods of teaching can rapidly improve learning outcomes for people who are neurodiverse?

Nadhim Zahawi: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his question. We are looking at innovation across the board in the Department, and one of the areas that we are looking at is gamified work. I have seen some excellent work being done with children in Luton.

STEM Subjects

13. **Colin Clark** (Gordon) (Con): What steps his Department has taken to increase the take-up of STEM subjects. [906014]

The Minister for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation (Mr Sam Gyimah): The Government are committed to tackling our need for science, technology, engineering and maths skills in order to create a dynamic, innovation-driven economy. That is why we are investing an additional £406 million in skills, including maths and digital. This includes the advanced maths premium, and an £84 million programme to improve the teaching of computing, which should help to increase the take-up of these subjects.

Colin Clark: The Oil & Gas Technology Centre in Aberdeen is a major promoter of STEM subjects. Does the Minister agree that it is essential to prioritise the take-up of STEM subjects if we are to have the engineers and technicians that we need for the future?

Mr Gyimah: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. This is why we are encouraging more students into STEM education across the entire school system. We have seen a 17% overall increase in entries to STEM A-levels since 2010. In physics, it is overall at its highest level since 1996. However, there is clearly a lot more to do, which is why we are focused on doing a lot through careers and through the university system.

Carol Monaghan (Glasgow North West) (SNP): One of the major factors affecting the uptake of STEM subjects is the expertise of the teachers. However, Department for Education data show that one third of physics teachers in England do not have a relevant degree in the subject. Rather than simply accepting that as an unfortunate reality, what steps is the Minister taking to upskill STEM teachers? Will he commit to following Scotland's example in making a relevant degree a requirement for entering the profession?

Mr Gyimah: That is a very good question. We have subject-level enhancement courses for teachers. Also, there is a £26,000 tax-free allowance to attract teachers

into the sector to teach STEM subjects. We are also helping to improve their skills as they go through the system.

Free School and Academy Programmes

15. **Mr Ranil Jayawardena** (North East Hampshire) (Con): What assessment he has made of the effect of the free school and academy programmes on GCSE results. [906016]

The Minister for School Standards (Nick Gibb): Based on last year's GCSE results, converter academies and free schools had higher Attainment 8 and Progress 8 scores than the average for state-funded schools overall. In fact, eight of the top 10 schools for progress made by pupils were either academies or free schools. That is evidence that free schools and academies are delivering high standards for their pupils, and that particularly includes disadvantaged pupils.

Mr Jayawardena: The Department for Education has identified target local authority areas for raising standards. Further to my right hon. Friend's answer, does he agree that free schools that are accessible to anyone, wherever they might live in that area or beyond, will increase parental choice and improve standards?

Nick Gibb: My hon. Friend is right. Since 2010, the creation of the free schools programme has been a huge success. Those schools, which often serve disproportionately disadvantaged communities, have unleashed innovation and driven up academic standards. To give just one example, 92% of disadvantaged pupils at Reach Academy Feltham achieved grade 4 or above in English and maths last year.

Higher Education: EU Students

16. **Daniel Zeichner** (Cambridge) (Lab): What his policy is on the eligibility of EU students starting courses in English higher education institutions in 2019-20 and 2020-21 for home fee status and student loans and grants. [906017]

The Minister for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation (Mr Sam Gyimah): EU students, staff and researchers make an important contribution to our universities. We want that contribution to continue and we are confident, given the quality of our higher education sector, that it will do so. Information on eligibility for the academic year 2019-20 will be made available for students and institutions as soon as possible.

Daniel Zeichner: We need much more urgency. The admissions process is open and people are waiting to apply to medical and dentistry schools and universities such as Cambridge, but they face a real drop-off unless certainty is given soon about the status of EU students next year. Why do the Government not support British universities, which are among our great export earners? Is this just another day, another Brexit blunder?

Mr Gyimah: We hugely support our universities. Applications for courses starting in the 2020-21 academic year will not open until September 2019. We will ensure that students and institutions have the information they need very soon.

Post-16 Education: Social Mobility

18. **Mr Virendra Sharma** (Ealing, Southall) (Lab): What steps he is taking to improve social mobility in post-16 education. [906020]

The Minister for Apprenticeships and Skills (Anne Milton): We published a plan last year for improving social mobility through education, which set out the actions we are taking to increase social mobility. A crucial part of that is a career strategy, which I launched last year. Legislation came into force this year, including a requirement to allow further education technical and apprenticeship providers to have the opportunity to talk to young people. At the heart of the career strategy are those Gatsby benchmarks, which will make sure that young people get good careers advice.

Mr Sharma: In a country with world-leading education, why is there such a significant attainment gap for those with English as a second language?

Anne Milton: This is absolutely crucial. Obviously, someone who cannot speak English will be at a disadvantage. We have done a great deal more to improve the roll-out of ESOL. On the work we are doing in primary schools, the proportion of six-year-olds meeting expected standards in the phonics screening check has risen dramatically.

Children's Centres

20. **Sandy Martin** (Ipswich) (Lab): What recent assessment he has made of the (a) effectiveness of children's centres and (b) ability of families to access those centres. [906022]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Nadhim Zahawi): It is right that local councils decide how they spend on children's centres. Our priority is to improve outcomes for disadvantaged children overall. It is not just about bricks and mortar, but about using and improving evidence about what works.

Sandy Martin: Given that there are now at least 1,240 fewer designated Sure Start children's centres than there were in 2010, will the Department commit to retaining the remaining two thirds of the original centres and invest in improving the range of services they offer?

Nadhim Zahawi: This Government are spending £6 billion on childcare. It is not just about bricks and mortar. There are 2,300 children's centres and they are very much part of the overall picture, but we will do what works. We have committed £8.5 million for councils to peer review each other, to see what is actually working. I hope that, like the Government, the hon. Gentleman is interested in outcomes rather than just bricks and mortar.

Topical Questions

T1. [906025] **Gavin Newlands** (Paisley and Renfrewshire North) (SNP): If he will make a statement on his departmental responsibilities.

The Secretary of State for Education (Damian Hinds):

In the past month, we have announced £730 million of capital funding to create new school places. That will bring to 1 million the additional school places to be created over the decade, making it the biggest for investment in school capacity for at least two generations. Friday was Thank a Teacher Day, and we have more of them to thank than ever before, as well as more to thank them for.

Gavin Newlands: This year's *Times Higher Education* rankings show UK universities falling down the league tables. Does the Secretary of State agree that that makes it even more vital that the UK relaxes any restrictions on EU academic and research staff post Brexit, to ensure that our universities do not become isolated and cut off from development?

Damian Hinds: Our higher education sector performs extremely well in the international comparisons. It is a popular destination for international students, including EU students, and, indeed, it remains a popular destination for EU academics.

T2. [906026] **Neil O'Brien** (Harborough) (Con): A report by academics at the London School of Economics found that schools that introduced a ban on mobile phones saw a 2% increase in the number of pupils achieving five good GCSEs. The Minister and I both agree with school freedom, but will he consider introducing stronger guidance and more help for schools that choose to implement stronger controls on mobile phones?

Damian Hinds: I agree with my hon. Friend that we want children off their phones and focused on their lessons. As he says, we know from research that that improves results. I am also very clear that it is for the people in charge of schools—the headteachers—to make the detail of their disciplinary rules.

Angela Rayner (Ashton-under-Lyne) (Lab): Just weeks ago, Ministers stood at the Dispatch Box, rejected our call to save the NHS bursary and promised that 5,000 apprentice nursing associates would be recruited this year to tackle the nursing shortage. Half were due to be recruited by April. Can the Minister confirm that Ministers have now missed that target by 60% and tell us how many people will start apprenticeships this year?

The Minister for Apprenticeships and Skills (Anne Milton): We need to make sure that nursing apprenticeships and apprenticeships for nursing assistants work well. There are complex problems in the NHS, not least in providing 40% off-the-job training and the fact that those apprentices are supernumerary. I am working very closely with Ministers in the Department of Health and Social Care to make sure that we make this work.

I was, in effect, a nursing apprentice. I know how well such apprenticeships can work, and I am determined to make sure they do.

T3. [906027] **Jeremy Quin** (Horsham) (Con): When will the Minister have the opportunity to review the zoning of the area cost adjustment element of the national funding formula?

The Minister for School Standards (Nick Gibb): We calculate the area cost adjustment using data on teacher pay and data from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on general labour market costs. For teacher pay we use the regional teacher pay bands as zones, but we will keep it under review to ensure that funding always matches need as closely as possible.

T6. [906031] **Wes Streeting** (Ilford North) (Lab): The news from the Children's Commissioner that there are over 30,000 children aged between 10 and 15 involved in gangs will surely be deeply concerning to everyone. What is the Department doing to tackle this problem, not least because the Children's Commissioner identifies that many of these vulnerable young people are groomed from pupil referral units?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Nadhim Zahawi): I sit on the Home Secretary's serious violence taskforce, and we are publishing revised statutory guidance, "Working together to safeguard children," which makes clear the roles and responsibilities of the agencies involved in protecting children from gangs. The guidance also offers links to further advice on these forms of abuse. Obviously, we also have our strategy for alternative provision—the hon. Gentleman referred to pupil referral units.

T4. [906028] **Mary Robinson** (Cheadle) (Con): Approximately 48,000 children are being home educated in England. In the light of the Government's consultation on home education, which ends next Monday, can the Minister clarify what steps his Department is taking to reassure home educators that their views will be fed into the Government's consultation response?

Damian Hinds: I can give my hon. Friend that reassurance. We are having this consultation, and there has been a rise in children being home educated, which of course includes some children with particular special educational needs who have had a particularly bad time in the school system and whose parents devote their lives to their education—I pay tribute to those parents. The rise includes other categories, but it is important that we listen carefully, and we will, to those parents in the consultation.

T7. [906032] **Mr Jim Cunningham** (Coventry South) (Lab): Does the Minister realise that more than 300 pupils were denied their first-choice school as a result of the Government cuts to local government education budgets in Coventry? What is he going to do about it?

Nick Gibb: If the hon. Gentleman looks at the national figures, he will find that, at primary, something like 97% of families received an offer of a place in one of their top-three schools, with 91% offered their first choice. At secondary, 94% of families received an offer of a place at their first-choice school. We have created 825,000 school places since 2010, following on from a Labour Government who actually cut 100,000 school places from the system.

T5. [906030] **Robert Courts** (Witney) (Con): Hard-working teachers in small rural schools in places like West Oxfordshire are ingenious in wringing every last penny of value out of their budgets, but what are Ministers doing to ensure those schools have the funding they need to thrive?

Nick Gibb: Our national funding formula is a much fairer way of allocating funding, and it also supports small rural schools, particularly in areas such as West Oxfordshire, by providing a lump sum of £110,000 for every school and by targeting funding to small and remote schools through the sparsity factor. That provides up to an additional £65,000 for small rural secondary schools and £25,000 for primaries.

T8. [906033] **Alan Brown** (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): The Centre for Global Higher Education has identified that EU academics fill gaps in subjects such as science, technology, engineering and maths where there are insufficient numbers of UK-qualified academics. With Brexit fast approaching, how are the Government going to maintain staffing levels, let alone magically increase the number of UK-qualified academics?

The Minister for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation (Mr Sam Gyimah): As part of the EU negotiations, we are mindful of the fact that we want academics here to work with academics from abroad. The Prime Minister said in her most recent science speech that roughly 50% of researchers in the UK are from the EU—we intend that to remain the same post Brexit.

T9. [906034] **Mrs Kemi Badenoch** (Saffron Walden) (Con): There is still a strong demand across businesses in my constituency for technical skills. What progress has been made on the introduction of the new institutes of technology?

Anne Milton: Sixteen proposals for institutes of technology will go through to stage 2, which we will launch in July. IOTs are a collaboration between higher education and further education, with a focus on levels 4 and 5; traditionally, this has been rather neglected in this country but it is so crucial for building the skills base. They will also extend to levels 6 and 7. There will be a £170 million capital fund to help IOTs get off the ground.

Dr Paul Williams (Stockton South) (Lab): I have recently learned that “consequence booths”, where children spend up to seven hours in a small booth without contact with peers, are being used by academies in my constituency. Will the Minister meet me to discuss how we can protect children in Stockton South from this threat to their mental health?

Nick Gibb: I would be very happy to meet the hon. Gentleman to discuss that issue.

Eddie Hughes (Walsall North) (Con): Will the Minister join me in encouraging young people in Walsall to attend the open evening at Walsall College, rated as outstanding by Ofsted, on Wednesday afternoon from 4 till 7, in advance of it delivering T-levels from September?

Anne Milton: My hon. Friend has given a great advert for T-levels. Contrary to what the shadow Minister said, T-levels have been viewed as a huge success, as shown by the broad support at the conference of the Association of Employment and Learning Providers this morning. They are a fantastic opportunity for our young people.

Luciana Berger (Liverpool, Wavertree) (Lab/Co-op): Yesterday, a survey of teachers by the charity stem4 revealed that students are facing a mental health epidemic and are not receiving the support they need. What assessment has the Secretary of State made of the number of counsellors, educational psychologists, peer mentors and pastoral care staff that have been lost from our schools in recent years? What assurances will he give that the proposals in the “Transforming Children and Young People’s Mental Health Provision” Green Paper will bring about a genuine addition to the mental health workforce in our schools and not just replace what has already been lost?

Nick Gibb: This Government take mental health very seriously. Some 84% of secondary schools have a counsellor to help children deal with mental health issues and stress, and we have unveiled our Green Paper, whereby we intend to improve mental health support for young people in our schools, including by having a designated senior mental health lead in every school in the country.

Huw Merriman (Bexhill and Battle) (Con): The teachers I meet in my constituency want to use more of their judgment and to reduce their assessment workload. Will the new goals for four to five-year-olds achieve on both fronts?

Nick Gibb: We are introducing a baseline assessment so that we can measure the progress that all pupils make in their time at primary school, and that will be based very much on assessment and observation.

Stephanie Peacock (Barnsley East) (Lab): Northern College has recently started teaching a pioneering 10-week course to help survivors of modern slavery. Will the Secretary of State join me in paying tribute to the work of Northern College? Will he also meet me to discuss its difficulty in using public funds to fund these vital courses because of current immigration regulations?

Damian Hinds: Of course I will meet the hon. Lady, and I pay tribute to what she is doing to make sure that the survivors and victims of modern slavery are given all the opportunities possible.

Justin Tomlinson (North Swindon) (Con): Following the announcement on the obesity strategy, what consideration is being given to opening up school sports facilities for free after school and during the holidays to parents and sports clubs that provide constructive opportunities for young people?

Nick Gibb: My hon. Friend makes an important point. Schools increasingly use their facilities for the community and to raise further income. We take school sport extremely seriously and the obesity strategy encourages more young people to be active every day of the week.

Wera Hobhouse (Bath) (LD): In last month’s Westminster Hall debate on school funding, the Minister said that per-pupil funding at Twerton Infant School in Bath would rise, but the headteacher maintains that it will not. If the Minister is so confident about his figures, will he please publish them next month?

Nick Gibb: The figures have already been published. We are providing increases in school funding for every school and every pupil—we are providing funding to local authorities on that basis. It is up to local authorities, in discussion with their schools, to decide how to allocate that funding to individual schools. I suggest that the hon. Lady takes up the matter with her local authority.

Vicky Ford (Chelmsford) (Con): This morning, I attended the schools' engineering and technology competition in Chelmsford, where Essex students had designed a wheelchair that climbs stairs. Does the Minister agree that such projects are key to inspiring the engineers of the future? Will he congratulate the Chelmsford Science and Engineering Society and all who were involved?

Damian Hinds: Yes to all the above.

Chi Onwurah (Newcastle upon Tyne Central) (Lab): This month, Newcastle's £9 million Discovery free school closed following a devastating Ofsted report. The Department for Education has said that it—or rather, the taxpayer—will bear the financial cost. Does the Minister recognise that the cost to the students, the people and the economy will be borne by the city of Newcastle, which should have been responsible for the school in the first place?

Nick Gibb: Yes; we take these issues very seriously. We take swift action when free schools such as that one fail. It was sponsored by the Newcastle colleges, with Newcastle University's involvement, but it was not delivering the required results so we took swift action and closed it. All the pupils will be placed in other, better schools.

Tom Pursglove (Corby) (Con): What steps is the Minister taking to ensure that daily mile initiatives are included as part of the childhood obesity strategy?

Nadhim Zahawi: On top of what we are doing, including the £26 million for breakfast clubs and the doubling of the physical education and sports premium, we would like schools to embrace the active mile as a simple, fun and inclusive way to build physical activity.

John Cryer (Leyton and Wanstead) (Lab): Earlier, the Minister claimed repeatedly that funding for the nursery sector is entirely adequate. On that basis, will more nurseries be open at the end of this Parliament than at the beginning?

Nadhim Zahawi: The important thing is to make sure that we have sufficiency in the system—that is, enough places—and I am confident that we will. This summer, 340,000 three and four-year-olds will benefit from 30 hours' free childcare a week; that is to be celebrated.

Leaving the EU: Airbus Risk Assessment

3.37 pm

Mark Tami (Alyn and Deeside) (Lab) (*Urgent Question*): To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to make a statement following the publication on Friday of the Airbus Brexit risk assessment report and its implications for future investment and job security in the UK.

The Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Greg Clark): The aerospace sector is one of the UK's greatest manufacturing strengths. Directly and through its supply chains, it employs in the UK around 300,000 people in high-skilled jobs, with an average salary of £41,000—that is 43% above the national average. Of the sector's £33 billion turnover, some 90% is accounted for in exports. From Bombardier in Belfast to Airbus in Filton, the supply chain that the sector operates is complex, precise and just-in-time. The industry is in demand around the world and that demand is growing rapidly, with the sector doubling in size every 15 years. Airbus is a very important part of that success, employing 14,000 people across 25 sites, with 110,000 people working in the supply chain of 4,000 small, medium and large companies.

On Friday, Airbus published a risk assessment, in which it stated to suppliers and to the UK and EU member states that if an agreement between the EU and the UK were not reached by 29 March 2019, its production would be likely to be severely disrupted, with a significant impact on the company. It also said that any agreement that involved significant change to customs arrangements would take time to implement through Airbus's supply chain, and that any agreement that involved new procedures, complexity or frictions would undermine the efficiency of the company's operations. That is completely consistent with what every part of the industry collectively has been saying directly, as well as through the ADS industry trade body and the international body the General Aviation Manufacturers Association, including in a letter to Michel Barnier at the European Commission earlier this month. Any company and any industry that supports the livelihoods of so many working people in this country is entitled to be listened to with respect.

The Government have been clear that we are determined to secure a deal with the EU that meets the needs of our aerospace firms and the thousands of people whose livelihoods depend on them and that, in particular, products made in the UK can be approved for use across Europe, that there should be no tariffs or any unnecessary friction in the trade between the UK and the EU, and that skilled employees will be able to work across the multiple sites of an integrated operation. Those objectives have been clearly set out by the Prime Minister in public and in our negotiations.

In the months ahead, my colleagues and I will work closely with businesses to ensure that, under the terms of our new relationship, we can continue to enjoy the prosperity that working in aerospace brings to so many people in all parts of the United Kingdom.

Mark Tami: I thank you, Mr Speaker, for granting this important urgent question and I thank the Secretary of State for his response.

Does the Secretary of State agree that the continued operation of Airbus in the UK is vital to the UK economy and that we need to take seriously its worries and concerns? Alternatively, does he support the comments of the International Trade Secretary, who said that we should ignore the views of business? Or does he agree with the views of the Health Secretary, who said that it was inappropriate of Airbus to raise concerns? Finally, does he support the more direct approach of the Foreign Secretary, who said, "F*** business"? I know that the Foreign Secretary has to be elsewhere today; I believe that he has gone as far as Afghanistan to avoid the Heathrow vote. Are not those comments indicative of the chaos in Government over Brexit and of the Government's approach to anyone who dares to raise genuine concerns?

Airbus has been raising those concerns privately for 12 months and getting absolutely nowhere. Can the Secretary of State explain why it is now, when it has done it publicly, that it is shouted down by Cabinet Ministers? Will he meet me and representatives from Airbus to address the serious concerns raised in the report? Does he accept that the lead-in times for investment in aerospace are long and that the sums of money are huge? For Airbus, it is all about securing the next generation of wing work, and these decisions are being taken now.

Is it not the case that, without clarity on Brexit, investment could be placed outside the UK—either in the EU itself or in low-cost producer countries such as China where the company has a plant? Airbus's concerns are real and shared by many other manufacturers such as BMW and Siemens. The Government need to wake up and listen rather than just address Tory infighting.

Greg Clark: I recognise that the hon. Gentleman has more than 6,500 people employed in his constituency in good jobs, and many more in the supply chain. Members from all parts of the House have constituents whose prosperous careers and excellent opportunities come from working in this important sector. Let us be clear: this sector is one of our proudest strengths and it is expanding. The opportunities around the world grow every year and the excellence that we have needs to be nurtured and cherished. I take seriously the representations of all businesses because we are talking about not speculation or visions of the future, but the reality of the lives of many hundreds of thousands of people across the country, which is important.

It is the case that we should listen to businesses. Of course, what Airbus has said was consistent with what it has said before and consistent with what it has said to Select Committees of this House. Very importantly, it was addressed equally to the European Commission and to member states of the European Union. It is very clear that, in order to have the agreement that we seek, it is necessary that both sides of the discussions should participate. Airbus has been clear that it is in the interests of the whole country and the whole company that that should be the case. I hope that that message will be heard in Brussels as well as in this country.

The hon. Gentleman asked questions about listening to business. All Government Members recognise that the livelihoods of millions of people, and the prosperity of our country, depend on business being successful. We will not always agree with everything that businesses say, but they have the right to be heard. The hon. Gentleman was rather one-sided in his representations;

[Greg Clark]

I think that he should direct some of his recommendations to his own Front Benchers, who have not been a picture of clarity on what they would like from these negotiations.

Mr Kenneth Clarke (Rushcliffe) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend explain to some of his Cabinet colleagues and others that it is simply not going to be possible to opt into most of the benefits of the single market and the customs union, while rejecting every trade rule and regulatory arrangement that the member states of the EU accept as part of that deal? Does he also agree that if, at the end of our negotiations, we start erecting new tariff barriers, new customs procedures and new regulatory divergences, it is perfectly obvious that we are going to deter inward investment from companies such as Airbus, BMW, Siemens and many others, with long-lasting damage to our economy?

Greg Clark: It is imperative that we do not do that. I am actually more optimistic than my right hon. and learned Friend about the prospects of a deal that will avoid that. Part of what this company and others have said is that it is strongly in the mutual interest of this international business that there should be an orderly agreement that allows a very successful company to continue to trade without friction. I think that that is in prospect.

We are leaving the European Union; that decision has been clearly taken. The task before us is to make an agreement that implements that decision and which, at the same time, ensures that these avoidable threats of frictions and tariffs do not take place. That is absolutely within our grasp and it is what the whole House should back during the months ahead.

Chi Onwurah (Newcastle upon Tyne Central) (Lab): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for granting this urgent question. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mark Tami) on securing it and on so eloquently setting out the importance of Airbus to our economy and the 110,000 workers whose livelihoods depend on it.

Airbus is not alone. Last week we heard from: BMW, which has 8,000 workers; Unipart, with 6,000 workers; Siemens, with 15,000 workers; and INEOS, which has 18,500 workers. These are the ones that have put their heads above the parapet, to be shot down by their own Government. The Secretary of State may say that he is listening, but the Health Secretary calls Airbus “completely inappropriate”, the Trade Secretary blames the EU and it would be unparliamentary to fully quote the Foreign Secretary, wherever he is.

Businesses are told to shut up when they call for clarity, Labour MPs are accused of scaremongering and Conservative MPs are called traitors. This Government are so insecure—so at odds with themselves and the country—that they cannot stand scrutiny. Their chaotic handling of Brexit is dividing the country, not bringing it together, and it is risking our industrial base. They should abandon their red lines, rule out no deal, accept that a new customs union and single market is in all our interests, and give business and workers the certainty that they need—or step aside for a Labour Government who will.

Greg Clark: We listen to the voice of business—large and small, across the country. Let us reflect on the months past. The hon. Lady knows that, around a year ago, business—again, large and small, across the country—said how important it was to have an implementation period. That proposal was put forward, adopted by the Prime Minister and has now been agreed with the European Union.

In her Mansion House speech, again, the Prime Minister responded to what business communicated very clearly in saying that we should be able to continue to be part of bodies like EASA—the European Aviation Safety Agency—which is responsible for aviation safety. That was also something that was recognised. Business recognises that this Government do listen and do act on the advice that business gives during these negotiations. It is an approach that is serious and sober. It recognises the challenges and complexity of the negotiations and addresses them in a responsible way.

I am glad that the hon. Lady calls for a degree of cool-headedness and consensus around this, because 80% of colleagues—80%-plus, I think—were elected on a platform that recognised the importance of leaving the European Union. What is before us is to make sure that the deal that we get is something that can be supported. But at every turn, her party changes its position—not for any reason of substance, but to maximise political advantage: shape-shifting to try to catch the Government out. In the past two years, we have had from Labour, at my last count, 15 tests, five red lines, four bottom lines, 170 questions and four key messages, but no coherent policy. Meanwhile, we in the Government are getting on with the task in hand, and that is precisely what she should do.

Mr Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford and Woodford Green) (Con): May I thank my right hon. Friend for coming so quickly to the House? When he was answering the original question, did he notice the irony that Siemens, among many other companies, has already been showing its faith in the UK even before this, with a £200 million investment in Goole to make sure that it is able to be here because it is where the talent lies? Would he not also consider it slightly ironic if the complaints from Airbus were such that it actually moved its production to China, given that China has never even been in the European Union?

Greg Clark: My right hon. Friend is right. I hope that he would acknowledge that my Department and this Government are energetic in promoting the advantages of locating in Britain, and not just at the new facility in Goole—I had the great privilege of opening the Siemens blade factory in Hull, employing 1,000 people. People locate in this country because it is a good place in which to invest. We have an environment of innovation and excellence—it is a tribute to the workforce—and we want to keep it that way. It is therefore incumbent on us, when we have industrial investors who are committing for years ahead, to listen to what they say about the requirements from the negotiation. He and I completely agree that in that relationship, we want to make sure that we do not have tariffs and we do not have frictions. That is what the company wants, that is what we want, and now we need to agree it with our European counterparts.

Drew Hendry (Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey) (SNP): Airbus's risk assessment is sobering news for those drunk on the fantasies of Brexit. Airbus has forecast "severe disruption" and "interruption of production" in the UK, forcing it to switch investment planning away from the UK. Airbus says that this is not "Project Fear" but a dawning reality. The fact is that business after business is shouting, "Brace, brace." At the heart of this is the lack of any plan or any sense over the customs union from this Government. This, coupled with no sign of any agreement over the EU-US open skies arrangement, means that Airbus is taking flight while the planes it already has in service could be stuck on the ground here.

The UK Government's disastrous plan to leave the EU customs union and single market risks 80,000 jobs by 2030 in Scotland. Will the Secretary of State provide details about how the Government will protect 8,000 jobs and £541 million of activity in Scotland indirectly supported by Airbus? What technical discussions has he had with Airbus and sectoral organisations on the impact Brexit will have on the industry? In the light of this, what policy changes, if any, will he take forward?

Greg Clark: The hon. Gentleman talks about the impact of Brexit. It may have escaped his attention that we are negotiating the terms of our future economic partnership with the rest of the EU. The representations that have been made by Airbus—as I say, directed at the UK but also at other member states and the Commission—are about what that future economic partnership should look like. I hope there will be a broad consensus in the House that it should be a regime that allows fantastic sectors and companies within them to not only continue to export in a just-in-time system in which any delay at the border undermines the business model, but also to expand production in a rapidly expanding market, not just in Europe but around the world. That is what we are negotiating, and that is the context in which Airbus has given advice to us and the other side of the negotiations.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr Speaker: Order. Given that there is a further urgent question to come, thereafter to be followed by a ministerial statement and subsequently a debate on the Heathrow motion, which I can tell colleagues is extremely heavily subscribed, the Chair's accommodation of the extensive interest in this matter will require brevity from Back and Front Benchers alike—to be demonstrated in the first instance by a co-author of the short questions textbook, Mr John Redwood.

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con): Does not Boeing's decision to make a major manufacturing investment in this country show that a complex supply chain can be run with a lot coming in from outside the EU perfectly well and give the lie to the idea that we will not be able to supply the wings to Airbus?

Greg Clark: I want Britain to be the best place in the world to produce advanced manufacturing products, and that means we should be tenacious in looking at every way to make the supply chain competitive. Given that our parts go backwards and forwards between the UK and the continent, if we can avoid frictions, as I am certain we can, that enhances our ability to compete, which is to the advantage of Boeing as well as any other company in the industry.

Hilary Benn (Leeds Central) (Lab): Is it not pretty damning that the Secretary of State has had to come to the Dispatch Box today to say that Airbus should be treated with respect when it tells the truth, rather than be criticised? Since the whole House knows that he understands what is at stake here, does he agree that the fact that the Cabinet is still arguing about what kind of customs arrangements it wants two years after the referendum is why a growing number of businesses despair at the Government's inability to get a grip of this issue?

Greg Clark: I disagree with the right hon. Gentleman. On the first point, we are an open economy. Businesses that employ people here are perfectly free to speak out and have a right to do so. It is incumbent on the Government to listen to what they say and factor that into the negotiations we are having. We have been very clear about that.

When it comes to the negotiation of our future customs arrangements, the right hon. Gentleman knows, as Chair of the Select Committee on Exiting the European Union, which has given this extensive scrutiny, that up to now we have been discussing the terms of our withdrawal. We are coming on to talk about the future economic partnership. We are negotiating and setting out what we want to achieve through that, and this was always the time when that would be done. For evidence from Airbus and other companies to come forward at this time is to be expected, given the focus of the discussions over the weeks ahead.

Anna Soubry (Broxtowe) (Con): A small business in my constituency that employs 180 people is part of the Airbus supply chain, so this matters very much to the good people of Broxtowe. I congratulate the Secretary of State on his statement and welcome it, but Airbus is not alone in having grave concerns about what the Government's position will be on Brexit and seeking clarity. Will he assure people first that the Conservative party remains the party of business, and secondly that when British businesses speak out, they should be able to do so without fear or favour and be listened to with respect?

Greg Clark: The answer to my right hon. Friend is: yes, and yes.

Tom Brake (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD): When the Health Secretary suggested that Airbus should get behind the Prime Minister's position, which of the positions on customs was he referring to: a customs partnership, maximum facilitation or customs arrangements?

Greg Clark: If the right hon. Gentleman had read what Airbus said, on which my right hon. Friend was commenting, he would know that it gave a forensic analysis of its requirements when it comes to imports and exports. The import of that was that it needs to avoid frictions and tariffs, which is precisely what the Prime Minister has committed to.

Sir Desmond Swayne (New Forest West) (Con): There are no tariffs on the aerospace industry under world trade rules, are there?

Greg Clark: The aerospace sector includes various components that do attract tariffs, and it is very important that we should have zero tariffs on all such components.

Emma Reynolds (Wolverhampton North East) (Lab): I am pleased that the Secretary of State is being sensible and listening to the concerns of business, unlike some of the disgraceful comments of his colleagues. Will the Secretary of State tell the House what assessment his Department has made of the impact on jobs and investment in the aerospace sector, and the impact not only on Airbus, but on companies in the supply chain, such as UTC Aerospace Systems in my constituency, of leaving the single market and the customs union?

Greg Clark: The supply chain of Airbus and indeed of every company in the sector is pervasive right across the UK, and many employers—small and large—across many of our constituencies contribute to it. The hon. Lady asks about the impact of leaving the single market. The purpose of the negotiations in the months ahead is to make sure, as we leave the European Union and as we leave the single market—she knows that it is not possible to be a member of the single market and to be leaving the European Union—that we have an agreement that allows us to trade without frictions and without tariffs. That is our purpose, and it is what the Prime Minister has very clearly set out. It is within our grasp, and I am confident we will be able to achieve it.

Stephen Crabb (Preseli Pembrokeshire) (Con): Is not the truth that the kind of Brexit deal that will fully safeguard our industrial base will be one that requires significant compromises? Does my right hon. Friend agree that we are fast approaching the moment when we need to spell out, for the benefit of business and industry, what those compromises look like?

Greg Clark: My right hon. Friend is right that any negotiation of course involves give and take. That is true on both sides, and it is important to remember that these observations have been addressed to the European Union as well as to the UK. My right hon. Friend talks about the time. As I said to the Chairman of the Exiting the European Union Committee, the right hon. Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn), now is the time when we are moving on from discussing the terms of our withdrawal to what our future economic partnership looks like. This is precisely the time at which we will set out and agree, I hope, a long-term future in which Airbus and many other companies can prosper.

Darren Jones (Bristol North West) (Lab): Airbus and its supply chain are significant employers in north Bristol, so will the Secretary of State set out what assessment his Department has made of the number of jobs that need to be put at risk, the number of families' lives that need to be devastated and the amount of damage that needs to be done to British industry before the threshold is met for the definition of a duff deal on Brexit, and will he at that stage join me and others in calling for a people's vote?

Greg Clark: I think the hon. Gentleman would be more productive if he engaged with the substance of the negotiation. We are leaving the European Union, and what is required is to reach an agreement that avoids

frictions and tariffs. It is perfectly possible to agree such an accord with the European Union. That is our purpose, and we will faithfully implement it.

Antoinette Sandbach (Eddisbury) (Con): Thousands of jobs in the north-west depend on Airbus and its supply chain there. Does the Secretary of State agree that close regulatory alignment is also a requirement to help to ensure that trade is as frictionless as possible?

Greg Clark: My hon. Friend is right in alluding to the fact that an aeroplane, which is what we are talking about, is a combination of products from different countries. They need to come together—this is inherently international—so to have standards for wings that are different from standards for engines and parts of the fuselage would clearly be incompatible with having a plane that flies. There is good sense in having an agreement that brings coherence to what is a single product manufactured in different parts of Europe.

Stephen Doughty (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op): I draw the House's attention to my declaration in the Register of Members' Financial Interests.

My constituents, many of whom work at Airbus plants in Newport or across the Severn bridge in north Bristol in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol North West (Darren Jones), also face devastation from the prospects of a hard Brexit. Will the Secretary of State therefore join me in condemning the leader of the Welsh Conservatives for his comments describing Airbus's remarks as "hyperbole", "threats" and "exaggerating", and agree with his ministerial colleague, the Under-Secretary of State for Defence, the hon. Member for Aberconwy (Guto Bebb), who has described senior Cabinet Ministers' comments as "both unworthy and inflammatory"?

Greg Clark: I have said very clearly, as I hope the hon. Gentleman would acknowledge, that it is entirely reasonable for any firm that employs people and pays taxes in this country to contribute its expertise and experience to the discussions that we are having.

Mr David Jones (Clwyd West) (Con): Article 50 provides that the withdrawal negotiations should take into account the framework for the future relationship between the departing member state and the continuing EU. Does my right hon. Friend not agree that the lack of clarity, about which Airbus is quite reasonably complaining, is a consequence, at least in part, of the flat refusal by the European Union to discuss that future relationship?

Greg Clark: One of the things that Airbus has set out is what it regards, correctly in my view, as the serious consequences for it of a Brexit without an agreement. It is in all our interests, on both sides of the channel, to have an agreement that avoids that. My right hon. Friend is right that Airbus and the various trade associations, some of them international, to which it belongs, have made the same points to other member states and to the European Commission. I hope that it will be heard in Brussels as well as in every other part of the European Union.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: As the record shows on urgent questions, I almost always call everyone. Today, I fear, that will not be possible and quite a lot of people will not get in, but the shorter the questions, the more who will. I call Jonathan Edwards.

Jonathan Edwards (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr) (PC): These warnings from Airbus, other manufacturing companies and, indeed, other sectors are not new to the British Government, as their own economic impact assessment shows that leaving the single market and the customs union will be hugely damaging. Is not the reality that for the Welsh economy the UK's Brexit policy is a game of Westminster roulette where every chamber is loaded?

Greg Clark: The hon. Gentleman should be more constructive. Given that the whole country—the United Kingdom—voted to leave the European Union, we should be engaged in making sure that we have the best deal possible. I talk regularly with colleagues in Wales about what is required in the terms of that agreement. He should contribute to that, rather than wishing away the results of a referendum that clearly he did not want.

Jack Lopresti (Filton and Bradley Stoke) (Con): If Airbus makes good on its ridiculous threats—and I do not think it will for one minute—how much of the billions of pounds of taxpayer subsidy, paid for by the British taxpayer, would it have to pay back?

Greg Clark: I disagree with my hon. Friend. I think that the company has set out what it requires to be agreed in the negotiations so that it can continue to prosper. It is true that the company, like most companies in the aerospace sector, has been part of a successful investment with the Government in innovation and training. That is one foundation of our success, and I very much want that to continue.

Mr Pat McFadden (Wolverhampton South East) (Lab): Fourteen thousand jobs directly affected; over 100,000 in the supply chain, including in our crucial aerospace cluster in Wolverhampton. What does the Secretary of State think is in the minds of leading Brexiteers when they hear warnings like this, which are anything but ridiculous? Does he think that they take them to the heart, or do they in the end believe that this is a price worth paying, because the overall imperative of controlling immigration comes before any economic or employment consideration?

Greg Clark: My experience gives me confidence that the evidence and the facts will ultimately determine the outcome of the negotiations; respect for the facts on both sides of the negotiations will be what determines a solution in the interests of both sides. That is what I am determined to pursue. When companies offer evidence, as others are completely free to do, it should be considered in a serious and sober way, and used to inform those discussions.

Mr Laurence Robertson (Tewkesbury) (Con): The aerospace industry is important to my Tewkesbury constituency. Did the Secretary of State notice, on the day of the announcement, that American company GE Aviation announced that it was going to rebuild its propeller business, which supplies a significant proportion

of the world's propellers, in my constituency of Tewkesbury, here in the United Kingdom? Is that not a vote of confidence in what we are doing?

Greg Clark: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Our right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Mr Duncan Smith) pointed out earlier that companies invest here because it is a good place to invest. My hon. Friend's constituency and the area around it have proved successful because there is a critical mass—a cluster—of related firms. It is important that we do everything we can to ensure that we maintain and add to the strength of that cluster, and I am absolutely determined to do so.

Anna McMorrin (Cardiff North) (Lab): Ideology before jobs; doctrine before the economy. It used to be that the Conservatives were the party of business, but now they are the party of fears. When will the Government give clarity to business and hard-working families, heed warnings, and commit to staying in the single market and the customs union?

Greg Clark: Day in, day out, I meet businesses and persuade them of the advantages of this country. I have to report that one of their concerns is the policies of the hon. Lady's Front Benchers, which are a very significant deterrent to investment in this country.

Mr Mark Francois (Rayleigh and Wickford) (Con): Some months ago, when I visited Airbus at Broughton, I was briefed in detail about its considerable investment in both capital and skills for specialised wing work. Is it not a fact that it would be extremely expensive for Airbus if it were ever to contemplate trying to relocate that work, be it to Hamburg or Toulouse?

Greg Clark: My right hon. Friend takes too pessimistic a view. We do not want Airbus to be located in this country because it is too difficult for the company to go elsewhere; we want it to be here with enthusiasm because this is a good and profitable place to invest. I am determined that the deal we secure and the investment we make through our industrial strategy will add to our strengths and make us even more attractive. We should have a counsel of optimism rather than defensive pessimism.

Alison McGovern (Wirral South) (Lab): Unlike the right hon. Member for Rayleigh and Wickford (Mr Francois), my constituent Kyle Robinson, a Unite shop steward, works at Broughton every day. He wrote to me this weekend to say that the current situation for him and the families I represent is potentially catastrophic. Will the Secretary of State ensure that when he takes up the invitation from my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mark Tami) to meet him and the company, the unions get an invite as well?

Greg Clark: The company has good relations with the trade unions and meets them regularly, as indeed do I. The hon. Lady should reflect that when the country took the decision to leave the European Union, there was always going to be a period before the negotiations were concluded when anxieties would be felt. Our purpose and determination is that those negotiations should be

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concluded so that there will be confidence to invest in the future and we can create many more jobs for her constituents.

Robert Halfon (Harlow) (Con): Given what my right hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (John Redwood) said, and given Boeing's £40 million investment, is it not important that we listen to all voices in this argument, rather than concentrating on one voice, which may have a different view about Brexit, disproportionately more than others?

Greg Clark: Companies in the aerospace sector—big and small—report very similar requirements: we should avoid frictions and tariffs. That is consistent with many other employers who create valuable jobs in this country. It is important that we listen to not just one voice but them all.

Sammy Wilson (East Antrim) (DUP): Since aerospace regulations tend to be made on a worldwide basis rather than on an EU basis, the tariffs on manufactured goods are low or zero, and the UK is an important market for Airbus. Does the Secretary of State accept that we should take some of these warnings with a pinch of salt? If Airbus has concerns, it ought to direct them towards the EU negotiators who seem to be putting every obstacle in the way of the Prime Minister's objective of frictionless future trade.

Greg Clark: We need an agreement. The right hon. Gentleman is right that regulatory standards are increasingly international, but the idea that we would find ourselves unable to operate to the standards required for aircraft produced in Europe would be unacceptable not only to Airbus, but to Bombardier in Northern Ireland, which communicated in very similar terms its requirements for the future.

Richard Graham (Gloucester) (Con): Given that the clear aim of the Government, and indeed Airbus Group, is to achieve a frictionless and zero-tariff exit agreement, has not the statement from Airbus generated more heat than light? Is not the simple truth that we make the engines, wings and landing gear for the Airbus, that it is incredibly important that we continue to do so, and that there is no reason for us not to arrive at an agreement that enables us to do so?

Greg Clark: I agree with my hon. Friend. I hope that the House can tell that I regard the prospect of a good agreement as being within our grasp. That is our objective, and it is what this company and many others want from us.

David Hanson (Delyn) (Lab): Airbus makes great play in its statement of the need to remain in the European Aviation Safety Agency, because regulating in that way means that planes can fly. What confidence can the Secretary of State give to my constituents, including the chair of the trade union group and the 1,500 people in my patch who work there, that we will still have that proper regulation after Brexit?

Greg Clark: That is precisely what the Prime Minister set out in her Mansion House speech: we want and need to secure an agreement such that we will not require a different set of regulatory standards. I am confident that we will be able to agree that.

Vicky Ford (Chelmsford) (Con): Airbus is also a key player in the space sector, which is important for many jobs in my constituency. Can the Secretary of State confirm that the partnership that we are looking for will cover co-operation on standards and a deal on services, so that maintenance contracts and the like can continue to be fulfilled?

Greg Clark: My hon. Friend is absolutely right that there is no hard and fast distinction between manufactured goods and services, and that is especially illustrated in the aerospace sector. If, for example, Rolls-Royce sells an engine, the money that it makes in the years ahead is from maintaining and servicing that engine. That involves skilled engineers being able to travel, so it is very important—again, as part of our agreement—that such services should continue to be supplied uninterrupted.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Order. We have very little time left for this, I am afraid, so we will need short questions and short answers.

Mr Chris Leslie (Nottingham East) (Lab/Co-op): Apparently it was at a Foreign Office reception in honour of the Queen's birthday that the Foreign Secretary applied his four-letter expletive to the concerns of Airbus and business about leaving the single market. I can think of a few suggestions myself, but what four-letter word comes to mind for the Secretary of State when he thinks about the Foreign Secretary?

Greg Clark: For all of us, it is "jobs" that we want to secure from our negotiations—good jobs—and we are determined to do so.

Mr Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con): Is it not the case that the United Kingdom has attracted more foreign direct investment than most, if not all, our European partners, and is it not the case that today, two years on from the referendum, there is more foreign direct investment in our economy than there was in 2016?

Greg Clark: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. He will know that I spend time travelling around the world to encourage overseas investors to invest in our country and our economy. One of the reasons why they choose to do so is that we are a place of skills and ingenuity. We are also a place from which it is possible to export around the world, and we want to be able to maintain that. That is my purpose.

Jessica Morden (Newport East) (Lab): Many of my constituents work in Newport and in Filton. I reiterate to the Minister that the Government's failure to address the issues that Airbus raised about Brexit mean uncertain times for the workforce, and that includes the 500-plus apprenticeships that have been offered over the last five years in Wales. This is about jobs for our young people.

Greg Clark: I am glad that the hon. Lady refers to the 500 apprenticeships because, as she will acknowledge, the sector has prospered as never before during the last few years, during which we have had a fantastic programme of joint investment in skills and in the technology of the future. That has been this Government's deliberate policy.

Through the industrial strategy, we are taking that forward, and I am determined that we will be able to create markets around the world—including the European Union—for those products to be exported to.

Jeremy Lefroy (Stafford) (Con): I thank my right hon. Friend for his comments and for his support for businesses on all sides that wish to make their views known, because it is important that our constituents' jobs are protected. Will he adopt the same pragmatic attitude towards his input into the negotiations and encourage that from all sides, including Brussels?

Greg Clark: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. If one has the privilege, as I and many of us do, of visiting the shop floors and workforces around the country, one sees how important these jobs are. These are good jobs providing careers and opportunities, as well as decent incomes for workers and their families. It is important that we have that always in mind as we approach these negotiations. If we do, a sensible outcome will, I believe, prevail.

Stephen Timms (East Ham) (Lab): Is it not the truth that Airbus has done a great public service by injecting much-needed frankness and realism into this debate, and will the Secretary of State commend it for being willing to do so?

Greg Clark: As I have said to colleagues across the House, Airbus and other companies in the sector, like many other companies, have been very consistent in their approach for many months, including in evidence to Select Committees on which some Members in the Chamber sit. This has caught the country's attention now, but it is consistent with what the company has been saying for some time.

Iain Stewart (Milton Keynes South) (Con): I declare an interest, having visited the Airbus headquarters recently. Airbus has a manufacturing facility in Alabama, USA, which is outside the customs union. It exchanges products, parts and labour without impediment. Does that not give us hope for the future?

Greg Clark: In the context of Europe, the company's arrangements are remarkably effective. It combines products from neighbouring EU countries and, in many cases and in many markets, beats the competition hands down. Why would we want to disturb something that works?

Karin Smyth (Bristol South) (Lab): Bristol, home of Concorde, is proud of its aerospace industry, to which Airbus is critical. It is also critical to the provision of good apprenticeships in my constituency. How will the Secretary of State's industrial strategy be delivered if companies such as Airbus are not here?

Greg Clark: Not only will Airbus be here, but it will be expanding its operation and recruiting more apprentices for very successful careers.

Robert Neill (Bromley and Chislehurst) (Con): May I welcome the Secretary of State's firm restatement of a properly Conservative position that respects business and puts pragmatism above ideology? Will he make sure that the same applies to negotiations on our key services sector, which represents 80% of the economy?

Greg Clark: My hon. Friend is right. It is important that services, which make such a good contribution to our economy, can continue to prosper. That means that, whether in financial and professional services, or in the oil and gas sector in which we have such expertise, we can fly people into other countries, have them ply their trade and give advice and help, and then have them come back again. We can do that at the moment; we need to be able to do it in the future.

Chris Ruane (Vale of Clwyd) (Lab): It was a Tory Government who shed more than 8,000 jobs at Shotton in 1980—the biggest lay-off in one day in British industrial history. We will see history repeat itself, with 6,500 jobs lost at Broughton, if the Secretary of State does not pull his finger out. Why are he and his party prepared to sacrifice those Airbus workers' jobs and futures for party political ideology?

Greg Clark: I am not, but if the hon. Gentleman wants to talk about job losses, he should refer to the periods when his party has been in power and the devastation to the economy that that has caused. We are determined that industries that are successful now will be successful in the future. The policies of Labour Front Benchers, which are seemingly predicated on the idea that if it works, it has to be subsidised, and if it still works, it has to be nationalised, will attract no confidence in this country.

Charlie Elphicke (Dover) (Ind): Has the Secretary of State noticed that the European Union sells us £100 billion more in goods than the other way around? Does that not underline that, rather than following the defeatism of the Labour party, we should be bold and courageous in putting forward maximum facilitation and trade with the EU?

Greg Clark: Given my hon. Friend's constituency, he knows the importance of having no frictions at the border. As he describes, there is a common interest between the two sides of the negotiations, which I am sure will lead to a successful outcome.

Luciana Berger (Liverpool, Wavertree) (Lab/Co-op): Yesterday, the Health Secretary said that it was "completely inappropriate" for businesses such as Airbus to make warnings about moving jobs because of Brexit. Will the Secretary of State confirm that the Health Secretary was wrong and that, in a democratic country, it is entirely appropriate for such businesses to raise their concerns? What will he do to protect the thousands of jobs in the aerospace sector in the north-west and across the country that will be put at significant risk if the Government pursue their plan of leaving the customs union and single market?

Greg Clark: As I think I made it clear throughout my statement, I do not agree—unusually—with my right hon. Friend on this point. I think that businesses have a right to speak out if they pay taxes and employ people, and we are determined that they will be able to continue to succeed in the future.

Kevin Foster (Torbay) (Con): Having visited the Airbus facility in Bristol, I am pleased to note the tone and nature of the Secretary of State's remarks. Will he

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confirm that the aviation industry is increasingly working on a global basis—there are even direct flights from here to Australasia now—and that that will not change after Brexit?

Greg Clark: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We want to be able to take advantage of increasing global opportunities, but to do so without losing the advantages that we have from what have been very successful trading relationships within Europe.

Mike Gapes (Ilford South) (Lab/Co-op): When the Secretary of State said that there should be no unnecessary friction, was he referring to discussions within the Cabinet or to the economy?

Greg Clark: When a matter is complex and requires a forensic attention to what companies require, there will of course be discussions, and sometimes people will not agree with each other. What is important is for those discussions to be concluded in a way that is productive for the whole economy.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Order. I apologise to remaining colleagues, but we must move on. I am sure that this matter will arise again, and that those who were not called today will have a chance next time.

Childhood Obesity Strategy: Chapter 2

4.26 pm

Jonathan Ashworth (Leicester South) (Lab/Co-op) (*Urgent Question*): To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to make a statement on the Government's childhood obesity strategy.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Steve Brine): Today the Government published the second chapter of our childhood obesity plan. The plan is informed by the latest evidence. It sets a new national ambition to halve childhood obesity and significantly reduce the gap in obesity between children from the most and least deprived areas by 2030.

Childhood obesity is one of the biggest health problems that the country faces. Nearly a quarter of children are overweight or obese before they start school, and the proportion rises to more than a third by the time they leave. The burden is being felt hardest in the most deprived areas, with children growing up in low-income households more likely to be overweight or obese than more affluent children.

Childhood obesity has profound effects, which are compromising children's physical and mental health both now and in the future. We know that obese children are more likely to experience bullying, stigma and low self-esteem. They are also more likely to become obese adults, and face an increased risk of developing some forms of cancer, type 2 diabetes, and heart and liver disease. Obesity is placing unsustainable costs on the national health service and our UK taxpayers, which are currently estimated to be about £6.1 billion per year. The total costs to society are higher and are estimated to be about £27 billion per year, although some estimates are even higher than that.

The measures that we outline today are intended to address the heavy promotion and advertising of food and drink products that are high in fat, salt and sugar, on television, online and in shops, and to equip parents with the information that they need in order to make healthy, informed decisions about the food that they and their children eat when they are out and about. We are also promoting a new national ambition for all primary schools to adopt an "active mile" initiative, like the Daily Mile. We will be launching a trailblazer programme, working closely with local authorities to show what can be achieved and to find solutions to problems created by barriers at a local level.

Childhood obesity is a complex issue that has been decades in the making, and we recognise that no single action or plan will help us to solve the challenge on its own. Our ambition requires a concerted effort and a united approach by businesses, local authorities, schools, health professionals, and families up and down the country. I look forward to working with them all.

Jonathan Ashworth: We have a childhood obesity crisis, and we need action.

Of course, many of the policies announced today seem familiar. That is because they are actually our policies. Supporting the Daily Mile initiative is a Labour policy. Supporting a ban on the sale of energy drinks to under-16s is a Labour policy. Proper food labelling is a Labour policy. A target of halving childhood obesity is

a Labour policy. The Minister should not be commending his statement to the House; he should be commending the Labour party manifesto to the House.

But what was not in the Minister's response? There were no mandatory guidelines on school food standards, and no powers for councils to limit the expansion of takeaway outlets near schools. There was nothing about billboards near schools, there was no extension of the sugar tax to milky drinks, and there was no commitment to increasing the number of health visitors—and what about television advertising? We were told action was coming:

“the Health Secretary, is planning a wave of new legislation...including a 9 pm watershed”

said the *Telegraph*.

“Barring a last-minute change of heart, advertising for products high in sugar, salt and fat will be banned before the 9 pm watershed”

insisted *The Times*. But what did the Secretary of State announce yesterday? He is

“calling on industry to recognise the harm that constant adverts for foods high in fat, sugar and salt can cause, and will consult”.

So not even an “intention” to ban advertising of junk food—just a consultation. Surely this former Culture Secretary has not given in yet again to big vested interests?

We would bring forward legislation to ban the advertising of junk food on television. We have a childhood obesity crisis; the Government should be introducing restrictions on the advertising of fudge, not serving more up of it.

The Government talk of the role of local authorities. We agree, so will council public health budget allocations still have to wait until the spending review? Does that not mean new money will not be available for councils until 2020?

The Government have today announced 13 consultations and reviews; that hardly suggests the Government are gripped with a sense of urgency to tackle this crisis. Yet the evidence is clear: we need determined action now. I can assure the Minister that we would co-operate on the timely passage of legislation, so rather than stalling further, will he take us up on our offer? Our children depend on it.

Steve Brine: I have been doing this job for just over a year now and I had yet to find the party politics in child obesity, but I have to say that the hon. Gentleman has just managed to land that one correctly, if nothing else. He seems to be suggesting that everything in the plan is a Labour idea and that the last two years have been in some way a wasted opportunity since the 2016 plan. I would suggest that that is not true, and it is not even close, actually. Over half of the products in the scope of the soft drinks industry levy that we brought in under Chancellor Osborne have been reformulated, with many important manufacturers leading the way. Our comprehensive sugar reduction programme has reduced sugar in some products that children eat the most. We have also made a number of significant investments, including doubling the primary PE and sport premium to £320 million a year, transforming children's physical activity, as well as investing about £100 million this year in the healthy pupils capital fund and £26 million over three years to expand the breakfast clubs, with a focus on the Department for Education's opportunity areas.

But we were always clear that chapter 1 was the start of the conversation—the clue is in the name—and we are very clear that more needs to be done; that is why I said what I said in my opening remarks. That is why we are introducing the bold new measures outlined in chapter 2. I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman does not like consultations, but what could be described as delay through consultations I would describe as getting it right, and I expect that we will come on to discuss some of these measures in the coming minutes. But we must get these measures right and make sure people cannot duck underneath them.

Finally, the hon. Gentleman spoke about public health. We are spending £16 billion in the ring-fenced public health budget during this spending review. There are many good examples of local councils doing excellent things with that money, and we will probably hear about some of them as well.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr Speaker: Order It is unsurprising that there is significant interest in this matter, but in order to facilitate timely progress to the ministerial statement, and indeed to the subsequent debate which I can advise the House is heavily subscribed, there will need to be a premium on economy from Back and Front Benches alike, as will now be brilliantly exemplified by the Chair of the Select Committee on Health, Dr Sarah Wollaston.

Dr Sarah Wollaston (Totnes) (Con): I warmly welcome the second chapter of the childhood obesity plan, which takes us so much further in a number of areas. Can my hon. Friend the Minister set out the timescale for these consultations and confirm that the responses will be considered in a timely manner, treating this with the urgency it deserves?

Steve Brine: Yes, and may I thank the Chair of the Select Committee for the work she has done on this? Ever since we came into Parliament together she has been championing this issue—long before it was fashionable, I might add—and she has really led the line with her Select Committee inquiry on it, to which I and other Ministers joining me on the Front Bench today, including the Minister for Digital and the Creative Industries, my hon. Friend the Member for Stourbridge (Margot James), gave evidence. With most, if not all, of the consultations we are not hanging about; they will be getting under way this year.

Carol Monaghan (Glasgow North West) (SNP): This is a ticking time bomb that needs to be dealt with properly. We know that children from deprived backgrounds are twice as likely to suffer from obesity, so I first want to ask the Minister how this ties in with his plans to tackle poverty. The Scottish Government's ambition to halve obesity in Scotland by 2030 and initiatives such as the Daily Mile are extremely important in addressing this. Those initiatives have received the backing of Jamie Oliver, who has stated that Scotland

“has picked up the baton that Westminster dropped”.

The Scottish Government will support small and medium-sized enterprises that have innovative ideas for junk food alternatives. What support will the UK Government be giving to companies founded to offer alternatives to

[Carol Monaghan]

fatty foods? Does the Minister agree that restricting the powers of the Scottish Parliament to lead the way on legislation on food safety, labelling and health claims could severely restrict Scotland's ability to lead the way in this area?

Steve Brine: I thank the hon. Lady for what I think was her welcome for this. Looking at the letter on the comprehensive strategy to tackle child obesity that was sent to the Prime Minister on 25 April and signed by her leader, the First Minister of Scotland, I have ticked alongside the bullet points and I reckon that 80% or possibly 90% of the things that her leader has asked for are in this plan. She has asked about inequality, for example, and we have the lowest levels of inequality in 30 years. I am not going to get into the devolution arguments, but I will say that we welcome the North Star policy that the Scottish Government have announced, with the support of Jamie Oliver—who, I might add, has been very supportive and helpful throughout this process. We matched that, but the difference is that we have a plan for how we are going to get there.

David Tredinnick (Bosworth) (Con): Is my hon. Friend aware that Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council is already leading in Leicestershire in the areas of prevention strategy and tackling obesity? Chapter 2 will be widely welcomed. Has he considered talking to supermarkets about healthy shopping strategies?

Steve Brine: I cannot say that I have considered that personally, but I know about lots of the technology solutions that supermarkets are bringing in. I am not surprised to hear the news about my hon. Friend's local council, and yes, this is absolutely about prevention. Last week, the Prime Minister announced a record investment of new money in the NHS, alongside our new long-term plan, of £20.5 billion a year, but that must go hand in hand with prevention. Investment and prevention are always better than cure.

Keith Vaz (Leicester East) (Lab): I also warmly welcome these proposals. These have been asks of the all-party parliamentary group on diabetes and of Diabetes UK for a number of years. There is a clear link between childhood obesity and diabetes, and 4.1 million people in the UK suffer from diabetes. Does the Minister agree that retailers do not have to wait for the consultation? As with the sugar tax, they can start to make the changes now to prevent diabetes in the future.

Steve Brine: Yes, and I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his support for this. Diabetes UK has said:

“Diabetes UK welcomes the ambitious range of measures outlined by the government in their commitment to tackling the childhood obesity crisis facing the UK.”

Its brilliant chief executive, Chris Askew, has been very supportive of this plan. This is one of the drivers of the need to tackle this issue, and no, nobody has to wait for this. There have been many examples, and I am happy to name-check Waitrose, which took the lead on not selling energy drinks to children. Its example was followed by all the other mainline supermarkets.

Mr John Whittingdale (Maldon) (Con): I welcome the Government's multi-pronged approach, but will the Minister bear in mind the fact that, when it comes to calls for banning advertising before 9 o'clock, such a measure would do huge damage to the economics of the commercial broadcasters, just at a time when fewer and fewer young people are watching scheduled television? Instead, they are now watching the on-demand services that are the direct competitors of commercial TV stations.

Steve Brine: I take my right hon. Friend's views very seriously, but we want to protect children from the advertising of products that are high in saturated fat, salt and sugar, and we are going to consult on introducing a 9 pm watershed. He mentions online, catch-up and social media, and that is one of the reasons that this is an important area for us to consult on. We want to ensure that we get this right, and it is not about punishing the industry. The people who work in the industry and in advertising are also parents, members of society and taxpayers. They also have a stake in this and in the reason for it all to succeed.

Luciana Berger (Liverpool, Wavertree) (Lab/Co-op): I am really glad to hear the Minister talk about tackling the health inequalities of obesity among children, because we know that the gap between the least deprived and the most deprived children has become more pronounced over the past eight years. Will he go into a bit more detail about what he is going to ask local authorities to do to close that gap?

Steve Brine: I will work with local authorities on a new pathfinders programme, which the hon. Lady may not have had a chance to look at as it was published only this morning. We want to work with them to model solutions and barriers to action through the pathfinders programme. There are already some good examples, some of which are set out in the plan, including in Blackpool and at Derbyshire County Council, which are doing good things. Many local authorities already have a number of substantial levers and powers. We want to model the best so that others, such as Liverpool, can follow.

Sir Desmond Swayne (New Forest West) (Con): Why are the poorest children disproportionately among the fattest? It is not because they watch more adverts, is it?

Steve Brine: It could be that, but it is a job of education and about helping their parents make sensible choices, because it is the poorest in society who miss out when we get this wrong. It is about what the Prime Minister described as a “burning injustice” when she was first elected, and I agree with her.

Ellie Reeves (Lewisham West and Penge) (Lab): Breastfeeding is a protective factor against childhood obesity. Although initial rates are about 75%, fewer than 45% of mothers continue to breastfeed by six to eight weeks. There is no mention of breastfeeding in the childhood obesity plan. With health visiting services being cut, what are the Government doing to promote this important part of a child's nourishment?

Steve Brine: There is no mention of breastfeeding in the plan, but that does not mean that I and my colleagues do not see it as a very important part of the early years programme. In areas that I represent, as well as,

I am sure, in other areas represented by colleagues, local authorities are often actively engaged in making sure that breastfeeding is a very important part of a child's start in life.

Andrew Selous (South West Bedfordshire) (Con): It was the drive and passion of Alderman Eric van der Burg, a right-wing politician, that led to results in bringing down child obesity in Amsterdam. What more do we need to do to get local authority leaders here to see that this is actually part of their core business, not a fringe activity?

Steve Brine: As my hon. Friend will remember from my speaking to the Health Committee, I have also been to Amsterdam, but unfortunately not for as long as the Committee members were. The whole-systems approach taken by Mayor van der Burg and Amsterdam is very impressive and has resulted in a 13% reduction in child obesity. Local authorities can learn from their attempts to market their cities, areas and regions, and I would suggest that having a good, healthy community and a good, healthy look when people walk out of the airport and do not see massive adverts for unhealthy fast food is an important part of that.

Dr Lisa Cameron (East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow) (SNP): I welcome the Minister's statement. Will he encourage supermarkets to offer free fruit to kids coming into the store? Nothing has changed my supermarket shop more than my local store doing so; when kids go in, they now ask for their free clementine rather than their chocolate.

Steve Brine: That is an easy one to agree with. Tesco has been doing that for years, and my children regularly avail themselves of the opportunity.

Philip Davies (Shipley) (Con): May I urge the Minister not to get into some nanny state, socialist claptrap arms race with the Opposition parties, which will never be satisfied, as we heard earlier from the shadow Secretary of State? May I remind the Minister that he is actually supposed to be a Conservative and urge him to think about this from a Conservative standpoint, which focuses on things like parental responsibility and not seeking to ban anything that moves?

Steve Brine: I am very pleased that my hon. Friend made that very helpful contribution. I am a Conservative—I said so in my opening remarks—but at the end of the day this is a publicly funded health service that we all believe in and all love. If we want it to celebrate its 140th birthday, we need to protect it, and that means getting serious about prevention and stopping people coming into the service and getting sick. Everyone in the House—Conservative, Labour and everyone in between—should get behind that.

Helen Goodman (Bishop Auckland) (Lab): As I understand it, a six-year-old will be 18 before the Minister's proposed ban on the promotion of unhealthy food at supermarket checkouts will come into effect. Surely this is meant to be a crisis, not a long-term plan.

Steve Brine: I thought for one fleeting moment that the hon. Lady and I were going to agree. I do not recognise that that six-year-old will have to wait another

12 years for the measure to be consulted on and put in place, so I think the hon. Lady might need to check her math.

Mr Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con): I think the Minister said that one quarter of children are obese by the time they go into primary school. The figures are shocking. Surely that must mean that nought to five-year-olds have far too much refined sugar in their diet. Can we please have an emphasis on parental responsibility for those young children?

Steve Brine: Yes. I am absolutely clear that there are three parts to this particular puzzle: there is Government, and using the power of Government for things like a sugar tax, which clearly only the Government can do; there is business, and the reformulation we are seeing from many, many businesses is impressive and helpful; and there are parents. Parental responsibility is central to this—we cannot do it without them—but we are going to give them information to help them do it.

Diana Johnson (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): The Minister's Conservative Government introduced a tax on sugary drinks, which worked because, as we know, manufacturers have reformulated their drinks. Why does he not accept that the voluntary approach to high-sugar food is not working? Why does he not introduce regulation to cut sugar in the high-sugar foods marketed at families?

Steve Brine: The hon. Lady and I went through this at oral questions just last Tuesday. There is a two-part approach: the stick and the carrot. As a carrot, we have a sugar-reduction programme on fizzy drinks, and my colleagues at Public Health England are doing a calorie-reduction programme—working closely with the industry, and with great success, to reduce calories through changes to recipes and portion sizes, for instance. Yes, sometimes the Government need to wave a stick, but there are also times when they need to encourage and to help along the way. We are going to do both.

Robert Halfon (Harlow) (Con): At a time when families are struggling with the cost of living, I urge my hon. Friend to make sure that these measures do not increase prices, which hit those on the lowest incomes the most.

Steve Brine: I have been very aware of that throughout the drawing together of this plan. For instance, we do not propose to ban "children eat free" offers. We are talking about food and drink price promotions, such as two-for-one multi-buy deals in the retail and the out-of-home sector, to prevent needless consumption and to help parents with pester power—with which I am incredibly familiar, as I have a 10-year-old and a seven-year-old.

Paul Blomfield (Sheffield Central) (Lab): The challenge is about both prevention and cure. We need to act now to help the growing numbers of children who are already obese, but in its recent inquiry the Health and Social Care Committee heard that provision of tier-3 and tier-4 services is bare. It concluded:

"Addressing health inequalities must include providing help for those children who are already obese."

What is the Minister going to do about the commissioning of tier-3 and tier-4 services?

Steve Brine: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. This is not just about some future generation; it is about the generation now that is already too big. It is about helping people through a sugar-reduction programme, a calorie-reduction programme and—something we have not yet talked about—the Daily Mile and the activity programme we see in so many schools in my constituency, and I am sure in the hon. Gentleman's constituency. That will help children in the future, and it will certainly help children now. It is never too late.

Sir David Evennett (Bexleyheath and Crayford) (Con): I welcome my hon. Friend's proposals, and I am grateful for his recent visit to Bexley to see our local plans for coping and dealing with childhood obesity. Chapter 2 is a good plan. Does he agree that targeting sedentary lifestyles is a top priority, and that to do so we need parental involvement?

Steve Brine: It was a pleasure to visit my right hon. Friend's constituency to see how Bexley Council is using its power, money and public health grant—the council made it very clear to me that it would like more, and my right hon. Friend is a very good advocate on the council's behalf—to bring forward a whole community response like the one I saw in Amsterdam. I would like to see much more of that in England.

Wera Hobhouse (Bath) (LD): We have heard that obesity is caused not only by the wrong food but by a lack of exercise. Far too few children walk or cycle to school. Will the Minister engage with all our schools to make sure we have proper, realistic travel plans in place so that many more children walk or cycle to school?

Steve Brine: Yes. The Daily Mile happens when children are in school, but getting to school is important. I work with Sustrans, a charity, quite a lot in my constituency, as I am sure many Members do. It works to help children to cycle and scoot to school. That is very important, and the hon. Lady is right to raise it.

Robert Courts (Witney) (Con) *rose*—

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member for Witney (Robert Courts) is starting to resemble a runner who is literally itching to get out of the starting blocks.

Robert Courts: As the father of a two-year-old, I am increasingly concerned about the sedentary lifestyles that children lead. Will the Minister join me in praising Middle Barton, Great Rollright, Queen Emma's, Clanfield and Stanton Harcourt primary schools in West Oxfordshire, which have signed up to the Daily Mile programme? Will he encourage others to do the same?

Steve Brine: My hon. Friend will have enjoyed that contribution; I suspect his office are clipping it as we speak. We have a national ambition for every primary school to adopt an active mile initiative, such as the Daily Mile, as a result of this plan. I visited Western Church of England Primary School in my constituency recently, which has good plans to do that. This week is National School Sport Week. I will be at my sports day on Friday, taking part—as I am sure you will be at some point, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: The Minister's virtue is boundless; he is truly a person of the people. I am sure he is a very popular parent at the school—I have no reason to doubt it.

Mr Pat McFadden (Wolverhampton South East) (Lab): On Friday, I met Councillor Hazel Malcolm, Wolverhampton's cabinet member for public health. We discussed this challenge for the city, where, unfortunately and sadly, the child obesity problem is often worst in the lowest income wards. The Minister has mentioned the Daily Mile a few times during this statement. What can he do to make this more than something there are warm words about and to roll it out in schools so that children get the benefit?

Steve Brine: The education team are working very closely on this, and the Minister for School Standards wrote a very good piece in *The Sunday Times* about it. [Interruption.] Indeed, the children's Minister, the Under-Secretary of State for Education, my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Nadhim Zahawi), is right here on the Bench with us. We are encouraging all schools to take part in the initiative and we have a national ambition for it. There is no reason why schools in the right hon. Gentleman's constituency cannot do it, as is the case for schools in my constituency and those of other Members.

Rebecca Pow (Taunton Deane) (Con): I, too, want to welcome the Daily Mile initiative. We should not be arguing about who was first to introduce it; I know we are competitive, but this is competitive for the schools. Does the Minister agree that any sporting activity in schools should be encouraged? Does he also agree that the social prescribing of sporting activities could also play its part in tackling this obesity crisis?

Mr Speaker: Any sport, of course, but particularly tennis, I suggest to the Minister.

Steve Brine: Especially tennis, Mr Speaker. I know my hon. Friend is keen on social prescribing, as am I. I recently signed an accord between National Parks England and Public Health England to use the brilliant natural resource of our national parks. They are clearly part of the social prescribing mix that we increasingly see across our country, and I want to see more of it. She is right to raise that.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I, too, thank the Minister for his statement. With 25% of children overweight in Northern Ireland, will he confirm how he intends to work cross-departmentally there in the absence of a working devolved Assembly? We need a strategy that works for all of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Steve Brine: Yes. Some of the measures in this strategy relate to reserved matters, such as the advertising proposals that I have spoken about. I have been speaking to my officials, who are already talking to officials in Stormont and will be helping them to develop their own plans. I know they have been very interested in what we are doing, and I hope they can copy and follow some of this locally.

Kevin Foster (Torbay) (Con): Community sports clubs, such as the Cary Park tennis club in Torquay, play a large role in making children active and encouraging them to participate in activity. Will the Minister confirm that looking at these sorts of groups will be part of the strategy—to get people active, not just to tackle what they are eating?

Steve Brine: Yes, that is part of the strategy, in so much as we want local authorities to be involved, and upper tier authorities in England are all now public health authorities in their own right. There is absolutely no reason why sports clubs, which are plentiful in all of our constituencies, should not be a key part of the active lives agenda. Not just children need to do more activity in our country; all of us do.

Jeremy Lefroy (Stafford) (Con): I thank the Minister for the inclusion of both physical exercise and diet in this. Of course physical exercise is vital for mental health as well as physical health. Is the ambition to halve childhood obesity by 2030 ambitious enough, given that this is such an important issue for the future of not only the children, but our health service?

Steve Brine: I think it is very ambitious. Our first plan was world-leading and I outlined some of the things it has achieved. I think this plan is ambitious enough at the moment. We say in the plan that it is chapter 2 and that there will be a chapter 3—and no doubt there will be.

Justin Tomlinson (North Swindon) (Con): As 80% of children are not doing the recommended minimum of exercise, we owe it to them to do better than make political gestures. In stark contrast to when the Labour Government devastated school sport, will the Minister commit to making it an absolute priority to work with the Department for Education to unlock school sports facilities for free after school and in the school holidays for sports groups and parents, in order to provide opportunities?

Steve Brine: I spoke earlier about the Government's doubling of the primary PE and sport premium to £320 million per year, which is very important. My hon. Friend is absolutely right to raise the issue. I will of course work with all my colleagues across Government to implement the plan and to do even better than we currently are.

Michael Tomlinson (Mid Dorset and North Poole) (Con): Obesity harms the life chances of too many children. Given the Minister's encouragement earlier, will he join me in praising schools such as Lytchett Matravers Primary School, which has already set up a Daily Mile scheme, and encourage others to follow suit?

Steve Brine: Yes.

Energy Policy

4.55 pm

The Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Greg Clark): Mr Speaker, I wish to make a statement about the proposed Swansea Bay tidal lagoon.

Britain's energy policy on electricity generation is based on meeting three needs: ensuring that we can count on secure and dependable supplies of electricity at all times; minimising the cost of supplies to consumers and taxpayers; and meeting our greenhouse gas emission reduction obligations. To those three requirements we have added, through our industrial strategy, a further ambition, which is to secure long-term economic benefits, in terms of jobs and prosperity, from the decisions that we take.

Our policy has been successful. Britain has one of the most secure and reliable electricity supply sectors in the world. Last winter, one of the coldest in recent years, the margin of capacity in our electricity generating system was more than 10%—around twice what it was in 2016-17. We have the strongest record in the G7 for reducing our greenhouse gas emissions. Between 1990 and 2016, the UK reduced its emissions by more than 40%. We have massively increased our deployment of renewable generation: renewable electricity now makes up almost 30% of our generation; our renewable capacity has quadrupled since 2010; and in two years the auction price of offshore wind has fallen from £114 per MWh to £57.50 per MWh. Coal, the most polluting fuel, contributed less to generation in Britain last year than in any year since the industrial revolution. All that has been achieved while the UK has maintained a position in respect of electricity's overall cost to households that is well below the average for major European countries.

Nevertheless, the cost of electricity is significant for households and for businesses, and the policy-related costs have been growing. We have made a clear commitment to bear down on those costs. It is in that context that the Government have assessed whether they should commit consumer or taxpayer funds to the programme of six tidal lagoons proposed by Tidal Lagoon Power Ltd, with the first being the proposed project at Swansea. We believe in renewable energy and we believe in the benefits of innovation. The conclusion of our analysis, which has been shared with the Welsh Government, is that the project and the proposed programme of lagoons do not meet the requirements for value for money, so it would not be appropriate to lead the company to believe that public funds could be justified.

The proposal for the Swansea tidal lagoon would cost £1.3 billion to build. If successful to its maximum ambition, it would provide around 0.15% of the electricity we use each year. The same power generated by the lagoon over 60 years for £1.3 billion would cost around £400 million for offshore wind, even at today's prices, which have fallen rapidly and which we expect to be cheaper still in future. At £1.3 billion, the capital cost per unit of electricity generated each year would be three times that of the Hinkley Point C nuclear power station. The Hendry review found that if a full programme of six lagoons were constructed, the cost would be more than £50 billion, and it would be two and a half times what it would cost Hinkley to generate a similar electricity output. It is estimated that enough offshore wind to provide the same generation as a programme of lagoons would cost at least £31.5 billion less to build.

[Greg Clark]

Taking all the costs together, I have been advised by analysts that by 2050 the proposal that was made, which would generate around 30 TWh of electricity per year, could cost up to £20 billion more to produce, compared with generating that same electricity through a mix of offshore wind and nuclear, once financing, operating and system costs have been taken into account. That could cost the average British household consumer up to an additional £700 between 2031 and 2050, or the equivalent of £15,000 for every household in Wales. However, in recognition of the potential local economic benefits that might result from a lagoon in Swansea, I asked officials to go back to consider what additional benefit could be ascribed to a number of other factors, including a beneficial impact on the local economy. For £1.3 billion, a Swansea lagoon would support, according to the Hendry review, only 28 jobs directly associated with operating and maintaining the lagoon in the long term.

Officials were also asked to make an assessment of the potential for valuable innovation and cost reductions for later lagoons that might come from embarking on a programme of construction. Independent advice concluded that the civil engineering used in Swansea bay offers limited scope for innovation and capital cost reduction—estimated at 5%—in the construction of subsequent facilities.

I asked for an assessment of the export potential of embarking on a programme of implementing the technology, but the Hendry review concluded that it would take

“a leap of faith to believe that the UK would be the main industrial beneficiary”

of any such programme. On energy reliability, the generation of electricity would be variable rather than constant, with a load factor of 19% compared with around 50% for offshore wind and 90% for nuclear.

The inescapable conclusion of an extensive analysis is that, however novel and appealing the proposal that has been made is, even with these factors taken into account, the costs that would be incurred by consumers and taxpayers would be so much higher than alternative sources of low carbon power that it would be irresponsible to enter into a contract with the provider. Securing our energy needs into the future has to be done seriously and when much cheaper alternatives exist no individual project and no particular technology can proceed at any price. That is true for all technologies. The fact that this proposal has not demonstrated that it could be value for money does not mean that its potential is not recognised. My Department is also in receipt of proposals from other promoters of tidal energy schemes that are said to have lower costs than the Swansea proposal, although these are at an earlier stage of development. Any proposals must be able credibly to demonstrate value for money for consumers and public funds.

I am sure that many people in the House and beyond would wish that we were in a position today to say yes to the Swansea proposals. I have appreciated the contribution of Charles Hendry, whose constructive report led to this further analysis being made, and the engagement of the Secretary of State for Wales and Members of the Welsh Assembly, including the First Minister and the Leader of the Welsh Conservatives, Andrew R. T. Davies. All of us have a requirement to be

responsible stewards of taxpayers' and consumers' money and to act at all times in their interests. It is in discharging that responsibility rigorously that I make this statement today, and I commend it to the House.

5.2 pm

Bill Esterson (Sefton Central) (Lab): I thank the Secretary of State for the somewhat late advance sight of his statement—I think we understand why—and give the apologies of my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Test (Dr Whitehead), who would normally respond to this statement, but who is a victim of the Transport Secretary's failure to run the trains on time; a failed policy if ever there was one. I am afraid that this statement is evidence of yet another failed Government policy; it is a missed opportunity for the domestic economy and for our export potential.

The Government really should be ashamed about what we have heard from the Secretary of State today. When he announced the cancellation of the project, my hon. Friends said, “Shame”. They were right to do so as this is indeed shameful. It is another broken promise by the Conservative party—we have seen lots of those recently, too. I remind the House that, in 2015, the Conservative manifesto committed to building the Swansea Bay tidal lagoon. The Government appointed Charles Hendry to produce a report to do just that. It has been one year, five months and 14 days since he published his final report. The report stated:

“The aim now is that we should move to secure the pathfinder project as swiftly as possible.”

During this time, the Minister has received letters signed by more than 100 MPs from all parts of the House in support of the project, along with interventions and questions indicating the strength of feeling in this place. There has been unanimous support from across industry, but the handling of the project by this Government has been atrocious. Not only have the Government taken an inordinate amount of time to come to the House; hon. Members, Tidal Lagoon Power, the Welsh Government, the trade unions and other stakeholders have been left to find out about development through leaks in the press

It emerged in a joint hearing of the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee and Welsh Affairs Committee last month that a BEIS Minister had not spoken to Tidal Lagoon Power for 16 months. Will the Secretary of State set out how we can trust his word that he wants to talk to other marine developers and bring forward the other projects to which he referred in passing, when his Department has not even spoken to Tidal Lagoon Power for more than a year? This is no way for the Government to conduct themselves over an issue that is so important for Wales, our environment and the whole wider UK economy.

Approving the lagoon would have been a positive step, taken by a Government with a clear vision for the future, willing to lead the way in new, innovative technology and strongly supporting British industry. It would have been a step taken by a Government able to provide businesses with certainty in uncertain times, rather than the insulting, undermining and questioning rhetoric that we have heard from the Secretary of State's Cabinet colleagues. We have heard a lot from him and his colleagues about the industrial strategy and supporting new technologies, revitalising our manufacturing sector, encouraging UK-based supply chains and creating jobs

outside London. Well, so much for that industrial strategy. Swansea Bay tidal lagoon could have helped to deliver on each of these objectives, so will the Secretary of State outline which assessment criteria were used to decide against the project, over and above a simple cost calculation?

The project would have required 100,000 tonnes of steel, with a significant proportion expected to be produced nearby at Port Talbot. It would have used first-of-a-kind, precision-engineered, bi-directional turbines, with the vast majority of components built in the UK, establishing new UK-based supply chains. It would have created more than 2,300 jobs in Swansea and paved the way for the creation of a new domestic industry with substantial export potential. The Hendry review was commissioned by the Government. Given that the Secretary of State is ignoring his own review, what alternative analysis did he carry out to support his decision to cancel the project? That this Government, especially in the excessive time that they have taken to make a decision, do not value the wider benefits of the project is disappointing to say the least.

One very good way of offsetting the impact on climate change of expanding airport capacity would be to expand renewable energy production. Is not it remarkably ironic that this statement has been made on the same day as the Heathrow vote? There is a fine judgment to be made on Heathrow tonight. Giving the go-ahead to the Swansea Bay tidal lagoon would have made supporting Heathrow just that little bit easier.

Greg Clark: On the hon. Gentleman's last point, my understanding is that the Welsh Government support the option of a third runway at Heathrow; I am not sure whether that is a co-ordinated position.

The hon. Gentleman asked a number of questions. I understand his disappointment that we have not been able to approve the proposal, but he will know that we all—be it the UK Government or the Welsh Government—have to be responsible stewards of taxpayers' and consumers' money. He asked about the analysis that has been made and the time that has been put into this decision. It was the request of the Welsh Government and the recommendation of Charles Hendry that we consider alternative suggestions as to the economic impact of the proposal. That is what we have done, and I have been willing to extend the analysis and leave no stone unturned to see whether this project can be approved.

The hon. Gentleman knows that our record on renewables is one of the strongest in the world, particularly for offshore wind, in which Wales—as well as every other part of the United Kingdom—is a huge beneficiary. We have quadrupled our deployment of renewables since 2010. We are the world's leader in offshore wind, creating jobs and exports around the world. If we were to use the funds at less value for money—that is, take them from that very successful supply chain and deploy them instead to the programme of a tidal lagoon—the consequence would be job losses in Wales and other parts of the United Kingdom. It is the commitment to continue what has been a successful strategy of achieving jobs all around the country in offshore wind that provides the reason why we need to be rigorous about this.

Listening to the hon. Gentleman, one would think that what ordinary working people and businesses have to pay for their energy is a matter of complete indifference

to him. Is there any limit at all to what he would he would make consumers pay? The Swansea lagoon would cost three times as much—I repeat, three times as much—as having the same electricity generated by offshore wind here in the UK. The whole tidal programme would cost £50 billion when we could have the same amount from wind for nearer to £20 billion. Is it Labour's policy to charge £700 per household more than is needed in the first place? As for economic development in Wales, it would be cheaper to write a cheque for £15,000 to every single household in Wales than to subsidise this particular proposal. I am afraid that his response sums up the approach of spending whatever it takes, no matter how wasteful of consumers' and taxpayers' money that is.

The hon. Gentleman talks about industrial strategy, but the clue is in the word “strategy”. A strategy does not spray consumers' or taxpayers' money on any proposal—it requires a rigorous assessment. We are a leader in offshore wind because we took a decision to focus on a technology for which costs could come down and there was a massive global market in which we could create jobs. What he proposes would reverse that by doling out subsidy to whoever asks loudest, rather than what has been rigorously assessed. That is not strategic.

In summary, Labour would pay £700 per household for less reliable electricity, fewer exports from offshore wind and fewer jobs, including in East Anglia, on Teesside and in Scotland—and, yes, in Wales and Northern Ireland, too. It would saddle taxpayers with a decommissioning cost of over £1 billion. We will always put the interests of taxpayers, and working people who pay bills, first. I would hope that a responsible Opposition would acknowledge the seriousness of the analysis that has been made and recognise that its conclusion is rigorous.

Stephen Crabb (Preseli Pembrokeshire) (Con): Even Conservative Members who have been the strongest supporters of the lagoon project have always known that there was a serious value-for-money question to be answered. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that every single avenue was explored to try to find a financial solution to make this happen, and that today's announcement does not close the door on future investment in tidal and wave power that would give us reliable, clean energy into the 21st century and beyond?

Greg Clark: I can confirm that. Anyone who has concentrated on this proposal and seen the assessment that has been made would conclude that my hon. Friends and I have left no stone unturned in looking at all possibilities that might improve the economic case. However, when the conclusion is that something is so much more expensive than other low-carbon technologies, we have to follow that evidence and protect consumers and taxpayers from paying so much more than they need to pay. My right hon. Friend is absolutely right that we continue to believe in innovation. We have spent £100 million on new energy research and development. We will continue to do that. We have had other proposals that suggest they would be cheaper. I am very happy to continue work with other promoters of schemes to see whether what would be an attractive proposal can be implemented in a way that would be value for money.

Drew Hendry (Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey) (SNP): I thank the Secretary of State for advance sight of his statement.

Eighteen months ago, an independent review commissioned by the UK Government said that moving ahead with the Swansea Bay tidal lagoon would be a “no regrets policy”. Well, plenty of people are regretting this decision today. The Welsh Government were willing to put £200 million into the scheme if it went ahead. It was described as a world-leading opportunity to establish Wales as a centre for expertise and manufacturing, and a long-term source of low-carbon energy. This statement is, yet again, pulling the plug on a Tory promise.

In Scotland, we know how Wales feels. We witnessed the promised £1 billion for carbon capture and storage in Peterhead being pulled for no good reason, stunning both the public and the companies that had bought into the promise, surrendering the technological lead, and costing the taxpayer £100 million. Now it is back—it is flavour of the month—but, of course, grossly underfunded. Here we go again.

The Secretary of State hides behind the scale when making the comparison. He says that he cares about consumers, but this Government are happy to see bill payers paying through the nose for the calamitously bad deal that is Hinkley C. The Government’s disastrous deal with EDF on the strike price will see them pay at least £30 billion over 35 years. At a time when offshore wind strike prices are dropping dramatically, they seem to waste more and more on failing nuclear.

Will the Secretary of State confirm that this and other renewable support is being withdrawn in order to subsidise the likes of Hitachi’s Wylfa nuclear plant? That company has requested loans and guarantees of £12 billion, as per the secret negotiations. Will he admit that this is yet another mistake, and will he have the backbone to categorically rule out any other public bail-outs for failing, costly and desperate nuclear providers?

Greg Clark: The hon. Gentleman represents a country that has prospered from the development of the offshore wind industry. The truth is that if a decision had been taken to subsidise this proposal, that money would have come out of the budget for offshore wind, which would have led to job losses in Scotland and elsewhere around the United Kingdom. He mentions a proposed subsidy. The truth is that if a project that is not viable is subsidised by the taxpayer, it is simply a taxpayer-subsidised unviable project. That is no basis on which a project can be approved.

The hon. Gentleman refers to the nuclear power programme. If he regards the price agreed for the power from Hinkley Point C as too high, that is all the more reason for him to oppose this proposal, because it is so much costlier. He must accept that there is a responsibility for the use of consumers’ and taxpayers’ money that comes with being in office. When a proposal is so out of kilter with what can offer value for money, the necessary decision must be made, and he should respect that.

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con): I accept that, on the Secretary of State’s figures, this would be a very bad investment, but can he tell us about the amortisation period of the investment? Surely a barrage will last a lot longer than, say, a wind farm. Will he explain why his

advisers think that the project would generate so little power on a not very reliable basis, given the reliability of the tides?

Greg Clark: My right hon. Friend is correct to point to the amortisation. As someone who has spent a career in finance, he is aware that in discounting the value of earnings in future generations, the great majority of the value is in the earlier years, and that has been the standard basis of the assessment made. What has not been taken into account is the prospective decommissioning cost of the proposed lagoon, which has been estimated at £1 billion. That has not been included in the analysis, but it would be a further liability for the taxpayer.

Rachel Reeves (Leeds West) (Lab): I have to say that I am slightly surprised by the Secretary of State’s tone. In answer to the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey (Drew Hendry), he said that this project was “so out of kilter” with other ways of producing energy and that the costs are much higher. In that case, can I gently ask why on earth it has taken five years to come to this decision? What lessons has the Secretary of State learned from the decision-making process around the tidal lagoon project? Frankly, a lot of effort has been put into this project by business, the Welsh Government and others, and I think that many people have lost confidence in the Government’s programme for renewables because of this.

Greg Clark: The hon. Lady will know, as Chair of the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee, that the Government’s programme of renewables has resulted in the biggest reduction in the cost of the deployment of renewables that we have seen in this country, and that deployment has increased threefold. The success of that strategy is evident. I was asked by many Members, the Welsh Government and many businesses to make sure that every aspect that could contribute to a value-for-money case had been considered—the impact locally, the prospects for exports and the prospects for innovation—and it was right to do so and to leave no stone unturned. I think that that was the right approach, and when the Select Committee scrutinises the decision, I think it will regard the process as having been exhaustive and rigorous.

David T. C. Davies (Monmouth) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the relentless criticism by environmental groups and Opposition Members of the £92.50 per megawatt-hour strike price for Hinkley—not least in this House a few weeks ago—has made it virtually impossible for any Government ever to agree to pay a higher strike price than £92.50, and that this project was coming in at a significantly higher price, according to the person responsible for it?

Greg Clark: I saw the evidence given to the Committee inquiry chaired by my hon. Friend and the hon. Member for Leeds West (Rachel Reeves). He is right that we made a commitment, in approving Hinkley Point C, that future projects had to come in at a lower price. I think it is the case that evidence to the inquiry cited a strike price on a comparable basis of not £92.50, but £150, which demonstrates the force of my hon. Friend’s point.

Sir Edward Davey (Kingston and Surbiton) (LD): I was Secretary of State for Energy when the tidal lagoon story began, so may I tell the current Secretary of State with responsibility for energy that his statement is wrong, wrong, wrong? The evidence that the price of future tidal lagoons would fall dramatically after the first lagoon at Swansea is overwhelming. That was exactly what happened with other renewable technologies, including offshore wind, as he has admitted. Will he promise the House today that he will publish every scrap of evidence and analysis that he has used to take this decision, and hold a debate in Government time on that analysis and evidence?

Greg Clark: The right hon. Gentleman will see from the analysis, and indeed from the conclusions that Charles Hendry and others have pointed to, that the technology inherent in the construction of the lagoon programme—whether building sea walls or the turbines—is not subject to the same degree of cost reduction as other energy technologies. We will be very open about this and publish whatever is not covered by a non-disclosure agreement with the companies concerned. He is, of course, welcome to scrutinise that.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): Order. The Secretary of State has been very thorough in answering questions but, as the House can see, a great many people wish to ask questions. We have about 20 minutes left for the statement, which will allow everyone to get in if we can have just short questions and short answers.

Richard Graham (Gloucester) (Con): I have to say that this is a sad day for Swansea, for Gloucester—the home of Tidal Lagoon Power plc—and, indeed, for other innovative sources of marine energy more widely. Since the project was entirely financed by entrepreneurs and institutional investors, not by the Government, the only real point of argument was the price at which the Government were prepared to buy the energy through the grid. Will the Secretary of State tell us at what price he would have approved the Swansea project? Will he also confirm that his Department will lay out a programme of how it will develop a real strategy for taking forward tidal and other forms of marine energy?

Greg Clark: I know that my hon. Friend has been a great champion for this technology and that he will be disappointed with the conclusion that has had to be reached. At the point of considering any proposal, we are required to examine the cost of alternatives, and the costs of low-carbon alternatives, including offshore wind and nuclear, were more competitive than those for this programme. It is not possible to specify a particular price, because such an assessment has to be made at the point of a decision. However, I have said very clearly that far from being against tidal technology, I am in favour of it, but a value-for-money case has to be presented. We will continue to be open to proposals that can demonstrate such a case.

Albert Owen (Ynys Môn) (Lab): I am disappointed by today's announcement. It sounds as if the Government have given up on innovation, marine energy and their own industrial strategy. The Secretary of State discussed

wind energy. It would not be at the price it is today if we had not had a decade of subsidies through renewable obligations, which many Government Members opposed. Will he assure me that other marine energy projects such as those in my constituency and across the country will not be jeopardised and crowded out by the price of wind today, and that there is a level playing field for innovation in marine energy?

Greg Clark: The hon. Gentleman would accept that the commitment that I have given to pursue alternative energy sources, including projects in his constituency, has been clearly demonstrated. Of course we are open to innovation—we fund innovation. The assessment by independent experts is that the prospective cost reduction for this technology is not the same as that enjoyed by offshore wind. When it comes to future proposals, of course I will consider them rigorously, and if they can demonstrate value for money they can be contenders.

Glyn Davies (Montgomeryshire) (Con): Like many others on both sides of the House, I am disappointed that the Swansea tidal lagoon and associated lagoons are not economically viable. The Government have a responsibility to protect the interests of consumers who pay electricity bills. What we all want to hear from the Secretary of State is that he is committed to looking at other schemes that might offer the potential to use tidal energy around our coasts and the power of the production of our marine environment in which our islands live.

Greg Clark: I will. I welcome my hon. Friend's remarks. We have a substantial programme of investment in innovation. Indeed, when it comes to the costs, to pay £30 billion more than is required to generate the same amount of electricity crowds out the ability to fund genuine projects that can reduce the price of energy.

Carolyn Harris (Swansea East) (Lab): Swansea Bay tidal lagoon is in my constituency. The Secretary of State will never understand the frustration and anger felt in my city today. It prompts the question of just who is speaking for Wales in the Cabinet, because it is certainly not the Secretary of State for Wales. We have not had electrification; we have not had the tidal lagoon. If he does not do the job properly, it is time to move on, I fear.

Greg Clark: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales has been vigorously engaged in making sure that every aspect of the analysis of this project has been conducted, including the impact on the local economy. The hon. Lady is familiar with the figures and the economics of the project, and because she is aware of the proposal she knows of its distance from being value for money, which causes higher bills for her constituents, including intensive energy users such as the steelworks in south Wales, which is something that any responsible Government have to take into account. I think she knows that this has been done in a rigorous way.

Jeremy Lefroy (Stafford) (Con): The question is not simply about cost, although that is important, but about energy security. Tidal lagoons are one of the best and most secure ways, under British control, of ensuring that we generate power for the future. Will the Secretary of State please have a look at this again?

Greg Clark: Of course we look at energy security, and having a diverse energy supply is important. In so doing we have to look at the contribution that is being made, and it is much more cost-effective to diversify our energy by commissioning sources that, in many cases, are a third cheaper than what is proposed. We can do more of it if we adhere to value for money.

Jonathan Edwards (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr) (PC): This announcement will be met with widespread anger in the communities that I represent, and it is the second broken promise from the 2015 Tory manifesto on top of the cancellation of electrification. Will the Secretary of State outline how detailed the discussions were with the Welsh Government regarding joint equity in the project? If the Welsh Government determined that they wanted to increase their equity share and go it alone, would the British Government stand in their way?

Greg Clark: The commitment given was to enter into discussions to see whether the project could be financed. We have done that rigorously, including with the Welsh Government. I think there have been more than 10 meetings with the Welsh Government this year alone to consider whether this was possible and to make sure we were looking at every possibility. The conclusion we have drawn is that it cannot be justified in terms of value for money. It was right to work with the Welsh Government to look at all the possibilities, but we have to abide by the conclusions of a serious analysis.

Mark Pawsey (Rugby) (Con): The Secretary of State's statement will have been listened to with great concern at GE Power Conversion in Rugby, which would have manufactured the turbines for the tidal lagoon. A great deal of development has been done there within a mostly British supply chain. UK manufacturing missed out on the manufacturing of wind turbines because of a lack of a commitment to the sector in its early years. Does the Secretary of State agree that it is important that we do not miss out on the manufacturing opportunities that can arise from harnessing tidal power?

Greg Clark: My hon. Friend is right that it is important to take a long-term and strategic approach. That is exactly what we did with offshore wind, identifying a technology in which the supply chain could be located in the UK and creating jobs right across the country. That has been a great success. The opposite of that, however, would be to spread very thinly very expensive projects that do not, as the analysis demonstrates, have the potential for exports that offshore wind and others enjoy. That would reduce the economic prospects for firms across the country.

Chris Elmore (Ogmore) (Lab): Part of the role of government is that a Secretary of State will have a vision for delivering and a vision for ideas. The Secretary of State has shown today that he does not have any vision for delivering services and improvements to the economy for the people of south Wales. We have had the scrapping of electrification and we are clearly no further forward with various projects the British Government can fund. Can we have a guarantee from the Secretary of State about when the British Government are going to start investing, so that the people of Wales can have

some faith? All he is proving right now is that, with the Welsh Secretary and the British Government, the Tories really are failing Wales.

Greg Clark: The Swansea city deal, to name one case in point, will be welcomed by the hon. Gentleman. In terms of planning for the future, making commitments that put on bill payers or taxpayers costs that are three times higher than are justified is no strategy for the long term. To saddle businesses and industries with such costs is a strategy for uncompetitiveness.

Antoinette Sandbach (Eddisbury) (Con): I thank the Secretary of State for his very sensible decision. Will he confirm that it would have put an additional 31p on every household's bill in my constituency every year for up to 65 years, leading to £370,000 a year flowing out of my constituency on energy bills to pay for this uneconomic project?

Greg Clark: My hon. Friend is right that £700 per household across the UK cannot be justified, either for consumers in Wales or in any of our constituencies.

Stephen Kinnock (Aberavon) (Lab): The Swansea Bay tidal lagoon would also have been in my constituency. I can tell the Secretary of State that today the people of Aberavon see this as yet another betrayal of the interests of the people of Wales. They also understand that the project would have had tremendous benefits for the steel industry. Will the Secretary of State today please promise to publish the cost-benefit analysis for the steel industry and the massive opportunity cost of not going ahead both for the steel industry and the steel supply chain? Will he publish that information?

Greg Clark: The hon. Gentleman and I engage closely with the steel industry. In fact, the steel content of the proposed lagoon would have been about a third of a month's output of the Port Talbot plant. He knows perfectly well that one of the challenges facing the steel industry in this country is energy prices. I would have thought that he would want to take steps to reduce the burden of energy costs on businesses such as the steel industry.

Bim Afolami (Hitchin and Harpenden) (Con): As a member of the Public Accounts Committee, I can say that value for money is very important to the House and should always be, and I accept the Secretary of State's assessment in this regard. However, will he confirm to and reassure the House that the Government are not giving up on marine energy or renewable energy, and set out further plans in due course?

Greg Clark: I will indeed. We have an energy innovation fund that can bring forward new technologies, but when it comes to the point of mass deployment, they have to be value for money and show that consumers and taxpayers will not see increased bills as a result.

Thangam Debbonaire (Bristol West) (Lab): I am disappointed that the Secretary of State does not seem to understand that the Government are not just responsible for stewardship of taxpayers' money. Their stewardship of the Earth is what counts here, as does their stewardship of investment in our economy and shepherding an

industry from its nascent stages to something commercially viable. This country has so much potential marine energy. Will the Secretary of State please reiterate his commitment, which he should have, to investing in that marine energy today?

Greg Clark: This proposal is not commercially viable and the prospects are that it will not become commercially viable. If technologies are proposed through the test beds and our innovation programme, no one would be more pleased than I to deploy them as part of our energy mix, but we have to take into account the impact on bill payers and taxpayers.

Chris Davies (Brecon and Radnorshire) (Con): I thank my right hon. Friend for his statement. I confirm that there is also great disappointment from Conservative Members that this scheme is not going ahead, but with disappointment there is also realism. The figures that he quoted make it clear that if the scheme went ahead, the burden on our children and grandchildren would be enormous. He has already confirmed that he is still looking into tidal energy. Will he also confirm that if and when it is suitable to proceed with tidal energy, Swansea and the south Wales coast will be looked at first and foremost for future investment?

Greg Clark: Of course. The test is that the deployment of a technology can be done at good value for the taxpayer. That is the challenge for any new technology, and if it can be demonstrated that it meets that challenge I will be very pleased to welcome it.

Nick Thomas-Symonds (Torfaen) (Lab): The Secretary of State was very specific in the figure that he gave for the number of jobs he expected to be created in operation and maintenance of the lagoon—it was 28. Can he be equally specific about the number of jobs that he has been advised would have been created in the UK-wide supply chain during the construction phase?

Greg Clark: The figures are taken from the Hendry report—these are not Government figures; they were laid out there. The number of jobs created during the construction period would have been 2,260, but they would have been for the very limited period of construction. In terms of value for money, of course, the permanent jobs are what needs to be assessed.

Kevin Foster (Torbay) (Con): Will the Secretary of State reassure me that he will continue to make these types of decisions based on clear analysis, rather than political convenience?

Greg Clark: It has to be the case that when we take decisions that have consequences for consumers and businesses that already face, in energy-intensive industries, high energy costs, we have to act responsibly both for households and the future competitiveness of those companies.

Chris Ruane (Vale of Clwyd) (Lab): The proposed lagoon off the north Wales coast would have stretched from Llandudno to Prestatyn in my constituency, protecting a very vulnerable coast. In assessing the viability of a tidal lagoon, what recognition does his Department give to the impact of lagoons in combating coastal flooding?

Greg Clark: Part of the energy assessment that has been made is what would be the best way to secure our energy supplies of the future competitively and so that costs for taxpayers and bill payers are minimised. As I made clear in my statement, I added to that assessment considerations of the local impact and the prospects. I could not have gone further in embracing all the different aspects, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will reflect that that was the right thing to do.

Mr Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con): It is clear from what the Business Secretary said that this was not even a marginal decision that could have gone either way, and that by a country mile the Government have decided that this scheme is simply not financially viable. What I do not understand is why there is such a big gap in the Business Secretary's analysis and that of Tidal Lagoon Power Ltd. What is his assessment of why that gap is so wide?

Greg Clark: With any proposal, it is important to do due diligence and check the basis of the calculations, and in this case, in so doing, as my hon. Friend stated, we found the gap to be so wide that the proposal could not be responsibly backed. As I have said to hon. Members, however, any proposal that is competitive will be welcomed.

Owen Smith (Pontypridd) (Lab): This is another blatantly broken promise to the people of Wales, but I will leave that aside. The Secretary of State has given umpteen speeches talking about the need for this country to invest in new technologies and innovation and lamenting that we have failed to capitalise on great British ideas in the past. Does he not see the huge gap now between that laudable rhetoric and his short-term accountancy decision today?

Greg Clark: Part of the assessment, and part of that which Charles Hendry made in this analysis, was of the technology's export potential, and a great proportion of the global potential is within this country, so it does not have the potential the hon. Gentleman describes. In fact, Charles Hendry concluded that any benefits from the technology would be limited to design and consultancy, rather than substantial industrial benefits.

Anna McMorrin (Cardiff North) (Lab): This Government consistently let Wales down, and on this the Secretary of State is completely and utterly wrong. It is his duty to provide leadership here. The National Audit Office states that the lagoon either matches or outperforms Hinkley across its three value-for-money tests. If he supports the tidal industry, how can he not be prepared to support the project that makes it possible?

Greg Clark: In terms of support for Wales, for every £100 of public funds spent in England, £120 is spent in Wales, and the NAO, which scrutinises all such decisions and proposals, will find that this one was taken in complete conformity with the standards of probity required.

Tonia Antoniazzi (Gower) (Lab) rose—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): And finally, the prize for patience and perseverance goes to Tonia Antoniazzi.

Tonia Antoniazzi: I have been a teacher in Wales for 20 years, and I am devastated by today's news. Pupils throughout Wales have been studying an exciting new future promised to Wales by this Government, and now it is not going to happen. The fig leaf of a city deal will not hide the Government's shortcomings in Swansea. This is a clear dereliction of duty. If they have no aspiration for Wales, what aspiration does the Secretary of State expect for our future generations?

Greg Clark: I am surprised that the hon. Lady would turn her nose up at a £1.3 billion city deal. I would have thought she would welcome it on behalf of her constituents. It does her constituents, young and old, no service to saddle them with energy bills much higher than if we have regard to the price that ordinary people would pay in their bills and which businesses would incur when trading. That is responsible government.

Point of Order

5.43 pm

Richard Graham (Gloucester) (Con): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Charles Hendry published his review of the role of tidal lagoons in December 2016 —[*Interruption.*]

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): Order. I cannot hear the hon. Gentleman's point of order. If hon. Members want to talk about other things, there are other places to go. I call Mr Richard Graham.

Richard Graham: Charles Hendry published the Hendry review of the role of tidal lagoons in December 2016, but today's statement is not an adequate response to a report that included 18 pages of recommendations. In it, Charles Hendry wrote that

"when the wind turbines and solar panels...have long since been decommissioned in a few decades time, the tidal lagoons will still be capable of delivering some of the cheapest, lowest carbon power available."

Given the difference between what he wrote and what the Secretary of State has said today about the finances of tidal lagoons, how would you advise me, Madam Deputy Speaker, to ensure the Government give a proper oral response to the Hendry review?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his point of order. As I am sure he recognises, it is not a point that I can answer from the Chair, but I understand that he wishes to suggest that the review completed by Charles Hendry needs to be debated properly in the House, and I am sure that the Minister and others on the Treasury Bench will have heard what he said. He asked me how he could make his point, and I can tell him that he has made it very well.

BILL PRESENTED

FOOTBALL OFFENCES (AMENDMENT) BILL

Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)

Damian Collins, supported by Julie Elliott, Paul Farrelly, Simon Hart, Julian Knight, Ian C. Lucas, Brendan O'Hara, Rebecca Pow, Jo Stevens and Giles Watling, presented a Bill to amend section 3 of the Football Offences Act 1991.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 26 October, and to be printed (Bill 236).

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Speaker shall put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motion in the name of Secretary Chris Grayling relating to National Policy Statement not later than 10.00pm; and such Questions shall include the Questions on any Amendments selected by the Speaker which may then be moved.—(*Paul Maynard.*)

National Policy Statement: Airports

[*Relevant Documents: Third Report of the Transport Committee, Airports National Policy Statement, HC 548, and the Government response to the Transport Committee Report on the revised draft Airports National Policy Statement, Cm 9624.*]

5.46 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Chris Grayling): I beg to move,

That this House approves the National Policy Statement on New runway capacity and infrastructure at airports in the South East of England, which was laid before this House on 5 June 2018.

This is a very important moment in the history of the House and the history of the country. If the House endorses the proposed national airports policy statement today, it will move on from decades of debate and set what is, to my mind, a clear path to our future as a global nation in the post-Brexit world.

Let me explain to Members what we are doing today. The proposed policy statement does not grant final planning consent; what it does is set the policy against which a promoter of an expanded Heathrow airport can deliver more detailed design and participate in the detailed planning process that can lead to final consent.

I thank the many Members on both sides of the House who have gone on the record to support expansion at Heathrow, and who have made considerable efforts to persuade others of its importance to all nations and regions of the United Kingdom. I know that this debate is divisive for many, but there is also strong support across the House for what I believe is a very important step for our nation, and I am grateful to all those who have been involved in supporting the way forward that I believe is right for our country.

Michael Fabricant (Lichfield) (Con): My right hon. Friend has mentioned divisiveness. I personally think that this development is well overdue, and, although I know that it is not on the cards, I would support a fourth and a fifth runway, at Heathrow and at Gatwick. Does my right hon. Friend accept, however, that—just as with HS2—when constituency matters come into the equation, it is understandable that some people feel that they are unable to vote for this Government motion, and might find themselves called away?

Chris Grayling: I would never criticise any Member for representing the views of his or her constituents. After all, whatever position we may hold in the House, in government or in opposition, we are all ultimately constituency MPs, and it is absolutely right for us to champion the issues that affect our constituents.

I also want to thank people outside the House. It is unusual for me to find myself campaigning on the same side of the argument as Len McCluskey of Unite the Union, but the trade union movement has been a strong supporter of this, as have business groups in all corners of the United Kingdom.

Graham Stringer (Blackley and Broughton) (Lab): I will join the Secretary of State in the Lobby tonight because I think that the third runway is a piece of infrastructure of national importance that will benefit the whole nation. However, what it must not do is

increase the disparity of wealth and income between the regions of this country and London and the south-east. Can the Secretary of State tell us what extra funds he will invest in the regional airports to ensure that they can make their contribution? It cannot be right, at a time when this investment will lead to a great deal of public expenditure in the south-east, that Manchester airport is expected to pay for the station for HS2.

Chris Grayling: I absolutely take on board the hon. Gentleman's point. Of course Manchester airport is a great success story, and a great international success story. I have been working with the airport management to help it expand its expertise internationally and will continue to do that.

What I would say to reassure the hon. Gentleman is that, as he will be aware, the Infrastructure and Projects Authority has indicated that the region of the country that will secure the highest proportion of Government spending on transport in the next few years is the north-west. That is right and proper—a sign of our continuing commitment to deliver improvements in the north of this country that are long, long overdue.

Rehman Chishti (Gillingham and Rainham) (Con): The Secretary of State is absolutely right: Members of Parliament have a duty to stand up for their constituents, and I will do just that. Can he confirm that the expansion of Heathrow puts an end to the daft estuary airport idea, and that the long-term provision of air capacity needs can be met at Gatwick?

Chris Grayling: The Airports Commission looked very carefully at the estuary airport concept, concluded that it was not viable and made this recommendation. I see no way how, off the back of an expanded Heathrow, an estuary airport would become a viable option, so I reassure my hon. Friend on that point.

Ian Paisley (North Antrim) (DUP): In terms of the benefits for the regions, does the Secretary of State accept that the expansion opens up the opportunity for over 500 jobs for Northern Ireland, £5 billion of economic growth, a £10 million airline route development programme, and a logistics hub that, if based in Northern Ireland, will increase productivity and jobs and make Northern Ireland a key part of this development programme? Does he support that hub being in Northern Ireland?

Chris Grayling: This project, including the development hub concept that Heathrow has been promoting, will make a contribution to the economy of all parts of the United Kingdom. I know the hon. Gentleman has a keen eye on making sure that the hub goes to Ballymena; I cannot make any promises to the airport on the plan, but I know the hon. Gentleman will carry on making that argument very robustly.

Mark Pritchard (The Wrekin) (Con): Whether it is pre or post Brexit, does the Secretary of State accept that, to be an open, liberal, market economy, we need an airport that can compete against the likes of Paris, Schiphol, Istanbul, Dubai and Doha? On the issue of the regions, does he accept that Birmingham airport also has a part to play over the skies of the UK?

Chris Grayling *rose*—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): Order. Before the Secretary of State answers the two questions in that intervention, may I say that interventions should be short and should make one point? Otherwise, it is not fair to Members at the end of the incredibly long list of speakers I have here. Those making interventions now at great length are taking time away from the Members who will be trying to speak, having sat here until after 9 o'clock tonight.

Also, there are lots of conversations going on around the Chamber; perhaps Members are negotiating which way they are going to vote this evening. If they are, will they do so either more quietly or somewhere else? The rest of the House wishes to hear the Secretary of State.

Chris Grayling: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I will respond to the last intervention, then take a couple more interventions and then make some progress: as you rightly say, lots of Members want to contribute.

I say in response to my hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin (Mark Pritchard) that this is absolutely crucial to the UK as a whole. He is right that Birmingham airport is probably the most directly affected, although of course HS2's arriving at Birmingham airport will create fantastic connections to that great airport from around the country.

Our forecasts show all regional airports growing, which is an indication that we need to provide the capacity at Heathrow. We can do so without damaging the prosperity of the regions. Indeed, it will enhance the prosperity of the regions, as their airports grow and their connections improve.

Mr Andrew Mitchell (Sutton Coldfield) (Con): My right hon. Friend should be commended for finally, at long last, bringing forward this vital measure of national infrastructure. Will he confirm that although, according to Sir Howard Davies, London and the south-east will benefit to the tune of £52 billion economically, the north, Birmingham and the rest of the country will benefit to the tune of nearly £80 billion?

Chris Grayling: My right hon. Friend is right, and it is interesting how much support there has been from around the whole United Kingdom: not a single regional airport has opposed the expansion of Heathrow, and I have talked to business groups up and down this country, all of whom support the expansion of Heathrow because they believe it will make a huge difference.

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con): Although airport expansion is crucial to our economic success, does my right hon. Friend accept that from 2014 unfortunate changes to the pattern of aviation movements from Heathrow, made without consultation, have created a much worse noise situation over my constituency and adjacent constituencies? Will he ensure that a proper noise reduction programme is in place from now on? We do not like the existing level of noise, let alone an expanded one.

Chris Grayling: I absolutely understand my right hon. Friend's concerns and will make two points to him. First, we intend to move ahead quickly with setting up the independent noise monitoring body, which is needed to make sure the rules are kept to. In addition, I believe

the modernisation of air space, and proper enforcement of the way air space operates, will mean we can use it in a smarter way, give communities more relief and avoid the kind of change that affected my right hon. Friend's constituency. I give him the assurance that I will work with him, and make sure that NATS and others work with him, to ensure that the issue he is concerned about is addressed in the future.

Several hon. Members rose—

Chris Grayling: I will make a little more progress, and then take some further interventions.

The need for an additional runway in the south-east is greater than ever before because—this is the reason why we have to do this—all five of London's main airports will be full by the mid-2030s, and Heathrow is full today. We are seeing business leave the UK and go to airports like Frankfurt, Amsterdam and Paris, which have made additional capacity provision. If we sit here with our "Plane Finder" app on, we can watch planes flying overhead from the United Kingdom so that UK business passengers can go to Schiphol and then fly around the world. We are losing those connections to other countries, and we are losing the investment that goes around those connections. That is an important part of why this expansion is necessary.

I also need to be clear that this is not at the expense of growth at our other airports. It is simply not the case that other airports will lose business as a result of the expansion. All of our forecasts show every airport around the UK continuing to grow and expand. The UK's Regional and Business Airports Group, which represents 40 airports, wrote to hon. Members saying:

"Heathrow expansion would mean more UK airports have vital access to a truly unrivalled network of routes...to destinations around the world."

With expansion at Heathrow, non-London airports will continue to experience that strong growth—80% by 2050—and, importantly, they will have the capacity to accommodate that growth.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I thank the Secretary of State for his statement. This is clearly more than just about the constituencies around Heathrow and London; it is about connectivity for all the regions, as he has outlined. It has been said that Belfast City, Belfast International and Londonderry airports will gain by some 15% in new domestic routes. Can the Minister confirm that the increase will be of 15%?

Chris Grayling: My expectation is that we will see substantial growth. I would not put an exact percentage on it, but I have said that I will use the public service obligation mechanisms to set aside 15% of the additional capacity at Heathrow for links around the United Kingdom. We will use the PSO mechanisms to ensure that airports such as those in Northern Ireland, which are already thoroughly successful, benefit from this connection, and we will do the same in Scotland, the south-west and at other airports in the north and potentially north Wales, where this can make a difference.

Ruth Cadbury (Brentford and Isleworth) (Lab): How many airports per region will be protected by that "up to 15%" promise in the document? I have been led to understand that the Department will only protect one per region.

Chris Grayling: That is simply not the case. Heathrow itself has set out a long list of airports that it expects to benefit and where it will make provision for those links to happen. I believe that setting aside that 15% will result in links being provided to airports all around the United Kingdom. We will use the PSO mechanism to make sure that the expansion delivers improved links to all around the United Kingdom.

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (The Cotswolds) (Con): This proposal for a third runway at Heathrow was first published in 2002, whereas Hong Kong published theirs in 2011 and it will be built within five years. Does my right hon. Friend agree that if we are to remain internationally competitive, we should get on and build the runway?

Chris Grayling: Absolutely; I completely agree with my hon. Friend. We have delayed on this for much too long, and it is time we got on with the job.

Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): Aviation already has a uniquely generous allocation for climate emissions, which basically means that passenger numbers can grow by up to 60% by 2050, but according to the Secretary of State's own Department, passenger numbers are expected to grow by 93% by 2050 even before expansion at Heathrow, so when is he going to start looking at demand-side regulation—perhaps including a frequent flyer levy—rather than simply carrying on growing more and more supply? Or is he content to follow the advice of the hon. Member for Lichfield (Michael Fabricant) and basically cover the whole country in concrete?

Michael Fabricant: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I would have expected better from the hon. Lady. She claims that I have said that I want to cover the whole of the country in concrete. Not only is that deliberately untrue but I think she should withdraw that falsehood.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): The hon. Lady has made her point, and the hon. Lady—I mean the hon. Gentleman—[*Laughter.*] I will start again. The hon. Lady has made her point. The hon. Gentleman has made his point, which is not a point of order for me, but the matter is dealt with, I think.

Chris Grayling: Let me touch on the issue of climate change, which I was planning to come to in a moment. We are confident that we can deliver the expansion at Heathrow within our obligations under the Climate Change Act 2008. Any increase in emissions that would have a material impact on our ability to meet our obligations would lead to a refusal. I can tell the hon. Lady that the independent Committee on Climate Change wrote to me two weeks ago setting out its views on the NPS. It works to a target that aviation emissions in 2050 should be no higher than they were in 2005. With more efficient aircraft and engines, improved ground operations and the use of biofuels, the CCC's analysis estimates that the UK can accommodate that increase in air travel by 2050 while meeting our climate change obligations. We believe that an expanded Heathrow airport and a new runway are consistent with this target.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Chris Grayling: I want to make some more progress, then I will give way a couple more times.

Let me touch on the benefits to the wider economy and the connections to Heathrow airport on the ground. Surface access is one of the questions that is regularly raised. People ask why this location is best and what the benefits will be for the United Kingdom. Heathrow is already Britain's best-connected airport by road and rail, and this will be further strengthened by improvements to the Piccadilly line, by new links to Heathrow through Crossrail and connections to HS2 via an interchange at Old Oak Common, and beyond that by the development of western and southern rail access to Heathrow.

A point that people often miss about Heathrow airport is that it is also crucial to the economy because it is our biggest freight port by value. It carries more freight by value than all other UK airports combined, nearly all of it transported in the belly-hold of passenger aircraft. This expansion will bring a real trade boost to the United Kingdom, providing a greater choice and frequency of vital long-haul flights to international markets for passengers and goods than could be achieved by any of the other options that were available to us. These benefits will be felt all around the United Kingdom.

Michael Tomlinson (Mid Dorset and North Poole) (Con): My right hon. Friend knows about the case of my constituent, John Coles, a British Airways engineer who sadly passed away in an accident at Heathrow. I support a third runway, but the Secretary of State has not yet mentioned health and safety. Will he ensure that the health and safety of the 75,000 employees and 78 million passengers will be front and centre in his mind?

Chris Grayling: Absolutely. What happened to my hon. Friend's constituent was tragic. I know that it is an accident that all at Heathrow bitterly regret, and they have worked to learn lessons from it. Of course, at a major facility such as Heathrow—and, indeed, any other airport—safety has to be our priority. Aviation is one of the safest—if not the safest—modes of transport around, but that should not in any way allow for slippage on health and safety.

Mary Robinson (Cheadle) (Con): Manchester airport employs thousands of people in my constituency, and it has 28 million passengers a year, with a capacity of 55 million. Obviously, it is doing a lot more than hub; it has global connections as well. Given the investment in northern powerhouse rail and in the north-western and northern economy, can my right hon. Friend assure me and my constituents that we will have even more benefits from this new proposal?

Chris Grayling: All the expectations we have are that Manchester airport will continue to grow strongly. There has been a £1 billion investment, and I was there recently to see the start of the development of the new terminal building. Manchester airport is a fantastic success story. It is a real asset to the economy and to the country as a whole. Manchester will also gain through the additional connectivity to new and emerging markets that we get through a hub airport. This is a good news story for Manchester, and it is also part of the ongoing success story of the north.

Catherine West (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab): What assessment has the Secretary of State's Department made of the impact of this proposal on the respiratory health of London children?

Chris Grayling: We have been very clear about two things. First, this runway cannot open if it does not meet air quality standards. Secondly, the air quality issue in west London is much bigger than the airport itself. This is the kind of challenge that we see in any busy metropolitan area. That is why we published our air quality strategy last summer, and it is why we need to get on with the job of making our car fleets much greener through lowering emissions. We are pushing ahead with low emission vehicles as fast as we can in this country.

Mr Dominic Grieve (Beaconsfield) (Con): My right hon. Friend will be aware that Heathrow is a vital economic hub, but because of that, the traffic congestion that surrounds it is a really serious problem, particularly in parts of my constituency, where the emissions levels are high and the roads are almost impassable. Can he give me an assurance that, in looking at the development of a third runway, attention will be given to improving the infrastructure so that these areas benefit?

Chris Grayling: That has to happen. This is not just about infrastructure. My Department has already been in discussions with South Bucks Council about some of the issues that my right hon. and learned Friend's area will face and about how they can be mitigated. One of the options is to improve the environment around the Colne Valley, and I am keen for my officials to work with him and the local authority on that. The provision of a community fund from Heathrow as a result of this will make it easier to fund projects such as those.

Justine Greening (Putney) (Con): My right hon. Friend has said that Manchester airport will gain from this proposal, but the reality is that the modelling that his own Department and the Transport Select Committee have done shows that Manchester airport will have 11% or 12% fewer international flights by 2030 as a result of the Heathrow expansion. I spoke to the chief executive of Manchester airport today, and he explained to me that its catchment area for passengers is very different, so it is simply wrong to say to the House that Manchester will somehow benefit from this proposal.

Chris Grayling: I refer my right hon. Friend to the tables that we have published, which show that Manchester will grow international routes over the 2030s and 2040s, as will Heathrow. This is an important part of delivering growth around the United Kingdom. The reason for a hub airport is that, if there is a new destination such as an emerging city in China or a new, growing economy in Africa or Latin America, there is often simply not enough of a market from an individual location to support that new route. A hub brings together passengers from around the United Kingdom to make that route viable.

Lucy Powell (Manchester Central) (Lab/Co-op): I am pre-empting some of the remarks that I will make in my speech later, but as a Manchester MP, I thought I should speak for Manchester airport on that point. Manchester airport refutes the figures in the forecasts,

because it believes that it will exceed those passenger numbers even before the Heathrow expansion is on stream. The hub argument is not the right argument to make for Manchester, because most of its connectivity involves direct flights. There are other reasons that Greater Manchester MPs have come together to support this proposal, but that particular argument is not the one to make.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Lindsay Hoyle): Order. I am not going to stop interventions being made, but they must be short if we are to get through all the speakers.

Chris Grayling: We want to ensure that passengers who are flying to a hub airport from points in the UK can do so through a UK airport and not, for example, through a middle eastern hub. Manchester airport is a great success story and, on behalf of this country, I am hugely proud of how much it has achieved. I have been trying to work with the management of Manchester airport to help it to win business internationally, because I think it has a great model that it could take to other countries. I think that this will be a win-win. It will be a win-win for the north of England, for Manchester, for Liverpool, for Leeds, for Newcastle, for Edinburgh, for Glasgow, for Aberdeen, for Dundee, for Belfast and for Newquay.

Several hon. Members rose—

Chris Grayling: I will give way three more times, then I really must make some progress.

Stephen Hammond (Wimbledon) (Con): I listened carefully to my right hon. Friend's remarks about climate change, which will clearly require an upgrade to surface transport. Will he confirm whether the statement lays out the polluter pays principle and that the developer will be expected to pay a contribution to the surface transport upgrades?

Chris Grayling: Absolutely. Improvements to nearby roads and paying for parts of the rail projects that are due to happen are built into the plans. It is absolutely essential that that is the case. Heathrow airport will make a substantial contribution to that.

Several hon. Members rose—

Chris Grayling: I will give way to two more Members who have a particular interest in the issue.

Andy Slaughter (Hammersmith) (Lab): The last time this House took a decision on this matter, in January 2009, the Secretary of State voted against a third runway. Since then the case for Heathrow has got worse on every indicator, whether it is the economic case, the cost to the public purse, the environmental case or the effect on the regions. Why has he changed his mind in the face of all that evidence?

Chris Grayling: We commissioned an independent review that asked where we should site new capacity in the south-east of England. The Airports Commission came back with a very clear view. We have studied that view and talked to all those who are promoting individual schemes, and as a Government we believe that this is the

right thing to do. We stood on this in our election manifesto last year. I believe it is the right thing to do for Britain.

Zac Goldsmith (Richmond Park) (Con): The Secretary of State said earlier that not a single regional airport has opposed this scheme, but will he not acknowledge that Manchester, Edinburgh, Birmingham and the East Midlands have all expressed opposition to it, not because they do not believe that they will see growth, but because they believe that whatever growth they do see will be in spite of Heathrow expansion and that it will be less?

Chris Grayling: The key point is that they will see growth. The opportunities are there right across the United Kingdom. As I said a moment ago, the body that represents regional airports has been very robust indeed in its support. I genuinely believe that this project brings benefits right across the United Kingdom, including at least 100 additional flights a week for Scotland, and potential new routes for Northern Ireland, unlocking the benefits of tourism and advanced manufacturing. We believe that this will deliver, across the United Kingdom, the kinds of connections we need for the future.

Let me touch briefly on a couple of other issues that have been raised. First, I have been very clear that this airport NPS says that expansion can happen only if the delivery is compliant with our legal obligations on air quality. I am very confident that the measures and requirements set out in the NPS provide a very strong basis for meeting those obligations, including a substantial increase in public transport mode share, and it could also include an emissions-based access charge to Heathrow airport and the use of zero or low-emission vehicles. Heathrow is already consulting on the potential of a clean air zone.

Crucially, communities will be supported by a package of compensation worth up to £2.6 billion. That is absolutely vital. It is not possible to deliver a project such as this without some consequences for people who live in the area—I am well aware of that. Our job is to make it as easy as possible for those people in what is inevitably going to be a very difficult set of circumstances. There is, therefore, a world-leading package of compensation, ensuring that homeowners who lose their homes or who live closest to an expanded airport will be paid 125% of the full market value of their property. It includes a comprehensive noise insulation programme for homes and schools, and a community compensation fund of up to £50 million a year, which can help in places such as the Colne Valley. The Government will also consider how local authorities can benefit from a retention scheme for the additional business rates paid by an expanded Heathrow.

To mitigate the noise impacts of expansion, the proposed NPS makes it clear that the Government intend to implement a six-and-a-half-hour ban on scheduled night flights, which could mean that some communities will receive up to eight hours of noise relief at night. That is a really important part of the proposal. It may be uncomfortable and difficult for airlines, but it is the right thing for local communities.

It is important to note that those measures will not be optional; they will be legally binding. Let me explain how we will ensure that that happens. We are governed by the Planning Act 2008, a good piece of legislation

passed by the Labour party. Following a period of statutory consultation by a promoter, any subsequent application for a development consent order will be allocated to the Planning Inspectorate. At the end of the examination process, the inspectorate will report to the Secretary of State and the mitigation measures needed to comply with the NPS will be imposed on a successful applicant as requirements in the development consent order. The Act grants the relevant planning authority significant powers to investigate a breach of the requirements and ultimately to apply for an injunction or prosecute for failure to remedy a breach. In the Crown court the fine is unlimited and, in determining the level of the fine, recent judicial trends have tended to look to the benefit gained from the offence.

I can also confirm that expansion can and will be privately financed, at no cost to the taxpayer. It has to be delivered in the interest of the consumer, which is why in 2016 I set out my ambition to keep airport charges as close as possible to current levels, and why I have commissioned the Civil Aviation Authority to work with the airport to keep landing charges close to current levels. So far, that process has identified cost savings of £2.5 billion.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Chris Grayling: Before I conclude, I will take a couple more interventions, but only from Members who have not already intervened, for obvious reasons.

Mary Creagh (Wakefield) (Lab): May I take the Secretary of State back to the issue of climate change, which he glossed over? His policy statement says that passenger numbers can grow by 80% by 2050 and we can still meet our carbon budgets, but the Committee on Climate Change says that they must not grow by more than 60% by 2050. He has outlined a set of measures in his sustainability appraisal, but is he not just adopting the Micawber strategy of hoping that something is going to turn up on climate change?

Chris Grayling: The key thing that is happening right now on climate change and aviation emissions is a transformation of aviation technology. As I said earlier, the new generation of aircraft are already much more fuel efficient. We expect the introduction of biofuels and further technological changes. We have been not only working very carefully with the Airports Commission, but listening very carefully to the Committee on Climate Change. This House will form a view today, but we believe absolutely that we can deliver this expansion within our obligations.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Chris Grayling: I will give way one final time and then conclude.

Helen Whately (Faversham and Mid Kent) (Con): In the past, Heathrow has scored poorly on accessibility for people with disabilities. Will my right hon. Friend make sure that, as part of this expansion, Heathrow improves its accessibility for people with disabilities, particularly people with wheelchairs?

Chris Grayling: That is a really important point. It is not something that can and should wait until 2026. There have been one or two unfortunate incidents recently

[Chris Grayling]

in the aviation sector, which should be as disability friendly as any other mode of transport. All airports and airlines have a duty to do that.

I am going to conclude because there is a long list of Members who want to speak. My message to the House is very simple. I believe that this project is in the strategic interests of our nation and that it will unlock prosperity in all the regions of this country. I think it will set us fair for the post-Brexit world. I believe this is essential for all our constituents, with the jobs it will create and the connections it will bring. We have to deliver it in a way that ultimately stretches every sinew to do the best we possibly can for the communities affected. My commitment to them is that we will do that. We will ensure tight rules around the permissions that are granted, and we will make sure that the commitments made by the airport and by this Government in the run-up to today's vote are kept, enshrined in law and delivered for the future.

Ultimately, this is a project this country needs. It has been delayed for much too long. It falls to this House of Commons to take a decision today and I urge it to do so.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Lindsay Hoyle): Order. Before I call Andy McDonald, I warn Members that we will start with an eight-minute limit but it will soon drop to five minutes.

6.18 pm

Andy McDonald (Middlesbrough) (Lab): Airport expansion in the south-east of England has been a deeply contentious and divisive issue for 50 years. If the motion is agreed to, it will generate many winners, not least the shareholders of Heathrow Airport Ltd, but it risks making losers of many, including the communities in which thousands of people will lose hundreds of homes. I regret to say that the Government have not been direct and clear with those communities and, as I will point out, the Government are demanding that they make sacrifices based on flawed information. Their potential loss should not be ignored or devalued.

I respect voices in industry and the significant voices in the trade union movement who have concluded that the best interests of the country are served by proceeding. Having faithfully and carefully assessed Labour's four tests against the revised national policy statement, I have to respectfully disagree.

Mike Gapes (Ilford South) (Lab/Co-op): My hon. Friend mentions the trade unions. Will he confirm that the Trades Union Congress and Unite the union—they have written to all Labour MPs—support this project? Will he also confirm that Michael Dugher, who, as shadow Secretary of State for Transport, wrote the four tests has come out in support of going ahead with Heathrow expansion today?

Andy McDonald: I respect the point of view expressed by my hon. Friend, who has been entirely consistent in his support for this project for many years. I acknowledge his point about union support, but there are unions that support Heathrow expansion and those that do not.

My predecessor was responsible for writing the tests, and it is my job to implement them—my predecessor has a new career.

I remind the House that the UK's aviation and aerospace industries are world leaders. They bring services to hundreds of millions of passengers, generate tens of billions of pounds in economic benefits and support nearly 1 million jobs. Labour wants successful and growing aviation and aerospace industries across the UK. The industries and their workforces deserve a sustainable and strategic plan for the future, and they currently have neither.

Mr Speaker,

"I hope that the Secretary of State recognises that as a result of today's announcement, nobody will take this Government seriously on the environment again."—[*Official Report*, 15 January 2009; Vol. 486, c. 366.]

Those are not my words, but the words of the current Prime Minister during a 2009 debate in which she opposed the expansion of Heathrow. Nearly 10 years on, I entirely agree with her. Given how she and her Transport Secretary have approached this issue, nobody should take this Government seriously on the environment.

Clive Lewis (Norwich South) (Lab): Does my hon. Friend agree that, given the glaring absence of any genuine carbon mitigation policy framework, tonight's votes will break down into two camps of those who believe we can negotiate with climate physics, and those who do not?

Andy McDonald: My hon. Friend makes a good point, which I hope shortly to be able to address in some detail.

Mr Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): I must confess that I am a waverer on Heathrow expansion. I do not like the air quality dangers we face or the Government's target to do something about air quality by 2040, by which time 1 million people will have died. People in the north of England, in Yorkshire and in Huddersfield want to know what investment they will get. This is yet another massive investment in London and the south-east.

Andy McDonald: My hon. Friend raises two significant points about air quality and investment across the United Kingdom. I hope to address them in great detail as I proceed with my speech.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Andy McDonald: I will make some progress, because I am aware that many Members want to speak.

This has not been a great year so far for the British transport system, with meltdown on the railways and growing frustration across the transport industry about the Government's "It will be all right on the night" approach to Brexit. Last week's news from Airbus struck like a thunderbolt, so the proposal to undertake a large-scale infrastructure project in the UK should be a good news story. The expansion of our hub airport should be very good news indeed—except it is not.

The Government have not done the work to support the development of this project. Their case is riddled with gaps and is fundamentally flawed. Yet again, this Secretary of State has made a complete shambles of a vital national project. Yet again, he is not putting the

relevant facts before Parliament. Today's vote has been scheduled just days before the Government's own advisory body, the Committee on Climate Change, is due to publish a report that is expected to warn that increasing aviation emissions will destroy Britain's greenhouse gas targets. It appears that the vote on the national policy statement has been planned for today so that hon. and right hon. Members are left in the dark about how much the Secretary of State's plan will obliterate the UK's climate change commitments. That is not only reckless, but shows contempt for Parliament and for the environment.

John Spellar (Warley) (Lab): Is not my hon. Friend slightly missing the point? Aviation—across the world and into Europe—will continue and grow, so the real question is whether it will be going into Schiphol, Frankfurt or Charles de Gaulle airports, or whether we will create investment, protect the well-paid, unionised jobs at Heathrow, and create opportunities for the youngsters of the future.

Andy McDonald: I thank my right hon. Friend for his intervention but, of course, we must always ensure that any growth is delivered sustainably—that has to be the point.

Hon. Members will not have the opportunity to see the hugely important Committee on Climate Change report before they vote. Global warming is the single most important issue facing the world, yet Members of this House are being asked to vote today without full knowledge and without the full set of facts.

That is outrageous behaviour from the Government, and from the Secretary of State in particular. The Justice Committee said last week that his multi-billion pound reforms to the probation service in 2014 will never work. In his two years as Secretary of State for Transport, he has laid waste to the railways, slashing and burning and leaving a trail of scorched earth. Rail electrification cuts, franchising meltdown and timetabling chaos have caused misery to millions. His mismanaging of airport expansion, as he has mismanaged other areas of transport, will present much bigger risks, with immensely more serious consequences.

The Transport Secretary has consistently demonstrated poor judgment and a reliance on incomplete, unreliable and non-existent evidence, yet he stands here today and expects the House to take his word for it—to take a leap of faith with him. Labour has been clear that we will support airport expansion only if the very specific provisions of our four tests are met. We are not against expansion; we are against this option for expansion, as presented.

The north-west runway is too risky and it may be illegal. There are simply too many holes in the case. There are too many hostages to fortune for the taxpayer and for any future Government.

Sir Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire Dales) (Con): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Andy McDonald: I will give way, and I will then make progress.

Sir Patrick McLoughlin: I am grateful to the shadow Secretary of State. He says that climate and the expectation of meeting our climate responsibilities are vital, but does

he accept that Professor Dame Julia King, who is a member of the Committee on Climate Change, sat on the Davies commission and fully endorsed its report?

Andy McDonald: The critical word is that it “could.” That is the important point—not that it will, but that it is quite possible that it could. There is an awful lot of work to get from one place to the other.

Grahame Morris (Easington) (Lab): My hon. Friend is setting out a powerful case regarding the four tests. The Secretary of State said that one of the key selling points is connectivity with our regional airports, but that will be only up to 15% of the new capacity. He has already indicated there will be 100 extra flights a day from Scotland, and as that 15% of new capacity is for all the regional airports and the Crown dependencies, it does not sound like a very good deal to me.

Andy McDonald: There are grave misgivings on the whole issue of regional connectivity, which I will address, but first I will deal with the tests.

Can the airport actually be built? It is not clear that it can. Heathrow's borrowing costs depend on whether it can increase landing charges at what is already the most expensive airport in the world. The Government have provided no guarantees that landing charges will be held flat. Astonishingly, there are no details or costings on the upgrades to the M25 and the wider transport system in London and around the airport that are required for expansion. That uncertainty risks yet more transport infrastructure investment being sucked into the south-east of England at the expense of the rest of the country. It is simply staggering that this information has not been provided.

The cost-recovery clause that the Government signed with Heathrow, as highlighted by the right hon. Member for Putney (Justine Greening), is an enormous liability for future Governments and represents a significant risk to taxpayers. For those reasons, Labour has concluded that the third runway is not in fact deliverable.

Ensuring the health and safety of our country for our children and grandchildren should be the most important priority for each and every Member of this House. Some 40,000 people die prematurely each year because of poor air quality. Despite the superficial public relations initiatives from the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, this Government have dithered and delayed on dealing with air quality and carbon emissions.

Gareth Snell (Stoke-on-Trent Central) (Lab/Co-op): I am listening carefully to what my hon. Friend is saying. He makes a good case for why he will not be able to support Heathrow, but what would his alternative be, given that growth in the sector will happen whether we have Heathrow or not? We will simply be handing business to other airports.

Andy McDonald: We should consider which airports they may be, because—

Michael Fabricant: Frankfurt, Amsterdam—

Andy McDonald: The hon. Gentleman is listing names from overseas, but how about others—Birmingham, Newcastle, Manchester?

[*Andy McDonald*]

On test 2, we are being asked today to support a significant expansion in UK aviation capacity without a plan from the Government for tackling aviation carbon emissions. The Secretary of State did not even mention climate change in his statement to the House on 5 June.

Kwasi Kwarteng (Spelthorne) (Con) *rose*—

Andy McDonald: I am going to plough on, if the hon. Gentleman does not mind. Plenty of people want to speak. I know he has just walked into the Chamber, but I want to crack on.

The Government have still not set out aviation's place in the overall strategy for UK emissions reduction, despite their having a legal requirement to do so. According to the Department for Transport's own projections, this plan for Heathrow expansion will cause the Government to miss their carbon emission limits. The Government argue that they can reduce emissions through technology, but their only proposal is a hypothetical case study by a consultant that contains a disclaimer professing that there is

“significant uncertainty around the results of the study and the conclusions that are drawn”.

That is not a credible position.

Mary Creagh: The economic case for Heathrow is unarguable, but the environmental case is unconscionable. The Department's analysis—this is from the study my hon. Friend talks about—refers to two ways to reduce carbon emissions from flights: one is single-engine taxiing; the other is ensuring that 12% of fuels in aeroplanes are renewable. Neither of those is currently in operation in Heathrow or any other airport in the world.

Andy McDonald: My hon. Friend makes a very powerful point because this whole process is predicated on banking technological achievements that do not currently exist. We must be more thoughtful about this.

The Committee on Climate Change's last progress report saw the UK failing to stay on track to meet its 2030 carbon targets. The CCC publishes its latest report on Thursday, and it reportedly will detail just how badly the Government are performing. The third runway will increase the number of flights by 50%, as per the Airports Commission report—table 12.1; page 238—yet any increase in aviation emissions will require other sectors to reduce their emissions beyond 85%. That is astonishingly imbalanced. The Department's own projections show that a new runway at Heathrow will directly lead to a breach of at least 3.3 million tonnes of the 37.5 million tonnes carbon dioxide limit for 2050 set by the CCC without new policies to mitigate emissions.

Chris Grayling: It might be helpful if the House were to understand whether the hon. Gentleman's position is that there should be no expansion of aviation at all.

Andy McDonald: I thought the right hon. Gentleman was going to provide some clarity from the Dispatch Box about the breach of the CO₂ limits that I have just described, but instead he asks that question. In fact, we know that we are talking about considerably more than that. It is utterly absurd for the Government to ask the House to vote on expanding Heathrow without a plan for reducing aviation carbon emissions. Under the

revised NPS, there is a very real risk that aviation's carbon emissions will be higher in 2050. Furthermore, the Department for Transport is not due to publish a new aviation strategy until 2019.

Andy Slaughter: My hon. Friend is right that the environmental case against Heathrow expansion has always been unarguable; what has changed is that the economic case is also now very strongly against it. The net present value is plus or minus £2 billion to £3 billion over time. The case for Gatwick, which would be much easier to build and would involve far less grief, is much easier than that, so whether on economic or environmental grounds, Heathrow is a non-starter.

Andy McDonald: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that intervention. He makes a powerful point, which many commentators have identified, about the various economic arguments.

Kwasi Kwarteng *rose*—

Andy McDonald: I will not take any further interventions; it was well timed, but too late.

This Parliament will not know the Government's plan for keeping UK aviation emissions at or below 2005 levels by 2050 until next year—talk about carts and horses! This scenario, where aviation targets are exceeded, would place an unreasonably large burden on other UK industries. I do not believe it is acceptable or fair to ask other sectors of the economy to make reductions to compensate for aviation emissions. The UK Government call themselves a climate leader, but only last week the EU raised its carbon reduction target to 45% by 2030, which is above that set by the Paris agreement, whereas this week the UK Government support an aviation plan that will increase emissions without a clear plan to reduce them. The revised NPS is simply not consistent with the obligations set out in the Climate Change Act 2008. We are being asked to give the Transport Secretary a blank cheque on the environment. On the issue of climate change, this fails to meet test 2.

Airspace modernisation is vital to the future of this country. Only through modernisation can we improve the structure and management of UK airspace, to handle growth and realise the economic benefits. The process and consultation to make these changes is at an early stage and there are many years ahead, yet airspace modernisation is critical to noise levels at an expanded Heathrow. Once again, we are being asked to accept promises on noise without a broad framework for the future. That is not good enough and this is yet another gaping hole in the Government's case.

It is difficult to clearly assess the noise impact at Heathrow until the airspace modernisation programme is more advanced. Precise details of new flight paths will not be known for several years, and this represents another significant uncertainty. The Transport Committee's excellent report called on the Government to set clear noise targets, but in the revised NPS they are not proposing any new targets. Do they really care about noise levels?

The revised NPS states that

“the Secretary of State will consider air quality impacts over the wider area likely to be affected, as well as in the vicinity of the scheme. In order to grant development consent, the Secretary of

State will need to be satisfied that, with mitigation, the scheme would be compliant with legal obligations that provide for the protection of human health and the environment.”

That provides no indication as to how the air pollution can be managed. Much of the additional air pollution is largely outside Heathrow’s control. The Government have been repeatedly dragged through the courts over their failure to address the air pollution crisis, so it would be generous to assume that they will now suddenly address these issues in the context of a decision over an expanded Heathrow. That the key issue of tackling air pollution could turn on the judgment of the Transport Secretary does nothing to afford us any comfort whatsoever.

What of the regional economic benefits? The revised NPS says that if the third runway is built, up to 15% of all new routes will need to be reserved for the domestic market. There are considerable uncertainties around that pledge. The Government say that public service obligations will ensure compliance, but “up to 15%” could mean as little as 1%, and PSOs apply to cities rather than airport-specific locations. Late last week, the Government announced they would use PSOs to ensure domestic connectivity. They have not said where they will be used, how many will be used, what percentage of routes will be guaranteed through this method or if they will be permanent. In addition, PSOs would make domestic routes exempt from air passenger duty. That tax cut was not considered in the business case, and the Government have not stated its cost to the public purse. Surely this represents an uncosted subsidy to Heathrow Airport Limited. It is simply incredible that the Government would announce such a subsidy at the eleventh hour before a vote on the NPS.

The Government’s stated case for expanding Heathrow is dependent on a number of other conditions being met, including measures to constrain growth at regional airports in order to ensure that Heathrow expansion can meet the UK’s climate change obligations. I cannot support the restriction of other UK airports to facilitate expansion at Heathrow. Rather than improve regional connectivity, it has been said that a third runway at Heathrow will have a substantially negative impact on the UK aviation industry as a whole. Regional airports will also lose around 17 million passengers per annum, as Heathrow’s share of the UK aviation market rises from 21% today to 27% in 2050.

Government claims for the economic benefit of expanding Heathrow do not include the costs of the improved public transport links needed to keep road traffic at current levels. Transport for London estimates that expenditure of £10 billion to £15 billion is required for new surface access; Heathrow and the Airports Commission say the figure will be closer to £5 billion—so what is the correct figure? The absence of clear proposals, projections and costs in relation to surface access are a major failing of the revised NPS. Labour is not satisfied that the taxpayer interest will be protected. We are also concerned that the lack of a clear surface-access plan will result in yet more transport investment being sucked into the south-east of England. Furthermore, our view is that there are too many uncertainties that could undermine the economic benefits of a third runway at Heathrow. We are not assured that the number of jobs that have been promised will be forthcoming, given the number of variants that could undermine the economic benefits of the case.

For all those reasons, I am not convinced that regional connectivity and shared economic benefits will in fact be delivered by the proposed expansion. I acknowledge the case made for expansion, but I believe that the price of a third runway at Heathrow is currently simply too high. I am greatly aware that right hon. and hon. Members from all parties will wish to weigh up the issues carefully before they cast their vote, and I of course utterly respect the decision that each and every one of them will make. But, given my grave misgivings as to the process itself and the manner in which it has been conducted, I can only conclude that to proceed at this juncture, given all the circumstances, would be the wrong thing to do.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Lindsay Hoyle): Order. I call Greg Hands to speak, with an eight-minute limit.

6.42 pm

Greg Hands (Chelsea and Fulham) (Con): I rise to oppose this national policy statement, which is why I resigned from the Government. I did not resign willingly; I greatly enjoyed my seven years in the Government. I spent four years in the Government Whips Office, keeping the show on the road during those difficult coalition years; I carried out the 2015 spending review—controversial in places—which is now bearing fruit as we see the deficit at a record low; and I was at the very foundation of the Department for International Trade to help the Secretary of State for International Trade to make the crucial preparations for having our own independent trade policy for the first time in 45 years. But I am also surprised to be resigning from the Government as I had always been led to believe that the decision on this issue would be a free vote.

I always knew, however, that I would vote against this proposal. At the 2017 general election I made two unequivocal pledges:

“Greg will be voting against the proposal when it comes before Parliament, expected later this year”,

and:

“Greg is against Heathrow’s 3rd runway and will vote against it, in Parliament.”

So for me, this is not just a debate about Heathrow, important though that is; it is also about being true to one’s word and to one’s election pledges.

Regrettably, this is a truncated debate, but I am joined by several right hon. and hon. Friends who have similar views about Heathrow, including my right hon. Friend the Member for Putney (Justine Greening) and my hon. Friends the Members for Richmond Park (Zac Goldsmith) and for Windsor (Adam Afriyie), and I know that they will make a lot of important points. I have three points to make, briefly. The first is about the impact on the environment in an urban London context; the second is about whether a large hub airport is in the nation’s interests, and the arguments about London’s connectivity; and the third is on night flights and the need to remove this wholly unnecessary stain on the liveability of our great capital city.

On London’s precious urban environment, Heathrow already exceeds legal pollution limits, before any single plane has landed at the third runway. Heathrow is seeking to have an extra 28 million passengers visit the airport each year, but somehow without a single extra

[Greg Hands]

car journey. Furthermore, Heathrow has not yet identified the future flight paths, so it is impossible to tell who and where will be affected by this big increase in flights. An awful lot of Londoners currently have no idea that they will be overflowed by planes every 90 seconds.

Zac Goldsmith: I salute my right hon. Friend's principles on this issue. Does he agree that the lack of information on where the new flight paths will go makes an absolute mockery of all the consultations that have been doing the rounds over the past couple of years?

Greg Hands: I wholly agree with my hon. Friend. It is perfectly possible to show where the flight paths are going to be or are likely to be. I conducted my own consultation, because both Heathrow and the Department for Transport initially refused to do a consultation in my Chelsea and Fulham constituency. I eventually had them come to the constituency, but even then they were unwilling to provide such basic information.

The pledge to build a freight hub is absolute madness when we already have excellent freight hubs that are well away from population centres, such as those at East Midlands airport and Stansted. Surely freight hubs should be created away from population centres, not in the middle of urban environments. The Secretary of State's argument centres on this essential proposition: that the UK needs a hub airport—and by implication only one—to compete. I fundamentally disagree. A hub airport suits Heathrow and it suits the British Airways' business models, but those are not the same as the national interest.

Most hub airports tend to be in medium-sized cities, and there is a reason for that. I fundamentally believe that London is best served by its five airports. It is about the difference between a city of 8 million to 10 million people and a city with a population of 1 million, 2 million or 3 million. New York has three large airports, as does Moscow, and Tokyo has two large hub airports. Most successful hub airports are in medium-sized cities. The Secretary of State gave the examples of Frankfurt and Amsterdam on *Conservative Home* this morning, but those are both cities with a population of fewer than 1 million. They cannot generate that level of traffic themselves, so they need to hub to create and boost their connectivity. It is not a choice for them; it is a choice for London.

Why should London prefer a set of orbital airports? The answer returns to the question of the size of London, with its 8 million, and growing, population. Travel times across London to one hub airport will very often exceed the two-hour median flight time. That is why, while Amsterdam and Frankfurt need a hub, London needs a set of orbital airports.

The related question is on connectivity, and it is not just about Heathrow but about London's airports as a whole. Much has been made of Frankfurt and Amsterdam overtaking Heathrow in respect of connectivity, but that misses the point. What about the whole nation's connectivity? And Heathrow is actually already pretty well connected. It may surprise people to know that 10 Chinese cities—Beijing, Shanghai, Changsha, Chongqing, Guangzhou, Hong Kong, Qingdao, Sanya, Wuhan and Xian—are currently connected directly to

Heathrow each day. And to London as a whole, 28 US cities are connected to London airports, along with 13 Polish cities, seven in India and eight in Canada—more than either Frankfurt or Amsterdam. The growth of destinations served by London airports has been huge, and they have been point-to-point flights. The direction of modern aviation is towards point-to-point direct flights.

Justine Greening: My right hon. Friend is making important points. We have just seen the very first non-stop direct flight from Sydney to London. Does he agree that there is no reason for people to want to hub unnecessarily, and that it is therefore wrong to have a 20th century hub strategy instead of a 21st century direct strategy?

Greg Hands: My right hon. Friend makes a very important point about the introduction of the first point-to-point flight from Australia to London. It returns to my point about what is in not just my constituency's interests but London's interests as a whole and the national interest. Creating the super-hub at Heathrow clearly suits the interests of British Airways and of Heathrow. I have nothing against that. I am a Conservative and have nothing against companies doing well, but we should not equate that with the national interest.

I promised to say a few words about night flights.

Liam Byrne (Birmingham, Hodge Hill) (Lab): I respect the position in which the right hon. Gentleman finds himself. Birmingham airport could take 17 million extra flights now on the existing infrastructure, and that capacity could be unlocked if we built the high-speed loop that was originally proposed. The cost of that loop would be about half that proposed for the new runway at Heathrow. Should we not look again at using high-speed rail to unlock capacity we already have rather than bring forward a proposal that will drain 43,000 flights from our airport?

Greg Hands: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for that intervention. I support high-speed rail. With regard to the sort of solutions that one could come up with with the money being spent here, I certainly think that that is probably an example of the sort of thing that could increase the UK's connectivity as a whole.

On night flights, the situation is untenable. There are allowed to be up to 16 flights each night, starting from 4.30 am. I hear these planes at 4.30. I frequently receive letters about them from my constituents. One can almost time the first flight coming over at 4.30. This is done in the interests of a few thousand people. These are important people travelling from the far east to this country to do business; nevertheless, we are talking about a few thousand people measured against the convenience of many hundreds of thousands of people living directly under those flight paths, many of whom are some of the most economically productive people in this country, paying a lot of taxation. We should not ignore their interests. We need to ban night flights—6 am is early enough. Even if this proposal is to be adopted, the minimum quid pro quo should be the abolition of all arrivals before 6 am. We definitely do not want this stealthy smoothing.

I have just outlined a few of the arguments against this policy statement. The proposal is fundamentally flawed, but this vote is also about integrity and about

the pledges that we make to our electors. It is to be regretted that we will not now have a free vote, but I urge colleagues to vote against the proposal tonight.

6.52 pm

Alan Brown (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): I am a civil engineer by profession and so have an appreciation of the importance of infrastructure investment. For too long, successive UK Governments have not invested enough money directly into infrastructure. The correct infrastructure projects can lead to increased productivity, increased connectivity, a possible increase in visitors, a possible increase in trade and contributions to growth in the economy. Clearly, those are all the hoped-for benefits of the additional runway proposed for Heathrow.

When it comes to decision making on infrastructure, Governments are often too frightened to make decisions because of potential impacts and disruption. Heathrow has been a case in point: the expansion and additional runway have been spoken about for decades. It is only right that the pros and cons are assessed, and this must be done with a balanced perspective. The Airports Commission recommends the additional runway at Heathrow, and the National Infrastructure Commission has said that it wants it to proceed. The Scottish Government have spoken in support of it in principle, and I have spoken in favour of it, although I have highlighted some concerns.

Douglas Ross (Moray) (Con): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. He mentions the support of the Scottish Government. Until 24 hours ago, the SNP Scottish Government said that they supported expansion at Heathrow airport and looked forward to Scotland seeing the benefits. What has changed in the past 24 hours?

Alan Brown: Sometimes when we take an intervention, we worry about what is going to come and trip us up. That was so obvious that I did not see it coming. If the hon. Gentleman waits and is willing to listen to the rest of my speech, I will set out where I am going.

After forensic analysis, the Transport Committee recommended approval of the national policy statement, but with a considerable number of recommendations for consideration. The proposed expansion at Heathrow has the support, on record, of the Scottish Chambers of Commerce, plus Inverness, Ayrshire, Glasgow, and Edinburgh chambers of commerce. Clearly, it has the backing of the GMB and Unite the Union. As the Transport Secretary said, it has the support of the Regional and Business Airports Group; it has the explicit support of Glasgow, Highlands and Islands and Aberdeen airports; and it has the support of Airlines UK.

As we will hear over the course of tonight, there are concerns about the proposals. Some environmentalists will never support air expansion of any kind. Clearly, there are local objections to do with the impact and disruption; I appreciate that MPs should represent the concerns of their constituents and I can understand why some are against the proposal.

However, given the general support that I have outlined, the Secretary of State should be able to pull this off, and for me this is where he has come up short. He has come up short on addressing the concerns of the Transport Committee, but where he has really come up short is on the protection of slots for domestic flights. My predecessor,

my hon. Friend the Member for Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey (Drew Hendry), previously raised the issue of protection of slots and the need for point-to-point public service obligations. The Transport Committee highlighted the fact that further clarity was required on national slots in paragraph 3.34 of the national policy statement. This is where the UK Government are, frankly, all over the place. Paragraph 3.34 states:

“The Government recognises that air routes are in the first instance a commercial decision for airlines and are not in the gift of the airport operator.”

The Government then state that they will hold Heathrow airport to account. That is clearly a contradiction: they are saying that it is the airlines that hold the slots, but that they will hold Heathrow airport to account.

Mr Simon Clarke (Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland) (Con): I do not understand what difference it makes where the flights are going to. If we want trade and business with the rest of the world, why does that matter? We want that business—why does not the hon. Gentleman?

Alan Brown: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. Frankly, as a Scottish MP and an SNP spokesperson on transport, it matters greatly to me where the flights are going. I want these flights, the connectivity for Scotland and the protection that we have not yet heard about from the UK Government.

Colin Clark (Gordon) (Con): The hon. Gentleman is making a very powerful speech. I have a simple question. Does he want the extra 100 flights that an expanded Heathrow will provide for Scotland? Can he give me a simple yes or no?

Alan Brown: I want that, but I also want guarantees of protection. I will come on to that point, so, again, I ask the hon. Gentleman to show a bit of patience and wait.

Chris Grayling: I am very grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. Can he confirm whether Heathrow airport has this afternoon agreed with the SNP and the Scottish Government that it is prepared to set aside 200, not 100, slots at Heathrow airport for connections to Scotland? If that is the case, why are they continuing to object to Heathrow's plans?

Alan Brown: Obviously, 200 slots are preferable to 100 slots. The thing is that only the UK Government can provide the protections. Heathrow has always said that it is willing to work with the Scottish Government, and with the UK Government, but it is only the UK Government who have the powers to provide the guarantees and protection.

Ian Blackford (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP): My hon. Friend is making some very important points; what he raises here is a real issue. Let us put this into context. One hundred flights means 50 arrivals a week—seven flights a day. We are talking about Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dundee, Aberdeen, Prestwick and Inverness. It is simply not enough. Is it not the case that Prestwick has held out its hand to the Scottish Government, but it is the UK Government who have not stood up to protect Scotland's interests? That is the point.

Alan Brown: I will elaborate on my right hon. Friend's point later in my speech.

The Government have still not responded properly to recommendation 10 from the Select Committee on Transport, regarding the 15% of new slots for domestic connections. They have fallen short on clarity. Paragraph 1.60 of the Government's response to the recommendations states:

"The Government expects the majority of these domestic routes from a potentially expanded Heathrow to be commercially viable".

Expecting the majority of routes to be commercially viable falls a long way short of cast-iron guarantees that the UK Government are going to protect those slots. There is a concession that

"the Government will take action where appropriate to secure routes through the use of Public Service Obligations (PSOs)",

but, crucially, the Government do not explain how these will be managed. We are advised in paragraph 1.61 that:

"The Government's expectations on domestic connectivity will be detailed as part of the Aviation Strategy Green Paper",

which is not expected until the second half of 2018. Having to wait months after tonight's binding vote in order to get clarity on these points is simply not good enough.

Ian Paisley: As someone who represents one of the regions of the United Kingdom, I understand that the hon. Gentleman wants certainty and clarity about this issue. But does he accept that an expansion, by its very nature, will necessitate more domestic passengers and, hence, more routes will open up locally?

Alan Brown: That is not the case. It all comes back to the protection of slots. Airlines operate the slots. If no protections are put in place, the whole concern is that domestic slots will be lost to more lucrative international flights. That is why I am asking for this protection. I would have thought that the hon. Gentleman, who represents airports in Northern Ireland, would be grateful that I am looking for this guarantee from the Government.

Ian Paisley: But by necessity more passengers will be required to travel through Heathrow. Those passengers are going to come from Northern Ireland, Scotland and the north of England. That is a fact. Some 700,000 passengers annually already travel from Northern Ireland. That number will expand, and it will also expand for Scotland.

Alan Brown: But that is not guaranteed, which is why we need these protections.

Over the years, domestic connectivity and the number of domestic slots have been cut massively because of the way in which the airlines have operated the existing slots. If we are going to get these increases, we need protections in place.

Steve Double (St Austell and Newquay) (Con): I have a great deal of respect for the hon. Gentleman, speaking up for Scotland as he does. But does he not agree that whether there are 100 or 200 extra flights a week—whatever the figure is—an expanded Heathrow would provide more flights than Scotland currently gets?

Alan Brown: It comes back to the anticipation that 15% of new slots will be available for domestic connectivity. Quite frankly, every regional airport wants a cut of that action. The hon. Gentleman's local airport, Northern Ireland, Scotland and airports in the north-east of England all want some of that 15%. At the moment, we do not know how that 15% is going to be broken down, or what is going to be provided.

Justine Greening: The Transport Committee's analysis showed that Scotland will actually lose 2,700 international flights per annum as a result of Heathrow expansion, and that flights will be fewer than they otherwise would have been.

Alan Brown: I do not recognise the exact figure mentioned by the right hon. Lady, but I do accept that Department for Transport figures suggest that direct connections and international connectivity will not increase as much if the Heathrow expansion goes ahead. Yet Scottish airports themselves do not express that concern and they do back the expansion of Heathrow, so I also have to trust their judgment on the matter.

Chris Grayling: Is the hon. Gentleman saying that the Scottish National party's view is that because it is not sure how big Scotland's bit of the cake is going to be, there should be no cake?

Alan Brown: I have also spoken up for other regional airports, because I would expect them to want the same protections that I am asking for when it comes to Scottish airports. It is up to the Secretary of State to give these guarantees and satisfy us on these points.

Paragraph 1.62 of the Government's response to the Transport Committee's recommendations explains that the Crown dependencies are also included in the 15% of additional slots. How will the figure actually break down between the Crown dependencies and all the various regional airports?

Ian Blackford: There has been a dereliction of duty by the Secretary of State. The language being used is "up to 15%". The harsh reality is that Scotland has lost slots in recent years, and we have lost connectivity. The Secretary of State should guarantee connectivity, but he has failed to do so time and again.

Alan Brown: I think that my right hon. Friend was making a rhetorical intervention.

I raised my concerns about slot protection when the Secretary of State came to the Dispatch Box and made his statement about the NPS. He will be aware that I followed up in writing to seek clarity and assurances, including on the fact that Scotland could have several PSOs if necessary. I asked him how many slots would be protected and what the reality of "up to 15%" would be. I also asked him whether there would be an absolute minimum that the UK Government would seek agreement on, and what percentage of the 15% would be for new routes rather than just additional slots. Just prior to that, a few days after giving the statement, the Secretary offered me a meeting. I stated I was happy to meet him and work with him, but I was instead left with last-minute phone calls with the aviation Minister, who is an unelected peer—not accountable to this place and not even able to come to the Dispatch Box tonight.

Following that there was a letter and DFT public announcements, which were pre-planned anyway. I acknowledge that there has been welcome movement in terms of airport-to-airport PSOs, and the Government have set out the fact that Scotland can have more than one PSO. But I repeat: there is no clarity or assurances regarding how these can or will be implemented. We do not even know whether any money has been set aside or whether there has been any cost analysis of the Government saying that they will provide these PSOs.

If the Heathrow expansion goes ahead and the airlines do forgo their domestic slots for more lucrative international slots—in, say, eight years' time—what actual obligation is there on a UK Government at that moment in time to act and bring in PSOs? I would suggest that there is none. We cannot bind a future Government, especially given how the provision is set out just now, and that is a critical concern.

Andrew Bridgen (North West Leicestershire) (Con): The hon. Gentleman says that he seeks clarity and certainty on what extra slots Scotland will get if the Heathrow expansion goes ahead. I put it to him that the clarity has come from the Secretary of State—that, without Heathrow expansion, there will be no extra slots for Scotland. Will the hon. Gentleman support the expansion this evening?

Alan Brown: Well, it is a daft point because it assumes that, if Heathrow goes ahead, the slots will somehow magically be there for Scotland. That is not the point, and that is why we are asking for these guarantees.

Ian Paisley: I really appreciate the hon. Gentleman giving way again because it is absolutely essential that the House understands that four out of eight of the domestic routes that are already available go to Scotland. Scotland already stands strong in this area. It does not need protection measures. Indeed, British Airways has already expanded its routes to Inverness.

Alan Brown: The fact is that Scotland has lost a lot of domestic connectivity over the last few years, so the hon. Gentleman is not quite right. It is good that he sees Scotland as strong, but we want to be stronger and we want further connections.

As we have already heard, the Department for Transport said that there would be 100 extra flights a week to Scotland. Although it is now saying that there could be 200 flights coming from Heathrow, it is up to the Government to provide the protections. Let us take the figure of 100 that has been quoted. If, say, Dundee and Prestwick get the new suggested slots, even just a twice-daily service from each of those airports would equate to well over half that figure of 100 flights. When we take the rest and spread it over the rest of Scotland's airports, it is not actually a great deal of increased connectivity. That is why this falls short of our expectations.

Heathrow airport has made it abundantly clear that it is willing to work with the UK Government on the matter, and acknowledges that it is a Government function to deliver that protection. As has been touched on already, Heathrow has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Scottish Government. The airport has been very open and communicative with both me and my predecessor in the SNP's transport spokesperson role. I believe that it really wants to deliver on its

commitments to Scotland, including the preconstruction logistics hub, for which I appreciate it is currently doing an ongoing assessment. I hope that that assessment concludes that Prestwick airport is successful, because that would be really good for my local area. There is also a stated minimum value of £300 million construction and supply chain contracts for Scotland, and a minimum peak construction job creation of 100 jobs.

Heathrow committed to a £10 passenger fee discount to Scottish airports, and, to be fair, it has since increased that reduction to £15 per passenger. It committed £1.5 million to advertising through a Scotland-specific marketing fund, and it has delivered on that, with only £250,000 outstanding, which it has pledged to use to promote the new V&A museum in Dundee. It has also confirmed that it is now working with VisitScotland to provide a takeover of a gate room to promote Scotland for a five-year period, equating to some £300,000. Cynics will say that it is bound to do these things to keep Scottish MPs and the Scottish Government onside. However, it seems to me that it has delivered to date, and over-delivered in some aspects, so I can only take it at face value.

In the bigger picture, 16,000 jobs are predicted to be generated in Scotland through an expanded Heathrow. These are certainly benefits that I want to see delivered.

Tom Tugendhat (Tonbridge and Malling) (Con): Does the hon. Gentleman agree with his namesake, Keith Brown, the Cabinet Secretary for the Economy in the Scottish Parliament, who supports the expansion of Heathrow and spoke about it very strongly in 2016? Does he not agree that the jobs he mentions simply will not come if there is not an expansion?

Alan Brown: As I said, I have spoken in favour of expansion before. The Scottish Government have also spoken in favour of it—that is why they have signed a memorandum of understanding. We are just looking for protections and deliverability.

Some people have asked, why Heathrow and not further expansion in Scotland? We have to acknowledge the reality that Heathrow has been the hub airport for the UK for 40 years, and there is not the critical mass in Scotland for getting such a hub-status airport. That is why the Scottish airports have supported the principle of Heathrow expansion.

Mike Kane (Wythenshawe and Sale East) (Lab): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Alan Brown: No, I need to make progress.

Some of my other concerns relate to the UK Government's responses to the Transport Committee. The Secretary of State said that he had acted on 24 out of 25 of its recommendations, but that painted a more proactive representation than what the Government have actually taken on board. Their responses have not been robust enough. I am sure that the Chair of the Committee will cover these aspects later on. My key concerns include the response to recommendation 12, which is about airport charges being held flat in real terms. This would address some of the wider concerns about the cost of the expansion being passed on directly to the airlines. The UK Government have said that expansion cannot come at any cost, yet they are passing the buck to the Civil Aviation Authority.

[Alan Brown]

Recommendation 25 is about policy and ways to maximise other runway capacity across the UK. That is not a make-or-break condition, but it would have been nice if the UK Government had got this policy in place at the same time as they are bringing this proposal forward. On the air quality issues in the Committee's recommendations 3 to 6, the Government need to confirm that Heathrow's triple lock is sufficient and that development consent will be robust enough to address those issues. More importantly, it needs to be confirmed that the expansion of Heathrow will not compromise obligations on climate change.

I have outlined my concerns—

Sir Nicholas Soames (Mid Sussex) (Con): Well done—jolly good so far!

Alan Brown: I was going to fast-forward there, but I think the House wants to hear me speak for a wee bit longer, so I am quite happy to do that.

This is a project where people tailor their arguments to try and bring other people onside. In a recent Westminster Hall debate, I had Tory rebels urging me not to vote with nasty Tories, and Tory and Labour MPs expressing their concerns about what Heathrow expansion would mean for an independent Scotland. I heard concern from the right hon. Member for Putney (Justine Greening) that this investment will take away infrastructure investment in Scotland. Frankly, these are all false arguments.

The announcement of a multi-billion-pound infrastructure project should be good news. The predicted job growth and opportunities for Scotland should be good news, and certainly businesses see the merit in the expansion proposals. As I said, I want the jobs to come to Scotland, I want a logistics hub at Prestwick, and I want the additional regional airport connectivity—but crucially, I want these aspects guaranteed, and that is where the UK Government have fallen short. I have been supportive to date. I certainly will not vote against these proposals, because of what I hope the opportunities are for Scotland, but given that the UK Government cannot and will not provide these guarantees, I also cannot, unfortunately, vote with the Government.

7.15 pm

Sir Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire Dales) (Con): There is no doubt that large-scale infrastructure projects will always be controversial, and no doubt that this is a large-scale infrastructure project that is incredibly controversial. That is one of the reasons why the coalition Government asked the Davies commission to do a report. That was supported by the House at the time, including by the Opposition. It was an attempt to try to get an expert opinion to take us forward through a report that we could take a proper decision on.

I am incredibly disappointed by the way that the SNP has responded today, because a big issue like this needs cross-party support to take it forward. These things do not happen in one Parliament; they go forward over many Parliaments. I heard the hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Alan Brown) question the Secretary of State on 5 June, just 20 days ago, when he said:

“To be fair, Heathrow has engaged fully with the Scottish Government, and has signed a memorandum of understanding in relation to commitments”.

He went on to say:

“However, all but one of the Scottish airport operators support it. So do the various Scottish chambers of commerce, because they recognise the business benefits that it can bring to Scotland, including...16,000 new jobs. That helped to sway me, and the Scottish Government have reiterated their support.”—[*Official Report*, 5 June 2018; Vol. 642, c. 175.]

Well, support means votes. It does not mean trying to abstain at the end of the day when an important decision like this comes about. However, I can assure the SNP that the Secretary of State for Scotland will carry on making the case for Scotland in the House of Commons and at the Cabinet table, and so will my 13 colleagues who represent Scottish constituencies. The people of Scotland can feel let down by the SNP for playing party politics, because that is absolutely all that this decision is about.

Chris Grayling: I thank my right hon. Friend for the important point that he is making. Will he join me in paying tribute to Scotland's best representatives—the team of Conservatives who would not play party games like those we have just heard and who are acting truly in the interests of Scotland and the Scottish people?

Sir Patrick McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend is absolutely right. I urge SNP Members, even at this late stage, to change their minds on this and follow through on what they say they support with their votes, because this is too important a matter not to do so.

It is now 50 years since the Roskill commission first started its work on expansion. I was first made a junior Minister in the Department of Transport in 1989. I was originally told that I was going to be the Minister for roads, but the then Secretary of State, Cecil Parkinson, informed me that I was going to be the Minister for aviation and shipping—which was a bit of a surprise to me, especially bearing in mind my fear of flying at the time. In 1989, there were 368,430 air traffic movements at Heathrow airport. We have gradually seen those grow, up until 2006, when the figure was 477,000 movements a year, peaking in 2011 at 480,000. There has been growth and expansion at Heathrow, and during that time NOx emissions have in fact reduced. That has come about partly due to newer and better aircrafts. I think that Heathrow has got the message that it has to improve on environmental issues, and that has moved substantially up the track.

Jeremy Quin (Horsham) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend recognise that the other change at Heathrow over that period is the massive improvement in connectivity? HS2, which he contributed to, will be part of that process, and Crossrail is another part of it. Heathrow is massively more connected now than it ever was in the early 1990s.

Sir Patrick McLoughlin: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and agree with him.

I fully understand that my colleagues who represent local seats say that this is wrong for their constituents, but one question they need to address is: change or no change? Without the expansion, there will be no change. With the expansion, there will be a number of changes—not least, an extension of the ban on scheduled night flights to six-and-a-half hours, legally binding noise envelopes, predictable periods of respite for every local community, extending compensation to more than 3,000 additional properties, a £1 billion compensation package for

local people, a new independent community engagement board, a new independent noise authority and 10,000 apprenticeships. That is why it is rather disappointing to hear the Labour Front Benchers change their tune today, in a way that some leading trade unionists who support the project have not done.

“The benefits of a third runway at Heathrow to our members are clear and compelling: 180,000 new jobs, doubling the number of apprenticeships to 10,000 and £187 billion in economic benefits.”

Those are not my words; they are the words of Len McCluskey, along with four other trade union leaders. That is the point they have made.

What has changed since the setting up of the Davies commission is the revolution on the Labour Benches, which has seen the right hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (John McDonnell) assume the role of shadow Chancellor. I accept that he has long been an opponent of this scheme, but the truth of the matter is that setting up the Davies commission in 2012 to do a detailed investigation into the right way forward was the right thing to do. It was not just Howard Davies, but also John Armitt and Professor Dame Julia King, who is a leading expert in the environment.

In the past 10 years, we have seen £12 billion of investment in Heathrow airport, which has been very beneficial to the airport and to the country. Part of that—*[Interruption.]* Sorry, I thought the shadow Transport Secretary, the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Andy McDonald) wished to intervene, but he does not. That investment has been very welcome, and it has led to a better facility for passengers.

One thing that the Government have to do—I know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State takes this fully on board—is to ensure that this expansion is done to budget. There have already been trimmings on the cost of the original scheme, and I congratulate the Secretary of State on driving that. The CAA must ensure that that happens, so that we do not put too much extra cost on travelling passengers or indeed the plane operators. That will be very important for the future of Heathrow, and it is well aware of that. We are seeing investment proposals.

Sir Nicholas Soames: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on everything that he did on this when he was Secretary of State. Does he agree that the whole credibility of this vast scheme will depend on control of the cost and the way in which that is transparent to the House?

Sir Patrick McLoughlin: I agree with my right hon. Friend. When the Secretary of State made his statement three weeks ago, I raised that point with him, and he was very clear on it.

This is one of the biggest infrastructure projects that the country faces over the next 10 years. We have been better on infrastructure over the past few years. We are about to see the opening of the Elizabeth line, which will make a tremendous difference, including to Heathrow airport, and that has been part of the investment cost. This is long planned and long overdue. I believe that this is the right scheme to go for, and I congratulate the Secretary of State on bringing forward these proposals.

7.25 pm

Lilian Greenwood (Nottingham South) (Lab): Fast, reliable and affordable transport has the power to make a real difference to people's lives. That is why I am a

passionate believer in the transformative power of improving transport. If Britain is to have any chance of succeeding in a post-Brexit world, improved connectivity, both outside our islands and around them, is key. Among the most pressing of the challenges facing our transport system is the need for additional airport capacity in the south-east of England. Failure to address that challenge will mean less choice, more disruption and higher air fares for UK passengers. Along with the other members of the Transport Committee, I agree that building an additional runway at Heathrow is, in principle, the right answer to our aviation capacity challenge, provided there are safeguards and mitigations to protect passengers and affected communities.

The Secretary of State has already set out the economic benefits that could be achieved with expansion. The case is compelling, but have the Government been as candid with MPs and the public as this decision deserves, acknowledging not just the benefits but the costs and risks? Ensuring that the NPS properly reflects the weight of evidence in the supporting documents was the first objective of the Transport Committee's report. Our Committee's detailed analysis of the Department for Transport's forecasts revealed that future passenger growth, and the destination and route offering at the UK level, are broadly similar over the longer term to those of the other schemes. That is not reflected in the final NPS.

At the current costs anticipated for the north-west runway scheme, there is a very real possibility that domestic routes from Heathrow will not be commercially viable. Ministers have told us that they intend to use public service obligations to guarantee regional connections, yet their own 2013 guidance on the use of PSOs states:

“Government considers it unlikely that PSOs would be appropriate for new routes from the regions to London.”

What has changed since 2013 to make a policy that was ruled out then viable today? Even if PSOs could be used, it is not clear what level of subsidy would be needed and whether those subsidies would be provided in perpetuity.

Justine Greening: That is an important point, and it has not yet been raised—PSOs will require subsidies. For example, in Cornwall, Cornish taxpayers are subsidising the PSO, but those flights are to Gatwick. If Heathrow has a PSO, it will be way more expensive for taxpayers, and they are unaware of that.

Lilian Greenwood: I hope the Minister addresses the issues around PSOs in his closing remarks.

The analysis supporting the decision is extensive; what is lacking is a fair and transparent representation of the information in the NPS to the House. For example, the Committee's scrutiny revealed that the Department's methods of presentation hid compelling noise modelling showing that more than 300,000 people are estimated to be newly affected by significant noise annoyance due to an expanded Heathrow. The total number of people in the noise annoyance footprint is estimated to be more than 1.15 million. Our investigations also indicated that those estimates are likely to be toward the lower end of the scale of potential impacts.

Chris Grayling: I hear what the hon. Lady says, but will she confirm that I made that clear in my statement to the House on the publication of the draft NPS? I also

[Chris Grayling]

indicated that we expected that that would be a temporary process while technology changed, and that those figures assumed no mitigation measures, whereas we intend significant mitigation measures, including, for example, the night flight ban.

Lilian Greenwood: The Secretary of State has clarified that issue. I simply want to ensure that Members have the full range of information in front of them before they vote this evening.

There are many instances where the assumptions underpinning the analysis misrepresented what was likely to occur in practice. For example, the Department has assumed that all the capacity will be filled within two years of an opening date in 2026, yet Heathrow's own business plan expects phased expansion over five to 10 years. Earlier this month, the Secretary of State told the House:

"We have accepted the recommendations...and will follow faithfully the Select Committee's wishes to make sure that its recommendations are properly addressed at each stage of the process."—[*Official Report*, 5 June 2018; Vol. 642, c. 174.]

These are fine words but, disappointingly, they are not matched with actions, and the NPS has not been updated.

The second objective of our Committee's scrutiny was to ensure that the NPS provided suitable safeguards for passengers and affected communities. We know that the Government have been struggling to deal with air quality in London for years. The Committee made two recommendations on changing the wording of the NPS to provide air quality safeguards. The Government did not accept these recommendations. On noise, we wanted to ensure that there were clear safeguards for communities, including guaranteed respite. The Government did not accept most of our recommendations to safeguard communities from noise impacts. On surface access, we recommended a condition of approval to ensure that the scheme would not result in more airport-related traffic on London's roads. The Government did not accept that recommendation.

Chris Grayling: Will the hon. Lady confirm that if there is a point of disagreement between us, it is simply that we accepted the Committee's recommendations but also said that the appropriate moment to insert them would be at the development consent order stage, rather than the NPS stage? Will she confirm that we have very clearly said that we will insert those at the DCO stage?

Lilian Greenwood: I confirm that that is the Secretary of State's view, and I will come on to my concerns about that approach in due course.

On protections for communities, we recommended that compensation be independently assessed and reviewed once the full impacts were known. The Government did not accept this recommendation. On protection for passengers, we recommended a condition of approval in the NPS that passenger charges be held flat in real terms unless not doing so was in their interests. The Government did not accept this recommendation.

Kwasi Kwarteng: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Lilian Greenwood: No. I am conscious of time.

The Committee did not make a specific recommendation on carbon emissions, but the NPS scheme must be compatible with our climate change obligations. As others have already said, this remains very uncertain. The Government have told us that our recommendations will be dealt with during the development consent order process, in consultation with communities and other stakeholders, but our recommendations were made on the basis that there were not enough safeguards in the DCO process to ensure that high-level policy objectives on noise, air quality, surface access, regional connectivity and costs could be achieved.

The third objective of the Committee's recommendations was to limit the risk of legal challenge, yet not providing fundamentally important information on possible environmental, health and community impacts seems to be a point on which a judicial review may be focused. Baroness Sugg told us recently that making the meaningful changes to the NPS we sought would add a six to nine-month delay to the process. Given the potential scale of the impacts of this scheme and the decades it has taken to get to this point, a few extra months may seem an appropriate price to pay, especially given the Government's self-imposed delays since the Airports Commission reported in July 2015.

This is a vital decision about our national infrastructure. Additional runway capacity must be delivered. I do not doubt the Government's intent, but rather their ability to deliver. Some of my Select Committee colleagues will accept the Government's assurances, but I intend to be guided by the evidence. I have no doubt that the Government intended their air quality plans to ensure compliance with legal standards, but three times the courts rejected them. I am certain that the Department for Transport intended to electrify 850 miles of railway and to introduce new rail timetables successfully but, as we know, the reality has sometimes fallen short of the ambition. This NPS leaves too many risks: the risk of a successful legal challenge; the risk of harming communities; the risk of rising charges; and the risk of a failure to deliver new domestic connections. If a substantial proportion of the Committee's recommendations had been incorporated, I would have felt able to vote for the motion. I wish that I could do so but, without them, I am afraid that I cannot.

7.34 pm

Justine Greening (Putney) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the Chair of the Transport Committee, the hon. Member for Nottingham South (Lilian Greenwood), who made a very powerful speech.

I do not think that the proposal before the House will be seen as Parliament's finest hour. It is very easy to dismiss the contributions of MPs perhaps who have communities overflowed by Heathrow planes, but nearly 3 million Londoners will be affected if this expansion goes ahead. However, this is actually a vote that will affect all our communities in one way or another.

I think that the story of Heathrow is a story of broken promises, broken politics and broken economics. Those of us with communities around Heathrow know about Heathrow's broken promises better than anyone else. There has been no action, despite promises, on night flights. The first flight over my community's homes today was at 4.29 this morning. Under this proposal, we will actually end up with more early morning flights,

not fewer. There has been no action on sticking even to existing rules on respite. I have been at public meetings at which the current Heathrow management has said that the previous promises made by previous managers should never have been made. Regional MPs who are banking on promises from Heathrow should bear that in mind when they sign up to this proposal today.

Of course, the ultimate broken promise was when the fifth terminal got planning permission. There was an express condition for local people of having no third runway, but look at where we are today. The bottom line is that any assurances in the development consent order are literally not worth the paper they are written on. Dare I say it, but with the greatest respect, Ministers will be long gone by the time those Members who are promised that their regional airports will get extra connections find out that those connections have not materialised. Such a “facts of life” explanation to them from a future Minister will be that their county council has to pay perhaps £10 million a year for their route to Heathrow. The problem, however, will be that no airline will want to provide it, because that is not a big enough subsidy, and doing so would be uneconomic. There have been broken promises in the past, and there are more to come for other MPs from Heathrow Airport Ltd.

What about broken politics? As we have heard, MPs are not being shown any kind of proper planning for a third runway. There will be 28 million extra passengers a year, but there is a promise from Heathrow that not a single extra car journey will happen. How is that going to be achieved? We do not have a plan for that. West London is illegally breaching air pollution limits, and there are similar problems in my own community. Expanding Heathrow makes that significantly worse. There is no plan at all.

No flight paths have been published today for communities to see. There is no plan on tackling carbon emissions. There is no plan on how to ring-fence domestic routes, as promised. Members might be interested to hear that the regional air connectivity fund set off with 11 new routes in 2016, but just two are still operating, and those are doing so at reduced frequency because they were not economic. There is no plan on how to have a freight hub in such a congested area. There is no assessment of how the resultant congestion charge that will become necessary will affect the west London economy.

Of most concern to people in this House is the fact that there has been no formal safety review—yet—even though the crash risk goes up by 60% in the most densely populated bit of the country, including my own community. When the Health and Safety Laboratory did its estimate of that crash risk, it asked DFT officials whether they wanted the population numbers impacted by the crash risk to be modelled, and they were told no, that was not necessary. Safety has been far from the top priority of the Department for Transport.

The process to create what little planning there is has been totally flawed. Consultations are never—I repeat, never—listened to. The Airports Commission got its numbers wrong. MPs have been given erroneous impressions of the impact on regional airports. The Government have had to reissue the draft NPS because its numbers were incorrect. Parliamentary questions have not been properly answered in the very short time MPs have had to ask them since the statement was first

made. People simply get ignored in this process. They have to be either a big business or a big union before their voice counts, and that is totally unacceptable.

After all that, the DFT disagrees with its own analysis. It picks the project that it shows has a lower level of total benefits to passengers and the wider economy than Gatwick. It picks the project that is likely to need the biggest taxpayer subsidy. It picks the project that is the most risky by far. It picks the project that cannibalises the transport budget for the rest of the country. It picks the project that harms the growth of regional airports. That is why this is a story of broken economics. Even Heathrow knows that this is risky, which is why it has a poison-pill cost-recovery clause in the pre-legal contract, effectively outsourcing the economic risk to taxpayers.

Heathrow knows that there is a massive risk of the project going belly up. When that happens, it will be in a strong position to turn round and ask taxpayers to pay. When it turns out that the problem of air pollution is insurmountable, we will be asked to pay for the runway that it cannot use.

Zac Goldsmith: My right hon. Friend is making an excellent, forensic speech. It has been said in the debate that without cross-party support we cannot hope to deliver an infrastructure project of this magnitude. Three of the four main parties in the House are not in favour of the scheme. Does she not think that that adds to the undeliverability of the project?

Justine Greening: Absolutely. This requires cross-party support, which is simply not there. Heathrow’s problem is that it is a hub airport in the wrong place, which means that it is expensive. Passenger charges are 40% more expensive than at rival European airports. That is why Leeds Bradford routes have been cut. It is not because there is not space—it already has space—but because those routes are simply uneconomic.

Steve Double: My understanding is that flights have been cut on those routes because of the unavailability of aircraft and crew, not because of the cost.

Justine Greening: No, Leeds Bradford has tended to hub out of Schiphol because it is cheaper. This is about economics, which matter. The bottom line is that in expanding Heathrow the economics and the expensiveness of the airport become worse, putting more pressure on domestic flights, with a loss of flights to emerging markets. Flights to places such as Dar es Salaam and Osaka, for example, have been cut.

In today’s vote, Heathrow Airport Ltd is seeking to go one further than outsourcing economic risk to the taxpayer. It wants to outsource political risk to MPs who are prepared to sign up to its project today. We know that in the end it will not deliver for the regions or communities. I am not surprised that the Scottish National party has begun to see through the proposal. I hope that it continues to see through it, and I wish that it would vote against it today.

There is an alternative: a proper regional strategy for airports around the UK, including in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales, and around our country in England, which would bring connectivity to the world for communities that need and deserve it, and regional economies too, bringing investment direct to the door.

[Justine Greening]

As I said, we have just had the first non-stop flight from Sydney to London. Direct flights—people being able to go from A to B—are the future of aviation. Low-cost carriers are moving into that market. They want to operate out of cheap airports, on the doorstep of communities and regions that need them—not an over-expensive airport at Heathrow.

In conclusion, Mr Deputy Speaker, if you asked me to come up with the most backward-looking, ill thought-through, poorly bottomed-out, badly articulated, on a wing and a prayer, bad value-for-money, most polluting airport plan I could find, this would be it. It is hugely polluting for my local community. To have only a four-hour debate on such a monumental infrastructure decision is an absolute disgrace. I am staggered that the House is seriously contemplating voting for the fantasy economics attached to such an expensive and risky airport plan. If we vote for that tonight, it will be proven that the House has not done due diligence properly, and people should rightly hold us to account for that. I will certainly vote against the proposal, not just on behalf of my community but on behalf of my country.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Lindsay Hoyle): I call John McDonnell. The time limit will go down to six minutes after John McDonnell.

7.44 pm

John McDonnell (Hayes and Harlington) (Lab): I shall seek to go under eight minutes if I can, Mr Deputy Speaker. I thank the Speaker for allowing me to speak from the Back Benches, given the direct impact of the proposal on my constituency and my constituents, who find the whole debate heartbreaking.

Occasionally in the House there are defining moments, and I think that this is a defining moment on a number of issues. It is a defining vote tonight. As we have heard in the debate, it is a defining vote, first, on climate change. The evidence from the Select Committee on Transport and others basically outlines the fact that if we are to tackle climate change, as the Committee on Climate Change said, we have to restrict the growth of aviation to 55%. However, as has been evidenced in the debate, it looks as if it might hit 90% or 100% by 2050. As a result of Heathrow expansion, that means that regional airports will have to be constrained or, as the Committee on Climate Change said, other sectors of industry will be constrained within our economy. To be frank, on past evidence we will not meet those targets, so we will jeopardise our potential to tackle climate change.

The second issue that has been raised in our discussions is whether we are going to tackle the grotesque inequalities of investment geographically across the country. Tonight, we have learned from some of the views that have been expressed that we will not do so. The economic benefits were announced by the Airports Commission: we were meant to gain £147 billion. The Government reduced that figure to £74 billion, then to £72 billion. Now we know that that was the gross benefit, and that the present net value ranges from £3 billion over 60 years to minus £2 billion. If there is a 1% delay in the project, that is completely wiped out. Costs will not be borne by Heathrow Airport Ltd, because it has a leverage rate—a

debt to asset value—of 85%. If it expands that will be over 90%. When the Government—not with my wishes—privatised the National Air Traffic Services, we prevented companies from bidding if they went anywhere near 65%. Heathrow will not find the money—the cost will be borne by taxpayers. The biggest taxpayer burden will be the surface infrastructure, assessed by Transport for London as £15 billion.

That money will come from investments, but they will not be in London and the south-east, and we will see delays and the ending of investments in transport and infrastructure around the country. We have heard about the growth of regional airports being held back, but the proposal will hold back growth in road and rail, along with all the benefits of infrastructure.

Ruth Cadbury: Does my right hon. Friend not agree that the much needed infrastructure promised as part of this statement—the southern and western rail links, along with Crossrail—have been on the cards for many years, and are needed for the existing number of passengers at Heathrow?

John McDonnell: It is an obvious point that we have made time and again in the House. We have been pressing for investment in infrastructure for the existing airport, but it has not been forthcoming.

We do not even know what the infrastructure plan is for the area. Last time, the infrastructure plan included a road through my local cemetery. We were meant to disinter the dead to enable access to Heathrow. We have still not seen the infrastructure plans. No wonder my constituents are angry about this. That is the third defining point. Does the House stand up for people and communities, especially working-class communities, or does it stand up to protect the interests of a corporate cartel that has ripped us off for decades? Ask how much—

Kwasi Kwarteng *rose*—

John McDonnell: I would respect the hon. Gentleman, my constituency neighbour, if he accepted a runway in his constituency south of Heathrow, but he refused.

Look at how much corporation tax has been paid by this company over the past 10 years: £24 million. It has been borrowing to pay dividends more than its profit ratios. That is the nature of the company we are dealing with. It is a company and an operation at Heathrow that has lied to my constituents. When it got the fifth terminal, a letter was sent to my constituents. I had meetings with the directors of Heathrow and they were beside me saying, “We will not seek a third runway.” Within 12 months, they were lobbying for one. We were told by a former Conservative Prime Minister, “No ifs, no buts, no third runway”. They never told us that promise was for one Parliament. The existing Prime Minister backed that guarantee to my constituents.

These are the consequences for my constituents that hon. Members need to know: 4,000 homes will go; 8,000 to 10,000 people will be forcibly removed from their community, the biggest forced removal of human beings since the Scottish highland clearances; and a church, a temple, community centres, open spaces and even our hospices are now threatened. That is what it means to my community. Two schools—where will they go? It is

no good offering them 125% compensation. You cannot compensate for the loss of your whole community. We have a housing crisis in our area on a scale not seen since the second world war. We cannot house our existing population. Where will they go? Two schools, at least, closed, with another one, most probably, after that. We have not got enough places for our existing pupils. Where will they go? We cannot find sites to build the new schools we currently need.

Those who get forced out might be the lucky ones, because the ones left behind are already breathing in air that is already poisoned above 2010 EU limits. No effective mitigation measures have been demonstrated to us tonight. We know the health consequences—respiratory conditions and cancer—yet the Government have refused to undertake a comprehensive health assessment.

Andy McDonald: Is my right hon. Friend as surprised as I am that there is nothing specific in the revised national policy statement that adequately sets out a framework for dealing with our air pollution crisis?

John McDonnell: We have 9,000 people a year in London dying from air pollution, yet there is nothing in the Government proposals that goes anywhere near even thinking about tackling these issues. Those are the consequences for my community, despite all the promises they have been given that their homes would be secure. These are villages that have been there for 1,000 years, to be wiped off the face of the earth—and for what? To ensure that a company maximises its profits. This is a company owned by Ferrovial, which was founded by Franco contracts, by the Chinese state and by Qatar. It is shipping profits abroad, rather than reinvesting in this country. That is what this vote is about tonight.

Alberto Costa (South Leicestershire) (Con): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

John McDonnell: I will finish on this point, because other Members want to speak.

This decision tonight will likely go through, but there will inevitably be legal challenges from a cross-party group and the London boroughs, as well as the Mayor of London. I believe, like last time, that those legal challenges will win. We will be left, yet again, with not tackling the real problem of developing a real aviation strategy that builds on the five airports around London, develops the regional airports we need, and connects them up with the rail and road infrastructure we desperately need. We will be back here yet again, having failed. I tell Members this as well: if the courts do not decide this, there will be a campaign. This will be the iconic, totemic battleground of climate change, which will attract protesters and campaigners from across Europe. This issue will not go away.

Before Members vote, I want to leave them with one thing in their mind: remember the name Armelle Thomas, resident of Harmsworth. Her husband, my friend, died a short while back. Tommy Thomas came to this country during the second world war to fight for this country against fascism. He flew airplanes for the RAF on some of the most dangerous secret missions into France. Armelle is his widow. His home that he built up with Armelle is in the centre of what will be the runway itself. There are human costs to this decision that Members

need to recognise and contemplate before they vote tonight to worry and blight my community once again on a project that will never—pardon the pun—take off.

7.55 pm

Dr Phillip Lee (Bracknell) (Con): May I begin by first commending my right hon. Friend the Member for Chelsea and Fulham (Greg Hands) for resigning on a point of principle to stand up for his constituents in the way that he made public at the last election? Similarly, in two general elections, 2015 and 2017, I stood on the position that I would support airport expansion in south-east England. That is why, this evening, I will be supporting the Government. However, I want to make a few points about the local impact of that decision and some broader points on the capacity of this country to make strategic decisions about the infrastructure it requires in future.

I came to the decision I did in 2013 because, on balance, the socioeconomic impact on my constituency was positive if we expanded capacity in the south-east of England, at both Gatwick and Heathrow. I am in favour of the expansion of both airports for that reason. It did not go unnoticed—I promise hon. Members that my postbag was large—that the impact of noise in my constituency was significant and, indeed, had grown, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (John Redwood) said in an intervention, because of the unilateral decision by the National Air Traffic Services to change the flight pattern, with no prior notice to anybody—including the airport itself. That impact has been significant. Despite that, I have stayed true to my word, recognising that an expansion of airport capacity in the south-east is, on balance, to the benefit of my constituents.

I say to colleagues on both sides of the House: let us be realistic about the world in which we live. In this post-Brexit world that the country voted for, there is little avoiding the fact that we are going to need intercontinental connections. This is what the country voted for. It is going to have an impact on the environment, a point made so eloquently and passionately by the right hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (John McDonnell), but it is what the public voted for. Until we invent a means of transport that flies through the air and does not rely on the combustion of fossil fuels, that is going to be the case. I therefore ask the Government to recognise that fact and that they need to take the issue of noise in particular seriously—I know they do: they have made some assurances today for that reason. But they must also recognise that the way the world works at the moment is not sustainable.

We must look at how the global economy works and the impact that that is having on the need for people to travel. All travel at the moment involves carbon dioxide being released into the air. As far as I am concerned—it is 17th-century physics—that is having an impact on the environment. It is extremely important that Britain takes that seriously and engages internationally on this issue.

I will not take all of my time, because I know colleagues want to speak. My final plea is on strategic thinking. Take a look at how long it took to build terminal 5. As I recall, it took eight years to get planning permission. Take a look at how long it has taken to build HS2—I am not a big fan of HS2: the future is fast data, not fast people, and I struggle with the justification for that project.

[Dr Phillip Lee]

Take a look at the world that we are growing into—an ageing world where, in future, transportation may be more domestic than international, because we need to look after our elderly. Take a look at the future in terms of who we are competing with and who we want to trade with. Do we want to trade with countries if it then involves significant pollution from the transport of their goods by boat and plane to our shores, or do we want to trade with countries closer to home?

If I look at the decisions that we have made as a country over recent decades, involving both political parties, what comes out at me is a complete absence of strategy. The Government should create a unit that looks at the long-term, strategic approach of this country in the world where we currently live, and the world that we are growing into. That is long overdue. If we are going to make such decisions, we need to make them quickly. The world changes even more quickly now than it did when we first started talking about airport capacity. We need to be agile. Above all, we need to be competitive, but in being competitive we cannot lose sight of the impact that it will have on our local communities and the wider community across the globe. If Britain wants to be successful and lead the world in protecting our globe—our planet—it needs to get real about its long-term strategy.

8.1 pm

Dame Louise Ellman (Liverpool, Riverside) (Lab/Co-op): I welcome today's debate. Finally, after decades of dithering, this House is being asked to trigger the process that could approve a third runway for Heathrow, the UK's only hub airport. The debate on the expansion of aviation capacity in the south-east has always focused on balancing the importance of international connectivity with its impact on key local and international environmental issues, such as noise and emissions, but taking a decision has been put in the "too hard" box for far too long.

I support a third runway at Heathrow: the case for jobs and the economy is overwhelming. Heathrow has been virtually full for a decade for both passengers and freight. Failure to take a decision has already had consequences. Airports in the regions have not benefited; instead, the UK has lost out to other hubs—to places such as Frankfurt, Paris, and Schiphol, and further afield, Dubai. Only this week it has been reported that Munich has now overtaken Heathrow for international connectivity. That has impeded the development of much needed trade outside Europe, and it has severe consequences for the economy. A 10% increase in air connectivity brings a 0.5% increase in per capita GDP.

Heathrow is particularly important for freight, especially to countries outside Europe. Adding one flight to each of Heathrow's five routes to China would deliver an extra £16 million per annum to our economy, creating 530 jobs, and that cannot be done without the expansion of Heathrow. All the main business organisations, including the Confederation of British Industry, the Institute of Directors and the British Chambers of Commerce, have repeatedly warned that cargo capacity to pivotal trading markets in Shanghai, Delhi and Dubai is virtually full. The CBI is concerned that if additional capacity is not available by 2030, we could lose £5 billion per annum in trade to Brazil, Russia, India and China alone. These concerns are echoed by the major trade unions. We ignore these warnings at our peril.

Expanding Heathrow is not an alternative to supporting airports in the regions. Airlines take commercial decisions about where they will fly; if Heathrow is full, the alternative has been another hub, such as Paris, Frankfurt or other airports—it has not been to move to the English regions. I support all efforts to develop airports in the regions, and that includes improving surface access, but the shortage of slots at Heathrow has weakened regional connectivity. Liverpool was squeezed out by Heathrow decades ago because of the shortage of slots. The commitment for 15% of new slots in an expanded Heathrow to be reserved for links to the regions is to be welcomed. For Liverpool John Lennon airport, Heathrow expansion offers a direct connection to international flights, plus a logistics hub, with the potential of a lasting legacy of construction and engineering skills for future generations, but it is essential that that is delivered.

The economic case for expanding Heathrow is overwhelming, but environmental concerns are critical as well. They could, and should, be addressed through the development consent process and other methods, such as taking steps to impose legally binding targets, better aircraft design, much improved public transport and a new use of airspace strategy.

Today is a watershed. We must draw a line under decades of dithering and take the bold decision that is required in the national interest. Expansion at Heathrow will link the UK to vital emerging markets, make it possible for airports outside the south-east to be connected to the hub, and bring jobs and opportunities across the country. The House should now take the responsible decision: support the national policy statement and back a third runway for Heathrow.

8.6 pm

Mr Dominic Grieve (Beaconsfield) (Con): I rise on behalf of my constituents to say that, in my judgment, this development is one that should be supported. About 750 of my constituents are directly employed at Heathrow airport, but many thousands more are economically dependent on its success.

It might well be that if we were starting from scratch, Heathrow airport would not be developed on the site where it is at present, but the reality is that in a country that is very crowded, particularly in the south-east of England, we have been quite successful in getting quarts into pint pots and minimising the environmental impact that might take place elsewhere if another hub airport had to be developed. The idea, for example, that we could successfully build one in the Thames estuary without vast amounts of environmental damage is simply fanciful. I am also convinced that we need a hub airport and that a capacity is being reached.

All those things take me to the view that this development, if it can be achieved within the environmental parameters, to which I shall come back in a moment, ought to be supported. I say that, I might add, even though I am probably going to be personally affected: living where I do in Hammersmith, I have absolutely no doubt that I shall be directly under the northern flight path into the airport.

My concerns, however, are these. First, there has been a consistent lack of strategic planning about the area around Heathrow airport. At the moment, many of my constituents, particularly in Iver, which is closest to the

airport, have their lives blighted by the consequences of that. Developments that were allowed to take place during the second world war, which are now linked to the airport's success, provide a level of planning blight that is exceptionally bad. Just to give an idea to the House, in Iver village, where two heavy goods vehicles cannot pass each other without going on to the pavement, one HGV per minute goes through the village street. All this is linked to the fact that Heathrow airport is an economic hub and presents real difficulties for my residents that, I might add, are going to continue even if this development does not go ahead.

Secondly, there is the problem of noise. It is difficult to make a judgment as to what the noise levels will be from the construction of a north-west runway, but there is no doubt that even today in the southernmost bit of my constituency, people are affected by the noise of aircraft on the ground. That, too, is going to have to be addressed, and I am very concerned that the current project does not necessarily envisage some of those residents being entitled to compensation. I was glad to hear from the Secretary of State today that that will be reviewed.

My third concern is about the entire environment in which I live. The Colne Valley is an area of biodiversity. It is also exceptionally attractive, and could be made much more so, if the proper investment went in. One of the things I look to from the development of a third runway is that some of those developments will be facilitated. If they are forthcoming, these developments, be they putting in the proper road infrastructure and an Iver relief road or environmental improvements in the Colne Valley, are capable of delivering a better outcome for my constituents and the environment than they have at present. That is one reason why, at this stage, I am prepared to support the scheme.

I am left with a slight sense that people see this vote as final. One should read what the NPS actually says. Paragraphs 112 through to 120 make clear the targets to be met if the Secretary of State is ever to sanction the development. If they cannot be met, as the right hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (John McDonnell) has correctly said, there will be successful legal challenges. In those circumstances, I would want those legal challenges to succeed: I will certainly not condemn my constituents, or those of any other part of London or its immediate and adjacent areas, to levels of pollution that do not meet the environmental standards to which we have said we will adhere. I see that as a major challenge for the Government to meet.

Justine Greening: My right hon. and learned Friend has made an important point. The problem is that the assessment would come after Heathrow had spent probably billions of pounds on a runway that it was then unable to use, and it would seek to recover that from the taxpayer.

Mr Grieve: I take my right hon. Friend's point, but the modelling that will have to take place even before the development proceeds ought to be capable of identifying whether that will happen. If it is to fall on the taxpayer to compensate for the failure of the scheme once it starts, that is something the Secretary of State will have to take full account of before giving any approval.

For those reasons, and because I happen to believe that a hub airport is a necessity and cannot be avoided, and because I also believe that there are real economic benefits for this country that cannot be ignored, I am prepared tonight to support the Government—but, as I say, my support is conditional. If this project is to deliver a better future for our country generally and for local residents, the Government will have to show that they understand the wider considerations of environmental benefit and improvement that must go with it.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): Order. After the next speaker, I am afraid that I will have to reduce the time limit to four minutes, and I remind people that interventions mean that others might not be able to get in. I say that particularly to people who have already spoken.

8.13 pm

Sir Vince Cable (Twickenham) (LD): I start by expressing my respect for the right hon. Member for Chelsea and Fulham (Greg Hands) for having resigned from the Government over this issue. I, like him and quite a few other Members, am concerned partly about our own residents and partly about the wider national interest. We are being criticised in some quarters for being nimby, but in this case our backyard is very large indeed. At present, 1 million people are affected by the 51 Leq—equivalent continuous sound level—noise contour, which is a good definition of serious impact, and that number will increase substantially.

The aspect of noise that I want to focus on, however, has already been alluded to by the right hon. Member for Wokingham (John Redwood) and others, and this is the deliberate creation of what our residents now call “noise sewers”: the deliberate concentration of flights along particular routes. The problem is aggravated by the absence of regulations governing the angle of take-off, which is judged by airlines specifically according to fuel savings. Tens of thousands of residents under take-off paths as well as landing paths are subject to extreme and prolonged forms of noise pollution. The question now is: how will the expansion of Heathrow affect that?

The number of flights is to increase by more than 50%, and the NPS says it would like to keep the proportion of people additionally affected to around 10%, so almost by definition those who will experience the greatest hardship and environmental damage will be those under the existing flight paths. I invite the Minister in reply to give some reassurance to those who have to deal with this noise sewage problem and say how that can be alleviated within the overall policy. We do not know the future flight paths or whether the Government will regulate to deal with some of the effects, but perhaps they could give us some assurances.

On the wider national picture, I strongly agree with the analysis of the right hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (John McDonnell). I do not necessarily agree with his approach to public finances, but on the financing of the airport he is absolutely right. Heathrow Ltd is an exceedingly dodgy company by any reckoning: last year, its profits were just over £500 million, but it remitted in dividends over £700 million; it extracts rent in the form of monopoly rent from its existing holdings,

[*Sir Vince Cable*]

particularly its monopoly control of car parks; it has very little interest in development; and its balance sheet position is terrible—it has run down its shareholder funds from £5 billion to about £700 million and it has doubled its debt. It has no interest in development and no competence in managing the kind of risky project now envisaged. The only way the Government can cope is by underwriting the company. We know in practice, however, that the regulator, because of the regulatory asset base system of regulation at the airport, will increase landing charges to enable the investment to remain profitable. The worry expressed by people such as Willie Walsh, the chief executive of British Airways, is that passengers—or a combination of the taxpayer and passengers—will pay for the overrun.

The other aspect of cost that the right hon. Gentleman rightly referred to is the complete lack of a definition of who pays for the infrastructure costs outside the perimeter fence. We have a wide range of estimates, from £5 billion, in the Davies report, to £15 billion from Transport for London. The Government say they do not recognise the lesser figure, but what figure do they recognise? The developers have said they will come up with only £1 billion, so where will the remaining billions come from? I know that “the odd billion between friends” might be a good way of looking at this, from the Government’s point of view, but we need some precision and some protection for the public finances. Billions of pounds of public investment are ultimately likely to be involved, and given how the Treasury operates, with the rationing of capital, this will come at the expense of infrastructure projects in other parts of the country.

In my remaining minute, I want to say a bit about that regional impact. The assumption in the Government’s statement is that the regions will benefit, but they patently will not. There will be a rationing of capital and of landing rights because of carbon dioxide limits. Every one of the seven leading regional airports—Edinburgh, Manchester, Birmingham, East Midlands, Bristol, and others—have made it absolutely clear that they oppose Heathrow expansion because it inhibits their own potential for developing point-to-point routes to other parts of the world. In terms of the aggregate picture, we have already been told that the net present value is close to zero, and actually heavily negative if we take out international transfer passengers, and on the specific issues, such as the availability of flights outside Europe for business passengers, only 2% of all flights fall in this category. For national and local reasons, therefore, I oppose the motion.

8.19 pm

Zac Goldsmith (Richmond Park) (Con): We have heard about some of the human and environmental consequences of the decision that we may be about to make, but it is worth repeating them.

Heathrow is already the noisiest airport in the world, and a third runway will obviously make that problem worse. The Heathrow area has been in breach of air pollution laws for more than a decade. Expansion will mean 250,000 more flights, 25 million more road passenger journeys, and therefore, plainly, more pollution. A third runway will mean the destruction of old and entrenched communities such as those described by the right hon.

Member for Hayes and Harlington (John McDonnell)—I pay tribute to Armelle and her campaign against the third runway, which goes back many years. Thousands of homes will be destroyed to make way for the new runway. Families will be displaced and simply told to start again. Official forecasts tell us that Heathrow expansion is not reconcilable with the Climate Change Act 2008. Those are just some of the consequences of the way in which we are potentially likely to vote tonight.

Members would only sign off those costs if they believed that the economic upside justified it, but so much of what we have heard about the economic benefits is propaganda. It is not even very sophisticated propaganda. Heathrow bosses must be laughing out loud when they tell us that expansion can deliver 250,000 more flights without any extra car journeys, or that a third runway will mean that fewer people will be affected by noise.

Let me briefly say something about the economic case. In its 2014 report, on which the Government’s decision was based, the Airports Commission estimated that Heathrow expansion would deliver £147 billion worth of total economic benefit. The Government lapped it up, but then, in last year’s draft NPS, they quietly revised the figure down to between £72 billion and £74.2 billion—less than half the original estimate. Today’s NPS uses the same figure, but admits that it is a gross figure which does not include the actual economic and financial costs of the proposal.

Adam Afriyie (Windsor) (Con): Does my hon. Friend agree that if the runway were ever built—in fact, it would be half a runway—it would be the most expensive place on earth on which to land, and that that would knock out the economics of improving our trade and connectivity?

Zac Goldsmith: As would be expected, my hon. Friend has made an impeccable point.

The net present value, a metric which does include all the costs and benefits, reduces the figure to between £2.9 billion and minus £2.5 billion over a 60-year period. So the upside has gone from £147 billion to minus £2.5 billion, yet the Government’s position has not budged.

It gets worse. A report from the New Economics Foundation shows that three quarters of any new capacity from a third runway will be taken up by international-to-international transfer passengers who never leave the airport. The Department for Transport’s own guidance says that they add nothing whatsoever to the economy, and should not be counted. If they are excluded—as the Government have recommended to themselves—the NPV is reduced by a further £5.5 billion, which produces a minus figure. DfT analysis also shows that an overrun in Heathrow’s costs of just 1% could be enough to negate the overall benefits of the scheme.

None of that, by the way, takes into account the point made by the right hon. Member for Twickenham (Sir Vince Cable) about Transport for London’s estimated £15 billion price tag for a link between the Heathrow expansion and surface level. It also does not take into account the legal and planning complexities that are unique to Heathrow. A gigantic legal challenge, backed by local authorities, City Hall and numerous organisations, is waiting around the corner from tonight’s vote.

This is what is so utterly perplexing. Why would we choose the most polluting, most disruptive, most expensive and least deliverable option, when the alternative is at least as economically beneficial, and vastly simpler to deliver? It is not because Heathrow will deliver more connectivity. According to every metric and every analysis, Gatwick and Heathrow deliver the same. Even the discredited Airports Commission's own analysis predicts that whichever airport expands, the UK as a whole will achieve almost identical connectivity.

That brings me to the NPS. I am having to skip whole chunks of what I was going to say. The NPS is a horror story. The Secretary of State told the House that Heathrow expansion would "enable" growth at Birmingham, Newquay, Aberdeen, and other regional airports. That is nonsense. The Government's own analysis shows that Heathrow expansion hinders growth at regional airports. It does not "enable" it. The Transport Committee found that if expansion goes ahead, there will be 74,000 fewer direct international flights per year to and from airports in the non-London regions in 2030, and that the figure will double by 2050.

In the last few seconds available to me, let me ask the Secretary of State to take this opportunity to put the record straight, because he has misled the House. We are being asked to approve a monstrous scheme, and I urge—beg, even—Members to look at the details before they cast their votes.

8.24 pm

Kelvin Hopkins (Luton North) (Ind): I do not believe that a third runway at Heathrow is necessary or desirable, for all the reasons that have been set out so powerfully by other Members. I shall certainly vote against Heathrow expansion tonight. I entered the Chamber totally opposed to it, and what I have heard has convinced me that it is an absolute and total nonsense,

I do not wish to be wholly negative about the need for airport capacity, especially to serve the capital and the south-east. I have one major and specific alternative proposal to advance, which is serious, sensible and practicable. Let me say first, however, that it is clear that maximum use must be made of existing airport capacity in and around London. Indeed, that was emphasised in at least one Government policy statement, although another that was published at about the same time mysteriously missed out the reference.

This capacity will, of course, include London Luton airport, whose passenger numbers are rapidly increasing, and where substantial investment is happening now to cope with future demand. Luton airport is a major part of our local economy, and a booming success story. With new parallel taxiways and the coming generation of composite-bodied aircraft, our airport will be able to accommodate long-haul flights and millions more passengers. My primary concern today, however, is to propose an expansion of airport capacity to serve not just London and the south-east, but the midlands and beyond.

Very simply, my proposal is to link Birmingham airport to central London with a direct fast electrified rail link. The Great Western line linking Birmingham Snow Hill to Marylebone and Paddington should be electrified, and should include the rail link from Leamington Spa to Birmingham airport. With some modest upgrading and the restoration of a few miles of four tracks on the

line and a direct link to Crossrail at the southern end, rapid direct services to and from central London will be possible. Indeed, that could also provide for a rapid rail service between Heathrow and Birmingham, again using Crossrail, in a hub-satellite relationship. That would be useful for Members, who would be able to take the Jubilee line from Westminster to Bond Street and then immediately get on to a train which would take them straight into the heart of Birmingham airport. The airport has a long runway to accommodate large, long-haul aircraft on intercontinental flights, and has at least 50% spare capacity.

John Grogan (Keighley) (Lab): Notwithstanding his vision for Birmingham, does my hon. Friend recognise that, according to official Government figures, there will be 40,000 fewer international point-to-point flights from Birmingham in 2040 if Heathrow expansion goes ahead?

Kelvin Hopkins: I thank my hon. Friend for making that powerful point.

There is massive extra capacity at Birmingham, and that seems likely to expand in the future. There is a railway station actually in the airport, linked via Leamington Spa to the main Great Western line. It is not a remote parkway station, but can provide direct rail travel right into the airport, much as happens at Gatwick. With 125-mph electrified trains, non-stop on the main route, journeys would take less than an hour from central London, and would be convenient and easy with no train changes required.

I have consulted, and have been advised by, experienced railway engineers who, like me, are convinced that this scheme would be perfectly practicable and inexpensive to build. I have also discussed the scheme with Paul Kehoe, who was recently chief executive of Birmingham airport, and is an old friend who was formerly airport director at Luton. He, too, considers the scheme to be eminently feasible and perfectly practicable. Many Members rightly believe that we should seek to develop our regional economy economies, with more emphasis on regional airports. I believe that developing Birmingham airport will meet that challenge too, while also making a potentially massive contribution to south-east aviation needs.

I urge Ministers to give serious consideration to what I propose, and to think again about Heathrow expansion.

8.28 pm

Iain Stewart (Milton Keynes South) (Con): Just outside the boundaries of my constituency lies a charming little village called Cublington. I mention that because 50 years ago, in 1968, the Roskill commission started its inquiry on airport expansion in the south-east. Its conclusion was that a new airport at Cublington should be recommended. Fifty years on, we are still dithering, and the time for a decision is now.

I have been a member of the Transport Committee for the majority of my time in this House. I have been part of two inquiries into airport expansion. The first, which was in 2013, was not scheme-specific, but looked at the general pros and cons of all the options for London and the south-east: Boris Island, Gatwick, Stansted, Luton and the others. Since then, I have been part of the current Select Committee's inquiry on the scheme-specific proposal for Heathrow.

[Iain Stewart]

I started my journey with an open mind—I did not have a preference for any airport. Indeed, I was not even convinced that we needed airport expansion in the first place. I looked favourably on suggestions that a proper high-speed rail network would free up enough domestic capacity at our international airports to create space for the long-hauls. However, having looked at all the evidence in detail, I am convinced that we do need the expansion of a hub airport over point-to-point capacity—both are important, but we need the hub option—and that the location for that should be Heathrow. Gatwick has many advantages, but it is on the wrong side of London for most of the rest of the country. It is also one of the primary freight hubs, and we need that freight capacity in the holds of passenger aircraft to make many routes viable. It is essential for our long-term international trading interests that we have this expanded capacity.

I was agnostic about whether we should choose the third runway or the Heathrow hub option. Neither of the options is perfect; each has its advantages and disadvantages. We also have to contend with the uncertainty of forecasting many decades into the future.

It is important to point out that the current Select Committee's inquiry looked only at the current Heathrow option; it did not conduct a comparative analysis of Gatwick or the Heathrow hub option. That was not in our remit, but had we done that, I am sure we would have found shortcomings in the other schemes as well.

We also did not look at the comparative costs of not proceeding—the huge economic cost to this country of not building new airport capacity at this point, when Schiphol, Frankfurt, Charles de Gaulle, Istanbul and Dubai would mop up our markets. What is the opportunity cost environmentally of not proceeding at this point, given the emissions from aircraft both circling in the air and on the ground now?

I am satisfied that the Government are listening to the Select Committee's recommendations, if not in the NPS then at some other point in the process. I am also satisfied that technology will help to address many of the justifiable concerns that people have. Aircraft technology will deliver quieter and less polluting planes. Electric vehicles will remove many of the surface access concerns, and there are solutions so that moving aircraft from the stand to the runway involves less emissions. All in all, we cannot afford to delay this decision.

8.32 pm

Lucy Powell (Manchester Central) (Lab/Co-op): I will spend most of my speech discussing a cross-party letter that myself and 21 other MPs from Greater Manchester wrote to the Secretary of State last week in support of Heathrow expansion, and also asking the Government to renew and restate their energy and focus on delivering the vision of a northern powerhouse transport strategy that is fit for purpose. Before I do so, however, I will say a couple of things about Heathrow itself.

I am for national infrastructure projects. I think that they boost jobs and growth—in this case, high-quality jobs—directly and indirectly. The economic benefits of a hub airport in London are unquestionable, which is why trade unions such as Unite and the GMB are in favour. We must also remember that that capacity would

go elsewhere if it was not at Heathrow. Obviously, there are concerns—environmental, noise and air quality concerns in particular—and they need to be addressed throughout the process.

I see today's decision as a gateway decision, not a final decision, but if we are in favour of major infrastructure projects, as I am, we also have to be in favour of taking the difficult and tough decisions to make them a reality. There are always reasons to oppose things, which is why we have seen such delay and dithering in relation to Heathrow over many years. I totally understand and respect the issues that local Members of Parliament have, and they have done themselves a great deal of justice in putting them forward.

I want to turn now to the issues relating to the north. Let us be honest: over the past few weeks, the optics of transport infrastructure in the north have been terrible, with “Northern Fail” and all the problems that have arisen from that. Unfortunately, this has given the impression that the northern powerhouse ambitions are second-order priority for this Government, and that there is always something more important to focus on. That was why we came together as a cross-party group of MPs to ask the Government to now give the same energy and focus that they have given to Heathrow expansion over the past few years to truly realising the northern powerhouse vision. It is a great vision. If we can get the agglomerative effect of connecting all our great cities with our fantastic airports in the north, including Manchester airport, we can really rebalance the economy for good.

Manchester airport has come up a few times in the debate. We want the Government to recognise the fact that it is not like any other regional airport. It is the second best connected airport in the country. It serves many direct routes, including trade and business routes to China, Africa and many other places, and we want a bespoke strategy for Manchester airport that acknowledges that. In particular, that strategy needs to focus on the HS2 stop and on connecting northern powerhouse rail to Manchester airport. We want the same deal that other airports have had in relation to who is going to fund that HS2 stop. We are being asked to fund it, but we do not think that that is fair. Birmingham is getting its stop funded by the Government, and connections to Heathrow and Gatwick have been funded by the Government through many years of rail investment. We want the same. We will support this decision tonight, on the basis not of the hub being connected to Manchester airport, but of the benefits to the country as a whole, but we now want the northern powerhouse vision to be realised.

8.36 pm

Crispin Blunt (Reigate) (Con): Let me spend the first couple of minutes of my speech addressing some of the issues that have been raised this evening. We have had the 2009 vote thrown back at us—that was when my party voted against Heathrow—but since 2009, the arguments have been about the Airports Commission report. In 2009, I personally would have supported an airport in the estuary, and there are still common-sense arguments in favour of that, particularly in relation to the environment. An environmental trade-off between people and wildlife would have to be made. It is still the

case, however, that we asked the Airports Commission to look at all the issues, and it came up with a clear conclusion.

I want to pick up on a point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes South (Iain Stewart). There is a serious cost to not making a decision. We have been friggling around with this for 50 years, one way and another, but we finally have to grasp the nettle and make a decision.

I also want to address the points about hubs made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chelsea and Fulham (Greg Hands). His argument is addressed by the relative success of Incheon airport in Korea, which has taken the cluster of airports around Tokyo to the cleaners, economically, as has Chicago when compared with New York, which has three separate airports around the city. The economic lessons about the success of hub airports are there to be learned.

The hon. Member for Hammersmith (Andy Slaughter) made several points about Gatwick, and I want to address them as the chair of the Gatwick Co-ordination Group, which brings together colleagues in this House, councillors from the affected local authorities, and representatives from the voluntary and charitable sectors with a key interest in the decision. We submitted our own response to the Airports Commission. The House needs to understand that there are two total showstoppers as far as Gatwick is concerned. One of the masterstrokes in my campaign was to drive the then Transport Secretary in a straight line from central London to Redhill, which is just over halfway to Gatwick. It is a distance of 30 km, and it took us two and a half hours using the main arterial route to Gatwick from central London.

Gatwick hangs off one rail access route: the Brighton main line, the busiest commuter line in the country. Those of us whose constituents are served by and use that line have all experienced the agony it has caused over the past four years. If there were a proposal for additional rail access to Gatwick, it would at least have some credibility, but Heathrow will have five new rail accesses to serve the extra runway. There is simply no comparison, not least given the obvious point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes South that Gatwick is the wrong side of London for the vast majority of the country.

The final point I want to make in the very limited time available is about the workforce. When we submitted evidence to the commission in 2015, we totalled up all the people who were unemployed and claiming benefit in a vast area centred on Gatwick who could try to service the estimated 122,000 primary and secondary jobs that would come from expansion at Gatwick. Today that number is under 20,000. If we want to add to the massive housebuilding demand in areas of the south-east that we cannot even meet now, that would be one way of doing it.

8.40 pm

Anna Turley (Redcar) (Lab/Co-op): Today's decision is about much more than airport capacity in London. This is a major national infrastructure project that can affect every region of our country, and it is on behalf of my own region of Teesside that I speak in favour of Heathrow expansion.

I pay tribute to Heathrow for its commitment to setting up logistics hubs, which will make sure that jobs and investment can be shared across the UK. Spreading the supply chain across the country in that way is a first for a national infrastructure project such as this and a key reason why I will vote in favour of expansion.

The South Tees Development Corporation site—a former steel site—in my constituency has been shortlisted to be one of those four hubs. I was pleased to welcome the Heathrow team to Teesside last month to show off the infrastructure and the local skills we have to offer. British Steel, with sites at Lackenby and Skinningrove on Teesside, also has aspirations to provide steel for the project, supporting jobs in our region. Heathrow expansion has the potential to give a boost to local economies such as the north-east. It is supported by the North East chamber of commerce, and additional flights are expected to generate £1.5 billion in additional economic growth.

After completion, a bigger Heathrow will be a driver for growth across our country, delivering new connections to open up Britain and links to the rest of the world. On Teesside we have investors from all over the world—from the US and Australia, to the middle east and Asia—who are looking for good transport connections when developing their projects. Heathrow expansion would deliver a boost not just for passenger flights, but for the movement of goods and services to both domestic and international markets. More than 550,000 international visits were made to the north-east in 2016, generating expenditure of more than £400 million.

It speaks volumes that more than 40 UK airports, including my own local airport, Durham Tees Valley, which states:

“We strongly support the expansion of capacity at Heathrow”, support the expansion and the new connections it will bring. Durham Tees Valley airport is currently cut off from the UK's hub. Amsterdam and Aberdeen are virtually the only destinations it is possible to fly to directly from the airport, which has been named by Flybe in its route map for Heathrow expansion, and easyJet is also considering it for a future Heathrow route. That connection would be a big boost for our local economy and for businesses and holiday passengers alike, and the interest demonstrates the appetite for more domestic connections in our hub.

To ensure that our regions can benefit, I welcome Heathrow's promise to support ring-fencing a proportion of slots for domestic flights and the commitment to reducing domestic passenger charges. Factors such as air passenger duty can be a drag on the affordability of domestic flights to regions such as mine, and that, along with the environmental commitments, is a commitment to which I and many other colleagues will hold both Heathrow and Ministers.

To conclude, for too long we as a country have been putting off this decision. Our national hub is at full capacity, and if we do not want to fall behind other countries we have to expand. Heathrow expansion is good for the British economy, good for jobs across the UK, and good for British Steel. Let us stop dithering and get this project off the ground.

8.43 pm

Adam Afriyie (Windsor) (Con): Of course I rise to defend my constituents, and I think everyone in this House would expect me to do so. Given the idea of

[Adam Afriyie]

Windsor castle being triple glazed and of 7 million visitors to Windsor being overwhelmed by the noise of aircraft, I can do nothing but object to the proposal. It would require the demolition of hundreds of houses. The noise levels experienced across the entire Windsor constituency and in Bracknell Forest, Woking and everywhere else in the area are already dreadful and would get much worse. We know about the pollution levels and I am pretty sure that everyone present will have experienced the congestion on the M4. It is a very bad idea to expand Heathrow.

People would expect me, as the MP for Windsor, to say these things, and they would expect me to be a nimby but, frankly, with my background in business and my having studied economics, my major objection to the third runway at Heathrow is to do with the national interest and national economics.

I have to ask a few questions. First, why do we believe we will have more flights to the regions? I have been an MP for 13 years, and I know how easy it is just to read the briefings and go with the flow, but the Government's own data and analysis say that every single region of the United Kingdom will have fewer connections than they would have had if Heathrow were not expanded.

Lilian Greenwood: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Adam Afriyie: I will not give way because of the time available.

Every single region, particularly the south-east, will have fewer flights. The second area where it is easy to have some fairly lazy thinking is the hub-and-spoke concept. The facts have clearly changed, and it is now about point-to-point travel. Nobody wants to get on an aircraft and then change to get somewhere else. Everybody wants to fly direct. The aircraft that are being purchased today by every single airline are point-to-point aircraft. Ninety-seven per cent. of all aircraft ordered are for point-to-point travel.

Aircraft can get from London to Sydney direct. Why are we showing our age? Why are we showing this lazy thinking, that we need a 20th century solution to a 21st century problem? I know it is difficult, because Heathrow has a huge amount of propaganda. Heathrow has a lot to gain. It paid £1 billion in dividends to shareholders while making only a £500 million profit. Of course it is in Heathrow's interest to try to get this decision in its favour and to try to slow the process so it can continue to drive up landing fees.

Lastly, it upsets me as a Conservative to sit on these Benches and see us all nodding our heads and saying that we should go ahead and create the most expensive airport in the world at which to land. Why on earth would we commit to such a project?

Crispin Blunt: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way. The way to make both Gatwick and Heathrow more expensive is simply to create no more slots by having no more capacity.

Adam Afriyie: Funnily enough, I have some sympathy with that view. I agree with my hon. Friend on having an offshore airport to address the country's very long-term interests. An offshore airport slot would be a lot less

expensive than a Heathrow slot. It costs just six quid per passenger to land at Gatwick, but it costs £24 per passenger to land at Heathrow. It is crazy to invest further in Heathrow to create a £34 per passenger cost for the airlines. That makes no sense whatsoever.

I cannot support this, and I hope that, in the coming months, as they begin to realise that Heathrow is pulling a fast one on them, the Government will begin to back off. We will then all gradually begin to change our minds.

8.47 pm

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhese (Slough) (Lab): The decision to expand Heathrow is complex and contested, with competing projections and a range of criteria that must be considered—more than I can do justice to within the four-minute time limit.

As we have heard, my party's Front Bench remains unconvinced, with the four tests not being met. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the shadow Secretary of State for Transport and his team for sparing their valuable time to discuss the issue with me in depth.

My good friend the Mayor of London and the No 3rd Runway coalition have put cogent arguments to me for why the third runway should not be built. Conversely, my local council, Slough Borough Council, has come out strongly in favour, as have the Trades Union Congress and unions such as Unite and the GMB, which represent thousands of local workers. I have listened very closely to their representations.

First, on climate change, we must bear traffic noise and air quality in mind. Yes, a new runway will mean more flights and more traffic, but what would be the impact on our environment if we do not build a new runway? The sad truth is that, if we do not build it, others will. New runways would be built in other parts of Europe, and the net result would be no different. The Government and Heathrow airport contend that they will have electric vehicle fleets and less noisy, less polluting aircraft, along with other mitigation efforts.

Secondly, expanding Heathrow will boost the national economy by tens of billions of pounds. In addition to creating apprenticeships, a new third runway will purportedly create more than 100,000 jobs across the UK, nearly doubling the size of the current workforce. Many of those jobs will be skilled jobs, jobs with prospects, unionised jobs, well-paid jobs.

Thirdly, there is the local economy and the benefits for Slough. The people of Slough sent me here to look after their interests, so of course I will be looking very closely at the impact of expansion. I am grateful to the many hundreds of residents who have shared their views with me. Heathrow is firmly in our backyard, given that the proposed runway will be built on Slough Borough Council land, and the people most directly affected by Heathrow airport must also be those who benefit the most. There must be fair compensation and clear benefits for local people.

I have argued with the aviation Minister, the chief executive of Heathrow airport and others that a greater share of the business rates must rightly come to Slough. The waste facility in Colnbrook would need to be rebuilt in Slough, along with a training and skills hub. More than 4,000 Slough residents rely on Heathrow for their living and a further 3,600 Slough people work in

related industries. The expansion of Heathrow will protect and boost those jobs, while helping to tackle youth unemployment in the surrounding areas.

Fourthly, on the UK's transport infrastructure, let us not forget what this proposal means for thousands of people who will be able to use a new runway, as customers, to travel to destinations unknown to previous generations. As our Parliament deliberates on whether we build one new runway, it is worth reminding ourselves that India will be building 50 new airports and the Chinese will be building 136 new airports by 2025. When weighing all this evidence, and with the Slough people foremost in my mind, I will be voting in favour of expanding Heathrow when the House divides. I will do so without any sense of jubilation, nor am I handing Ministers a blank cheque. I will be keeping an eagle eye on how the Government implement this project. Ministers and Heathrow airport will rue the day they seek to renege on their promises in principle to the people of Slough.

In many ways, I vote in favour of expansion with a heavy heart. I am concerned about the environment and of course we must weigh up these various issues, including the uprooting of people from their homes. However, we are faced with a binary decision to make at this stage, without all the requested clarifications and answers, including on flight paths, the six and a half-hour night flight ban, local apprenticeships and the western road into Heathrow and discounted car parking.

Mr Speaker: We are extremely grateful to the hon. Gentleman, who is now able to breathe.

8.51 pm

Mr John Hayes (South Holland and The Deepings) (Con): Governments in democratic polities struggle with big, long-term, strategic decisions, and that affects our infrastructure particularly. They struggle because those who make such decisions rarely get the credit, as they are long out of office once the impact of the decisions has been felt; because there is no political payback, typically, in a five-year period; and, more nobly, because they are reluctant to tie the hands of their successors. For those reasons, successive Governments over time have tended to duck the kind of issues we are debating tonight, and it is to the credit of the Secretary of State, his Department and this Government that they are taking such a decision. That they are doing so is not surprising, given their history. When I was a Transport Minister, we took a very big decision about road investment, with the biggest road investment strategy of modern times. Crossrail was a product of a long-term decision of the kind I am describing. And when I was Energy Minister, our coalition Government took a big decision about nuclear power, so this Government have a disproportionately good record against the backdrop I have described. It is right of course to consider the impact of such decisions, and the issues that have, understandably, been raised tonight in particular concern air quality, noise, traffic and compensation. Air quality is about a much bigger issue than just airports. We need to reconsider what we do about air quality and the Government have done that. The work we have done on the electric charging infrastructure, autonomous vehicles and trying to move towards cleaner means of travel will have a real impact on emissions over time. Technology will change, too. It is likely that all modes of transport will become cleaner and less polluting than they are

now, but we are making the decision now and it is very hard for us to see that, hard to imagine what the world might be like in 20, 30 or 40 years' time.

Compensation is being paid as a result of the consideration of the Government, the inquiries that we made and the record consultation—the one on this subject was one of the biggest ever. As you know, Mr Speaker, the compensation package that will be paid to those directly affected, including many of the constituents of Members who have spoken in this debate, is going to allow them to take steps in their homes and in their communities to mitigate some of the worst effects that have been described to us in this short debate. More steps can be taken on noise, and so the Secretary of State has been clear about night flights, about how noise can be controlled and about how surface noise can be dealt with.

Before I come to the exciting culmination of this thrilling address, it is worth saying that one or two valid points were made by Members on the Opposition Benches. We do need to look more closely at how people get to and from the airport, as we have been too blasé in our assumptions about those kinds of issues and their effect on noise, disruption, congestion and so on.

Finally, this debate is about 40,000 more jobs, 5,000 more apprenticeships and a £44 billion economic benefit to our capital city. In the end, it is about a huge economic boost to our capital and to our country. It is right that we take account of the environmental considerations, and we must take them seriously, but the economic case is one that is made.

8.55 pm

Mike Kane (Wythenshawe and Sale East) (Lab): It was the Mancunian entrepreneur and industrialist Daniel Adamson who coined the phrase “northern powerhouse” in 1882, when he wanted to create a single economic region stretching from the Mersey estuary to the Humber estuary. The process of building the Manchester ship canal took up three years of parliamentary time.

The Department for Transport has done an astonishing piece of work: from two Prime Ministers ruling it out, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (John McDonnell) said, within three years it has gone from consultation to a national policy statement to this motion. One can only hope that the Government will have the same laser-like focus and energy when they talk about the regional aviation strategy, northern powerhouse rail and HS2. In his letter to Manchester MPs, all that the Secretary of State said was that he hopes that regional airports fulfil their potential. There was no promise of Government support for them.

Let me state my position. All the major trade unions have come out in favour of the expansion of Heathrow, and the north-west CBI has said that the proposal will create 15,000 jobs in the north-west of England and add around £16 billion-worth of growth to our economy. That is why I will vote for the motion tonight.

Today, first thing in the morning, I had the great honour of celebrating Manchester airport's 80th birthday in my own constituency. Some 28 million passengers went through Manchester airport last year, making my constituency one of the most visited in northern England. It is the only airport outside the south-east with two runways

[Mike Kane]

and has a rail station that serves 5 million passengers a year. Those runways have the potential to bring 55 million people into that northern hub and, as the Secretary of State knows, the airport is investing £1 billion in a transformation programme. Only 1.6% of passengers who use Manchester airport use Heathrow.

We have been let down by the “northern fail”. Public transport penetration and journey times are key to Manchester airport’s growth, but the journey to Leeds takes 16 minutes longer on the new timetable. We have no agreement about how the HS2 station is going to be paid for, about the east-west alignment at Piccadilly station or about the extension of the Metrolink to the terminal 2 building. We are still awaiting a lot of promises.

Mike Amesbury (Weaver Vale) (Lab): That is exactly why this northern MP, who was born in Manchester and worked at Manchester airport, will be standing up for the north and voting against the motion.

Mike Kane: I respect my hon. Friend’s position. It is horrible when City and United fans fall out, but when people born in Wythenshawe fall out, the gods weep.

Heathrow and Gatwick have benefited from huge subsidies, including £15 billion for Crossrail and £500 million of public funds for western rail access. Manchester airport could meet 75% of long-haul needs for the whole country. I was astonished to hear SNP Members, who would not let me intervene, talk about Heathrow being vital to Scotland when they want independence. If they wanted vitality for Scottish airports, they would use their power over airport passenger duty, which would lead to an increase in passengers in Scotland, but they again bottled implementing that devolved power just earlier this month.

I agree with the right hon. Member for Putney (Justine Greening) that point-to-point is the model for the future in London. At the moment, we have a cartel situation. People from Manchester airport fly across the world and when they land they see BA aeroplanes, but we cannot get those same BA aircraft from Manchester to anywhere else in the world. BA should be done under the Trades Description Act; it should be renamed “Heathrow Airways”, and it should be done pretty quickly. The Secretary of State has given northern stakeholders few assurances that there is an integrated plan for the north of England. I will be supporting the motion this evening, but we will be holding the Government’s feet to the fire about a bespoke plan for the northern economy.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Order. A three-minute limit on Back-Bench speeches will now have to apply.

9 pm

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (The Cotswolds) (Con): With no availability at its main hub airport, London is beginning to find that new routes to important long-haul destinations are set up elsewhere in Europe, rather than in the UK. Other UK airports are increasingly squeezed out by Heathrow, with passengers from the nations and regions obliged to transfer through other European airports. That is the hub—literally—of this debate.

Although I respect my hon. Friends who oppose the proposal for Heathrow airport for constituency reasons, I respectfully say that they are wrong. The future is of hub airports. We can look, for example, at Dubai, South Korea and Bangkok. All the airports where there is major expansion are hub airports. My hon. Friends suggest that we should spread the service across five London airports. All that will mean is spreading the misery across far more communities in London.

The right hon. Member for Warley (John Spellar) put his finger on it when he said that if we do not adapt to what the world is facing, we will simply outsource air travel and pollution to other countries in Europe, and that really would not be very sensible. Of course, my hon. Friends want the greatest protections they can possibly have against the environmental damage and noise aspects of the airport, and I support them wholly in that.

Let me make my final point in the very short time that I have available. In paragraph 2.32 of the Airports Commission report, it says:

“Another important trend is that of rising inbound travel into Europe from emerging market economies. IATA’s forecasts...predict that over the next two decades the growth of the origin and destination (OD) market in China alone is predicted to be greater than that in the US, UK and Germany combined”.

If this country wants to succeed in a competitive world, it has to expand its airport at Heathrow. I am chairman of the all-party trade and investment group. I can see only too clearly what will happen if we do not remain competitive. Hong Kong started its consultation on this matter in 2011. Within the next five years, it will have completed a hugely difficult airport policy into the sea around Hong Kong. We must remain competitive. The world is changing around us.

9.3 pm

Seema Malhotra (Feltham and Heston) (Lab/Co-op): I thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity to speak in today’s debate. Heathrow plays an essential role in our national economy. My constituency is located on the gateway from Heathrow to London, with Heathrow being a powerful global symbol of our internationalism and our diversity.

I have been sceptical in the past about expansion, and indeed campaigned against the last proposed third runway. Today, on balance, based on jobs for the next generation and on what we need for our economy, I will not be voting against the motion, but let me be clear that much more reassurance is needed from Heathrow and the Government to ensure that any application does not fall to a legal challenge and that they can deliver for the country and local communities.

A majority in my constituency is in favour of expansion—every poll in recent years has shown that, and it is generally in the ballpark of 2:1. Tens of thousands of my constituents work, or have worked, at the airport. London’s first airport was in my constituency, in what is now Hanworth Air Park.

For many of my constituents, Heathrow is more than just a global hub for transport and shipping. It is the place where they go to work every day—not only flying the planes, running the air traffic control and policing the UK border, but driving the trains and buses, cooking the meals for passengers and, in logistics,

delivering British goods to destinations all over the country and the world. They have developed a diverse set of skills to serve the needs of the aviation industry. Heathrow depends on them and they depend on Heathrow. But residents are conflicted because they want Heathrow to grow, but they also want a fair deal. It is vital that they have a fair deal.

Families have told me that they support expansion but that they have felt neglected when it comes to noise compensation. Residents wake up before 5 am if planes come in to land too early and they are unable to open their windows in the summer for the noise, including noise from hangars behind their homes. They also face traffic congestion to and from Heathrow, pollution from cars stuck in traffic and night flights. Respite and other protections are critical for their quality of life.

I campaigned alongside Hounslow councillors for Heathrow to reach out and do much better with regard to these issues, regardless of a third runway. But in my discussions with residents in recent weeks, they have cited reasons for supporting the expansion, including jobs, apprenticeships, more opportunities, a fair deal for small businesses and improved local transport. Local unions have also come out in support and residents highlight international competitiveness.

Today it is a disgrace that we are unfortunately being asked to vote before we have all the information, including sight of new flight paths and analysis of how people will be affected. If the Government get support for the NPS tonight, it will be for them to hold true to their word that the development consent will not be given unless detailed proposals show how environmental impacts will be mitigated in line with legal obligations, and all other commitments adhered to.

9.6 pm

Colin Clark (Gordon) (Con): I rise to support the Heathrow expansion and the national policy statement on airports.

Connectivity to regional airports is absolutely vital to Scotland. Aberdeen International airport is in my Gordon constituency. Some 3.1 million passengers passed through Aberdeen in 2017. It is the busiest heliport in Europe, is vital to the oil and gas industry, which supports 300,000 jobs in the United Kingdom, and it serves half a million people in the north-east. Without Heathrow's expansion, this will be undermined. That is why I am stunned that the SNP is voting against Scottish jobs.

Heathrow's international success has admittedly squeezed out regional domestic routes since 1997. These have dropped from 62,000 to 40,000. Passenger numbers have dropped from 6.7 million to 4.8 million due to capacity restraint. How can the SNP not support Scottish jobs? Carol Benzie, the managing director of Aberdeen airport, joined 40 UK airport bosses supporting this strategic growth, which the Scottish Government did support until first thing this morning.

Heathrow is vital as a hub connecting the regions with the world and it is vital to Scotland's tourism. Inverness is benefiting by £8 million due to the route from Heathrow. How can the SNP possibly want to block Scottish votes? The expansion is vital to exports such as Scottish smoked salmon, which I believe comes largely from the highlands through Heathrow. Scottish business has been stifled by cargo capacity. The expansion is good for every single Scottish constituency, so why

would the SNP possibly block it? This is where the Union works at its best, with an airport of international significance serving the regions. That is why the SNP will not vote for it—because it has something to do with the Union.

The expansion of Heathrow will mean at least 100 additional Scottish flights a week. The hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Alan Brown) agreed that we do want more flights, but tonight he is rejecting those flights. Heathrow and the national policy statement on airports are vital to the nation and to Scotland. Conservative Members will vote for jobs tonight—and the SNP will vote against Scottish jobs.

9.8 pm

Sarah Champion (Rotherham) (Lab): Five and a half years ago when I became an MP, I became a member of the Transport Committee. At that time, we were doing an inquiry into the three options for south-east airport expansion. I went into it completely open-minded, but at the end of the inquiry I was absolutely convinced that Heathrow was the only viable option. Five and a half years have passed, and I have seen this Government and the coalition pass the buck on making a decision on this important topic—whether there was a general election or a mayoral election coming up—so I am really glad that we are now having the vote.

However, the issue has been ignored and put on the back burner for 50 years. In 1968 the Roskill commission on south-east airport capacity was launched, and since then we have been on the continuum of not grasping the real opportunity to invest in our infrastructure. I contrast what we have done with what has happened with Hong Kong airport. The difference is that that airport is owned by the state and there is a very clear commitment and understanding that investing in a country's infrastructure helps it to grow.

I recognise the difficult time that many MPs have had in making the decision on how to vote. I completely understand the role of constituency MPs in serving the views and opinions of their constituents. But I would ask everybody else for whom this is not a direct constituency issue to think of the national interest, and what will happen to our economy in 10, 20 or 50 years' time if we do not invest.

I say this for a particular reason. During the Transport Committee inquiry, we had some of the big international airlines come and talk to us about what their preferred option was. They said, "Actually, this is not an issue for us any more because we plan 20 years ahead, minimum, and so we have already started to discount the UK as our hub." I know that we are in a race against time, but I want us to be putting forward a really clear message that we will invest in the infrastructure and in the people of this country. I am therefore very proud to be voting for the Heathrow option.

9.11 pm

Kwasi Kwarteng (Spelthorne) (Con): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for calling me in this important debate. I am very pleased to follow the hon. Member for Rotherham (Sarah Champion).

I am also very pleased that the right hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (John McDonnell) is in his place, because he made a number of remarks about my position

[Kwasi Kwarteng]

on Heathrow expansion. I have always supported Heathrow expansion—that must be said for the record. I find it extraordinary that he, who is supposed to be a bastion—a supporter—of workers' interests should be turning his back on that and voting down a proposal that will boost jobs in the south-east, particularly in his constituency and mine, to the extent that this proposal does. It is not just me who is saying this—it is also a man called Len McCluskey, that great champion of capitalist interests and the cartels that the right hon. Gentleman talked about. That supporter of cartels would have us believe that Heathrow and the union he represents have shared interests in the expansion. He has said very categorically that it is a step in the right direction.

Heathrow expansion has been debated for 50 years. My right hon. Friend the Member for Putney (Justine Greening) lamented the fact that this debate would last for only four hours. That is completely wrong. We have been debating this issue for 20, 30, 40 years. The hon. Member for Rotherham mentioned the Roskill commission in 1968. I would suggest that that was before half the Members here, certainly those on the Conservative Benches, were even born. It is extraordinary that Britain, of all the advanced economies in the world, should be spending so much time and effort debating building, not an airport, but a single runway in the south-east, which has had no increase in capacity for 50 years. It is a shame, and I am embarrassed, that it has taken us this long, but I am also very grateful and pleased that we finally have a Secretary of State and a Government who have taken this step forward—who have actually had the gumption and the courage to address what is a serious national problem.

The House of Commons should take its head out of the sand, collectively, and look at what is happening outside in the world—look at Dubai and the other hubs that are expanding. As my hon. Friend the Member for Reigate (Crispin Blunt) said, we should look at Incheon airport in South Korea or O'Hare airport in Chicago. These are the rising powers in aviation. As we debate and dance around these pinheads, the rest of the world is expanding, and we have to compete with that expansion. That is why I firmly recommend the Government's position and will vote in the Aye Lobby tonight.

9.14 pm

Andy Slaughter (Hammersmith) (Lab): I thought it might be difficult to do justice to 30 years of my own and my constituents' opposition to Heathrow expansion in three minutes, against a series of reckless, greedy and selfish operators of Heathrow airport, but actually I can simplify it down to three propositions. First, can the third runway at Heathrow be justified given its catastrophic human and environmental cost, especially if there are alternatives? Secondly, are those alternatives better or worse than Heathrow? Thirdly, is it feasible and will it actually happen? To the last, I would say, whether we believe in it or not, that it simply will not.

We have heard in the debate the fact that thousands of homes will be demolished; that Heathrow has been exceeding pollution targets for 10 years already and there is no plan to get those levels down; that the effect on public transport will be to suck up all the spare capacity in London, for which we worked for decades;

and that there are no plans to expand the M25 and the M4, which are already two of the most congested roads, because apparently there will not be any additional cars. We have heard about the issue of safety, with 700 additional planes going across London a day. We have also heard about safety within Heathrow and the tragic case of John Coles, who was killed at Heathrow airport, and it took an hour and eight minutes for an ambulance to arrive there.

We have heard that 9,500 people die prematurely in London every year because of air pollution; that 300,000 additional people will be severely affected by noise, with 3 million people affected in total; that 28% of everybody severely affected by aircraft noise in Europe will live around Heathrow; that the cost is 40% to 50% higher than other airports; that the gearing ratio is over 80%; that there will be a 24% suppression in the growth of regional airports; that there will be a £10 billion to £15 billion cost to public transport, which the public purse will have to pay; and that the net present value over 60 years is somewhere between plus £2.9 billion and minus £2.5 billion, which is a worse economic case than Gatwick, and if we take out transfer passengers, it is worse passenger growth than Gatwick.

Are we really going to fall for this? If the House does fall for this tonight, there is a well-organised and well-funded operation. My borough has set up a residents' commission chaired by ex-senior civil servant Christina Smyth, and we, along with the Mayor of London and other boroughs, are funding legal action that will delay this until people's eyes are opened. When the flight paths are revealed and when the economics fall apart, Heathrow will no longer have the support that we may see today. I resigned 10 years ago to fight this, so I hope we are not back here in 10 years' time debating this, because it is a doomed project.

9.17 pm

Jack Brereton (Stoke-on-Trent South) (Con): I will be supporting this proposal tonight, but I must also make the case for our regional airports. The NPS suggests relatively little scope to redistribute demand away from the south-east region to heavily underutilised capacity elsewhere. I recognise fundamentally that despite all the scenarios considered by the Airports Commission to manage demand away from Heathrow, regular airline passengers will still want to fly internationally from Heathrow. Other markets such as freight and budget flights are already put off from Heathrow. As it says in paragraph 4.65 of the interim report,

“the relatively high landing charges and congestion at Heathrow already render it largely unattractive for charter flights, dedicated freighters...business and general aviation.”

It is important that the market demand for additional capacity at Heathrow is addressed. I recognise that long-term alternative locations do not satisfactorily offset that demand, but I think that more could be done to help reduce the pressure on Heathrow.

The scenarios in the interim report do not really look at the full potential for nudging demand towards our regional airports. It only seems to look at how many potential air passengers would instead use HS2, rather than how many Heathrow passengers might use HS2 or other rail projects as a means of accessing alternative airports. Both Birmingham and Manchester are planned to have direct connectivity to HS2, with a projected

journey time between London and Birmingham Interchange of 38 minutes, so it will be comparable to other airports serving this market.

I stress that we need to support Stoke-on-Trent with improved airport connectivity. While we are fortunate to have four international airports within an hour's drive of the city, rail access to our regional airports is not good enough. We must use HS2 and other rail improvements to strengthen connectivity to our regional airports in cities such as Stoke-on-Trent.

Our ambitions for a global Britain mean that we need to be linked to a greater number of global destinations. This is important for both passengers and freight services. East Midlands airport, for example, is hugely important to the national economy for cargo flights, and is second only to Heathrow. A significant proportion of Stoke-on-Trent freight goes through East Midlands airport.

I recognise that benefits from Heathrow can come to other parts of the UK. I particularly welcome the proposal for construction hubs supplying Heathrow to be located around the country to spread the benefits from construction more widely. I, of course, hope that Stoke-on-Trent's bid for a hub will be successful. Airports provide not only the wider economic benefits, but significant employment and local economic advantages for the communities surrounding them and right across the wider UK.

9.20 pm

Sammy Wilson (East Antrim) (DUP): Unlike the hon. Member for Slough (Mr Dhesi), who kept us waiting for four minutes—until the last sentence of his speech—to know whether he was going to support this project, may I say at the very start that I and my colleagues will be supporting the Government on this tonight? This is a project of national interest. It is one on which our economy depends, and that will help us in our pursuit of increased productivity, in our pursuit of being a global trading nation and in regenerating the regions. As someone from Northern Ireland, that is an important aspect of this particular project, because we rely on connectivity.

We have had Members telling us today that we can have regional airports or hubs in different regions all across the country, but the truth of the matter is that most regional airports are not in the centre of populations that can support all the international connections that are needed, and we therefore need an international hub. If we are going to have an international hub, we need to have local connections. Given that places are currently at a premium at Heathrow, the only way to get those connections, despite what the Scottish nationalists have argued, is to expand Heathrow. They cannot wish for more flights into Heathrow and say that they are ambivalent about whether it should be expanded. This is important to us for that reason.

Northern Ireland is of course an exporting part of the United Kingdom. High-value engineering exports and high-value food exports depend on having a good cargo infrastructure to enable us to send our goods across the world.

Nigel Dodds (Belfast North) (DUP): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the biggest domestic cargo trade between Heathrow and any regional airport is that to Belfast City, which will double if Heathrow is expanded?

Sammy Wilson: That is what we are hoping for. In fact, one of our asks is for a guarantee from the Government that the 15% of additional places will be ring-fenced for regional airports so that there is such access. The other thing is that this is a national project, and different regions of the United Kingdom should therefore be able to have an input into the work generated from it. I am pleased by the discussions we have had between Mid and East Antrim Borough Council in my constituency and Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council in looking at the possibility of one of the hubs being located in Ballymena, which would of course provide jobs for Northern Ireland as a whole.

Many contradictory arguments have been made tonight. On the one hand, we have been told by the right hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (John McDonnell) that these capitalists intend to squeeze every penny out of the United Kingdom. On the other hand, the right hon. Member for Putney (Justine Greening) has told us that this project is so uneconomic that the Government are going to have to subsidise it. One of the two has to be wrong.

On the one hand, we have been told that this is going to wreck our climate change targets. For those who find that an important issue, the only answer is of course to reduce the number of passengers. However, nobody has suggested that; they have all suggested that we should have passengers flying from regional airports. Well, those passengers will still produce carbon dioxide, and they will still contribute overall. If they fly from Schiphol, they will still burn carbon to get to Schiphol and from there to wherever they are going. Either it affects climate change or it does not. In fact, the only honest person was the Member from the Green party, the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Caroline Lucas), who wants people to stop flying, but I do not believe that that is an alternative.

For these reasons, we will be supporting this motion and walking through the Lobby tonight.

9.24 pm

Huw Merriman (Bexhill and Battle) (Con): Behind the inquiry and report of the Transport Committee on the national policy statement on airports was our genuine desire to assist MPs when reaching their decision tonight. I have always been struck by the similarity of the NPS designation to the manner in which a local planning authority makes a local plan before developers promote site-specific applications for planning permission. Even if the NPS gains support this evening, Heathrow Airport Ltd will have to submit a development consent order for approval.

The Committee's report included several recommendations that, in hindsight, would have been better addressed through the design process rather than the NPS. The Committee drew the following conclusions. We recommended that both Houses of Parliament allow the planning process to move to the next stage by approving the final NPS, provided that the concerns that we identified were addressed by the Government in the final NPS that it laid before Parliament. The issue is whether the 25 recommendations that the Committee made have been addressed. The Government maintained in their response to our report that they have largely done so, stating:

"The Government has welcomed and acted upon 24 of those recommendations, disagreeing with only one."

[Huw Merriman]

Reviewing the Government response, the Committee Clerk found that the 24 recommendations were not to be found in the final NPS. I believe that the Government have taken note of our 24 recommendations, and taken action, but not necessarily within the NPS. In many cases, the Government do not believe that the outline planning NPS process is the right avenue for design-specific recommendations. They believe that the right place is in the development consent order or at a later juncture. As a result, the Government maintain that they have fully implemented or exceeded the action that we proposed; partially implemented the recommendation by updating the NPS or by publishing additional information; confirmed that proposals would be addressed later in the planning process; confirmed that action will be taken through other mechanisms or regulators; or agreed with the issue raised but disagreed that the NPS was the correct mechanism, believing that to be the development consent order process.

The Transport Committee has, in the last three parliamentary terms, been a supporter of Heathrow expansion rather than the alternatives. Our report supported expansion, provided that our concerns were addressed, and I believe that the Government have done so. This procedural difference in opinion is not going to stop me voting for Heathrow expansion this evening. Britain's airport capacity is scheduled to run out by 2030. It was clear from our evidence sessions with neutral airlines that support all airports that we had to proceed, and that Heathrow was the only option on the table.

9.27 pm

Mike Gapes (Ilford South) (Lab/Co-op): Apparently the Foreign Secretary could not be with us today because he is in Afghanistan. He has got his Khyber pass—what a carry on! We are in a situation where other Members, however, have spoken honestly and passionately about their constituencies and their constituency concerns. That is partly why we are here as Members of Parliament, but we are also here, even if our constituents are put at a disadvantage, to think about our country's national interests. The SNP seems to have taken the ball off the field, and Labour Front Benchers are telling me that officially we are to abstain on the motion, which is a bizarre position, although some of us will vote—*[Interruption.]* It is a free vote—exactly.

In 2009, the Gordon Brown Labour Government made the decision to support Heathrow. That position was right then, and it is right now, in the national interest. I will vote in accordance with the position taken responsibly by Labour in government—not to have a free vote, but to say that these matters are in the national interest. I do so, too, as chair of the all-party group on Crossrail, knowing that my constituents in Ilford, and many other people in north-east London, Essex and Kent, will benefit greatly when Crossrail halves travel times from Kent and Essex, and from north-east and south-east London, across to Heathrow. That will be in the interests of jobs, prosperity and inward investment in our constituencies. The reality is that Crossrail will cut travel times.

The alternative to the proposal is delaying, stopping the process, and hoping that we will somehow go to remote and badly connected Gatwick. The hon. Member

for Reigate (Crispin Blunt) was absolutely right to point out the difficulties with that. There is one decision, and only one decision, that we should be taking today. We need national leadership. At last we have a recommendation from this Government, but why were nine years wasted under the coalition and the previous Conservative Government? Let us go and do it now.

9.30 pm

Lee Rowley (North East Derbyshire) (Con): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in this important debate. I support the proposed expansion of Heathrow and will vote accordingly. I will do so not because I do not accept there are many real and heartfelt reasons why Members feel, as they have explained today, they cannot support it, but ultimately because I believe that, on balance, it is in the national interest that we progress as a country by building a third runway at Heathrow. Frankly, as someone who can remember these debates growing up in the '80s, we need to get on with it.

There are two points I want to talk about. A number of Members have referred to emissions and carbon reduction targets, outlining that they do not think we will be able to achieve those targets. I think it was the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mary Creagh) who asked for a plan on carbon reduction targets. Plans from this place or from Whitehall will not allow us to meet our carbon reduction targets. Those targets will be achieved due to the innovations that are occurring at Boeing, Airbus, Embraer and so on. It is the planes on which we travel on our holidays this summer that will ensure, through the use of carbon fibre and biofuels, that we start to meet those targets. A Boeing 737 that took us on holiday in the 1980s produced 36% more emissions than the Boeing 737s that will take us on holiday right now. The next generation of Boeing 737s will be 20% more efficient still. That is exactly how we deal with the emissions problem.

Members have rightly talked about economics. When I took my economics class, economics 101 was about monopolies. We have a clear monopoly in Heathrow. A small number of operators have, for whatever historical reasons, got hold of a number of slots and are using them. Less than 0.5% of new slots—taking off or coming down—have been given to new operators in the past few years. The situation is also seen in the frankly extortionate cost of the secondary market in the trading of those slots. Scandinavian Airlines System sold two slots to American Airlines for £75 million just so that American Airlines could take off and land twice a day. An old airline, GB Airways, was sold in 2008 for £100 million. It had 15 aircraft, 36 destinations and hundreds of people. It also had five slots at Heathrow, which went for another £100 million. If that is not the epitome of a monopoly and a market that does not work, I do not know what is. It is for that reason, and for the national interest, that I support Heathrow expansion. I look forward to voting for the motion.

9.33 pm

Catherine McKinnell (Newcastle upon Tyne North) (Lab): As co-chair of the all-party group on regional airports and the MP representing Newcastle International airport, I know that there are very passionate and strongly held views on all sides of the debate. Delivering

aviation capacity is one of the most pressing infrastructure issues this country faces. It will be critical in shaping the UK's economy, particularly given the very obvious challenges we will face with Brexit in the months, years and decades to come.

I have long made the case that where we build new airport capacity is not just an issue for London and the south-east, but a strategic, nationally important decision with implications for the whole UK, including the north-east. I firmly believe that expanding Heathrow, as set out in the national policy statement, is the right strategic decision for both the north-east and Britain as a whole. Indeed, Newcastle International airport, the single largest employer in my constituency, has also been very clear for the past decade that expanding Heathrow is the right decision for the north-east and that the decision needs to be taken now.

At present, the north-east benefits from up to six flights a day from Newcastle to London Heathrow, carrying half a million passengers a year, over 70% of whom use Heathrow as a hub to onward international destinations, many of which are long haul. It is clear, however, that without additional runway capacity at Heathrow, UK domestic routes such as those serving Newcastle will gradually be squeezed out as capacity is increasingly used by larger long-haul aircraft.

Indeed, Newcastle is already starting to see that pressure build, with the Heathrow-Newcastle route reducing to five flights a day in winter 2018-19. Many cities and regions in both the UK and overseas are seeking the Heathrow international hub link. The north-east needs to hold on to its well-established link, maintaining that frequency, because in the face of Brexit and all the challenges that that will bring, particularly for an exporting region like ours, the north-east can ill afford to lose further access to what is already its biggest hub airport.

Of course, Newcastle airport's position on Heathrow expansion is echoed by the North East England chamber of commerce, which represents 3,000 businesses of all sizes across my region. It supports Heathrow expansion not just because of the clear connectivity benefits, but because it is determined to ensure that a significant proportion of the thousands of good new jobs and apprenticeships created will come to our region.

Mr Simon Clarke: Teesside has put in a bid for a logistics hub. Does the hon. Lady agree that this kind of sharing of the benefits of Heathrow expansion shows why shadow Front Benchers have got themselves into a really ludicrous position?

Catherine McKinnell: I agree that we need to share in the advantages. Just one of the firms that could benefit is Hart Doors, a family-run firm in Westerhope in my constituency, which has already supplied Heathrow with its high-performance security shutters for terminal 5. It said:

"Hart Doors has developed new products as a direct result of Heathrow's procurement ethos...a focus on quality has required Hart Doors to find innovative solutions to meet Heathrow's specific needs. The knock-on impact has been the development of new products that have subsequently been supplied to over 40 airports across the world. But Heathrow is not just a customer. Hart Doors also benefits from Heathrow's international routes bringing in customers from long-haul destinations, allowing sales into markets that otherwise would not have been possible. Because of this, Hart Doors firmly believes that if Heathrow falls behind then Britain falls behind."

This is undoubtedly why Heathrow expansion is supported by not just business, but the TUC, and the Unite and GMB unions nationally. They want to ensure that the UK can remain a world leader in the aviation and aerospace sectors, which are industries that mean high-quality, unionised jobs.

I recognise the important concerns that are being raised about noise, air quality and the potential impact on our climate change commitments. I would not support the proposal if I was not going to hold the Government to account on the mitigation that has been promised, but I feel strongly that this national decision must be taken in the national interest today.

9.37 pm

Steve Double (St Austell and Newquay) (Con): I rise to support the motion and I will vote for this historic event. The decision is long overdue, and it is urgent that we now make it and move forward on increasing capacity at our international hub airport.

Aviation will be absolutely vital for the future prosperity of our nation. It is growing around the world. The only question is whether the UK will be part of that growth in the future, because if we do not increase capacity at our hub airport, we will miss out. We will not stop the growth in aviation; it will simply go to other airports around the world, to the detriment of our economy. That is why I believe that for the future of investment, trade and tourism in our nation, we should back the decision this evening and allow it to move on to the next stage of the process.

I am absolutely delighted that the Government have said that their absolute intention is that around 15% of the new slots at an expanded Heathrow will be available to regional airports. I was delighted that the Secretary of State came to Cornwall on Friday—

Bill Grant (Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock) (Con) rose—

Steve Double: I will not take an intervention because we are very short on time.

In visiting Newquay airport, the Secretary of State saw the enthusiasm for an expanded Heathrow and the potential of a Heathrow link for Cornwall. It would be such good news for our local economy. It would be good news for our trade exports if we could export our high-quality goods from Cornwall directly through Heathrow to other parts of the world. The development would also be good news for our tourism.

At the moment, for example, we have a Gatwick link, but more overseas tourists to Cornwall come from Germany than from anywhere else, and Heathrow has five times more connections to Germany than Gatwick. A direct connection from Cornwall to Heathrow would therefore open up Cornwall to significantly more German tourists. We can multiply that by all the connections around the world that Heathrow would offer. If the success of the PSO that supports our Gatwick connection could be transferred to Heathrow, it would be another boon for our local airport and economy. A Heathrow connection would put us on the map by raising the status and profile of our regional airport, bringing other operators in. I am delighted to support the motion tonight. It is right for our country, right for Cornwall and right for Newquay airport.

9.40 pm

Ruth Cadbury (Brentford and Isleworth) (Lab): The case for runway 3 is as bad as ever for my constituents, and now weak overall, as the economic case has not been made—and that is based on the Department for Transport's latest figures. The proposal keeps coming back—16 years, I think, it has been—and I have been campaigning against it all that time. It keeps coming back not because of an unwillingness to make a decision, but because successive generations have realised that the arguments for expansion do not stack up. The generously funded Heathrow lobby keeps bringing the proposal back and will continue to do so until it gets the answer it wants. Meanwhile, we have not moved on to seriously address alternative solutions as part of a nationwide UK aviation strategy.

On noise and air quality, which are the issues affecting my constituents most of all, more than 300,000 people in our region of west London and the Thames valley will experience significantly worse noise than they do now. Most of them are not aware that they will be under the final approach path to the third runway. Those under the present approach paths to the existing two runways currently get eight hours respite; that will be cut to six hours and perhaps less. On night flights, the Secretary of State has suggested that the cap will be relaxed, despite promises. Runway 3 will bring 50% more passengers. Heathrow says that there will be no new traffic, but there is nothing in the NPS to justify that claim.

Zac Goldsmith: The hon. Lady has campaigned valiantly on this issue and deserves more than three minutes in which to make her case.

Ruth Cadbury: I thank my neighbouring colleague.

There is nothing in the NPS to justify how Heathrow can get away with saying that there will be no new traffic despite 50% more passengers, a doubling of cargo, and additional flight servicing and staffing. It is absolutely impossible. As everybody acknowledges, all the proposed rail infrastructure is needed now to meet current traffic pressures. Our roads system has ground to a halt, and our air quality has already been in breach of EU limits for many years. The Government will continue to lose legal challenges as a result.

There is nothing in the NPS on the air pollution generated by aircraft, and there is nothing on climate change obligations that will satisfy the Committee on Climate Change, as we will no doubt hear on Thursday. All the additional passengers arising from expansion will be outward leisure passengers and transfer passengers. The increase will bring nothing to the economy and will take the tourist pound away from the UK's beautiful tourist destinations. Heathrow expansion means more intense use of existing routes such as New York. It will restrict growth at non-south-east airports by 24%—those are not my figures but the Department's—reduce domestic routes to Heathrow from the current eight to four or five, and mean 160,000 fewer international links from regional airports, thus making our regions less connected to the rest of the world than they are now, according to page 27 of the Transport Committee's report.

The hub airport model has been superseded by a preference for direct point-to-point flights among passengers and businesses who would rather not change, and also

by the new ultra long-haul planes. Unused capacity outside London could, without Heathrow expansion, mean a growth of 62% in flights and 96% in passengers. Without Government intervention, domestic slots from regional airports to Heathrow cannot be guaranteed. The Government appear to have written a blank cheque to Heathrow by signing an agreement with a clause reaffirming the company's right to sue the Government if Ministers back out of the scheme—a clause not included in the agreement on the Heathrow hub or that with Gatwick. It is increasingly evident that the Government are supporting the most expensive, most complex and highest risk scheme. Heathrow should be better not bigger.

9.44 pm

Karl Turner (Kingston upon Hull East) (Lab): Let me start by commending those who have spoken today. The issue of airport expansion has been around at least since 2008, and Members have been campaigning on both sides of the argument since long before then. I recognise that those on both sides have strong views, but I think we can all agree that the tone of today's debate has been relatively comradely.

As we have made clear throughout this process, Labour recognises the need for airport expansion in the south-east, but our support was conditional on the meeting of our four tests. The draft NPS was published in October last year. In a Westminster Hall debate in January, I—along with other Members—highlighted a number of issues about which we were concerned. The Transport Committee scrutinised the draft NPS, and published an excellent report in March which made 25 recommendations to the Government. The Secretary of State claimed that he had acted on 24 of them, but the final NPS is largely unchanged.

The Government had the opportunity to listen to Members in the House and in the Transport Committee. They could and should have improved this document and given Members up-to-date, detailed information allowing them to make an informed decision about one of the biggest infrastructure projects in the country. Instead, Members are being asked to vote this through, and any concerns that they have will be dealt with by the Secretary of State at the development consent order stage. Given the Secretary of State's disastrous handling of the railways, and given the Justice Committee's recent comments on his reforms of the national probation service, I—and, I am sure, many other Members—will not have confidence in him to carry out that process. He should have listened to the Transport Committee and embedded its recommendations in the final NPS.

As I said earlier, our support for the NPS was always dependent on its meeting four tests. Throughout the process we made it clear that our final decision would be based on evidence, and, having looked at the evidence, we do not believe that the NPS has met our tests. The first warning sign is that the entire document contains only one mention of cost, which is shocking, given the £14 billion cost of the project. There is the big question of how the Government will keep landing charges flat in real terms. If they have to increase them, it is likely that the airlines will pass the cost on to consumers. The NPS does not guarantee that that will not happen. On surface access, the NPS provides no details of the costs that may fall on the taxpayer. There are also no details

about the proposed changes to the M25 or the new rail scheme, and how they will be funded. The Government could have addressed those issues if they had implemented the Transport Committee's recommendations.

The UK has a legally binding commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions under the Climate Change Act. However, the Government have failed to publish a strategy for UK emissions reductions in the NPS. Their new aviation strategy is not due to be published until 2019, so we will not know their plan for reducing emissions until next year. The Transport Committee asked the Government to amend their outdated air quality population figures and adopt a more stringent air quality compliance interpretation, but again the Government did nothing. It is also telling that tonight's vote has been scheduled before the publication of a Government report warning that surging aviation emissions would destroy Britain's greenhouse gas reduction targets. Not only are Members being asked to vote for the NPS when it includes out-of-date figures and presents no clear strategy on how climate change targets will be met; they have also been denied the opportunity to see a report that will provide key facts about the impact of aviation emissions.

The Government have failed to address noise and environmental concerns. They have not updated the 2013 baseline figure, or defined an acceptable noise level target. Noise level targets for noise mitigation was another Transport Committee recommendation that the Government chose to ignore, as was extending the respite period at night to seven hours. The Government have failed to give any detail on how they will secure slots for the regions. Given that the slots are owned by airlines and not the airport, it is unclear how the Government can guarantee the slots will be used for domestic routes. The Government have said that the public service obligation will ensure domestic connectivity; however, they have not said how, and given that they would make domestic routes exempt from air passenger duty, one wonders how this tax cut would be funded. Given the lack of detail on how the surface access plan will be funded, we are concerned this will lead to more transport investment being taken from the regions, and specifically the north of England, and used up in the south-east instead. We are not convinced that the third runway scheme will bring benefits across the country so it has failed our fourth test.

We have been clear from the beginning of this process that our support was dependent on our four tests and our decision would be based on the evidence. The NPS has failed our tests, and therefore I will be voting against the motion today.

9.51 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Jesse Norman): This has been a generally well-tempered and constructive debate on a very important topic; indeed, it is a topic of such importance that no Government have been able to solve it for the previous 50 years, and it is therefore with great pride and delight that I put this question to the House today.

We have heard a very wide range of views and there has been great engagement, but the fact remains that the need for additional capacity in the south-east is more pressing than ever, and, as colleagues across the House have mentioned, there is a cost to doing nothing—an

opportunity cost that we cannot ignore that forces us to act. We have acted so far by calling a review, and series of consultations, a statement, an urgent question, a debate, and I myself have signed 75 or so parliamentary questions; we have had a very extensive wider debate about this topic, and rightly so.

I have been very surprised, however, by the attitude of some of the Opposition Front-Bench teams. The spokesman for the SNP declared that his own Scottish chambers of commerce were in support and that he himself and the Scottish Government had spoken in favour of this proposal, yet they now find themselves against it, and at a time when airports in Inverness, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen and the like all stand to benefit. *[Interruption.]* There were many speeches in this debate and they deserve to be paid attention to. The SNP position, however, is clarity itself compared with that of the Labour Front Bench, which has managed to pull together the astonishing combination of itself being against the motion, while ordering a free vote for its Members and recommending abstention, as the hon. Member for Ilford South (Mike Gapes) mentioned; I have seen sludge from the bottom of the Thames with more clarity than Labour's position on this topic.

The fact remains that a new runway at Heathrow is the best strategic solution to this critical issue: it is well located, and it will provide the greatest connectivity by the introduction of new domestic routes and additional and frequent long-haul routes. The north-west runway scheme would deliver the greatest quantified benefits most quickly up until the 2070s. Crucially, this is not a scheme that will only benefit the south-east; its advantages will be felt across the entire United Kingdom, as we have heard from speeches from the entire United Kingdom during this debate.

The Government are committed to protecting and expanding these domestic routes, increasing them from eight to at least 14, and 15% of them will serve domestic flights to deliver even more opportunities for greater connectivity across the UK, benefiting passengers and businesses.

Tom Tugendhat: Are there not two things that would help my hon. Friend's position here: first, having the CAA and NATS taking overall control of airspace and, secondly, extending the Land Compensation Act 1973 to air routes?

Jesse Norman: I thank my hon. Friend for his contribution. If I had heard all of it, I would be able to respond in some detail.

Alan Brown: The Minister has referenced some of the points that I have made. What he did not do, however, was to guarantee to protect the slots for Scottish airports.

Jesse Norman: After this much discussion and documentation, the idea that the Scottish National party can hide behind the lack of a formal guarantee is frankly an insult to the process and to this House. To abstain, as the Scottish National party is doing, and not to reach a decision, is to say that it will give up the at least 100 additional flights per week. It will mean no more slots and no more economic growth for Scotland from this proposal. Frankly, that is a risible position.

Christine Jardine (Edinburgh West) (LD) *rose*—

Jesse Norman: I am afraid that I must make progress and continue to respond to the points that have been raised.

We will further improve the excellent rail connections that already exist. As my hon. Friend the Member for Reigate (Crispin Blunt) said, those rail connections distinguish Heathrow from Gatwick. The Elizabeth line will connect the airport directly to central London. The planned western rail link will greatly improve access from Slough, Reading and beyond, and I welcome the support of the hon. Member for Slough (Mr Dhesi). The proposed southern rail access would directly connect the airport to south-west London and the South Western rail network. The interchange at Old Oak Common will allow easy access to the airport via HS2 from the midlands and the north. Of course, Heathrow will pay for any surface access works that are essential to the delivery of the airport expansion. That includes works on the M25, the A4 and the A3044. It will also pay its fair share of the cost of any new rail connections.

Labour has put four tests to the Government on this topic, covering growth across the UK, climate change, air quality and noise. We have responded to each one of those four tests.

Bill Grant: Does my right hon. Friend agree that there will be many benefits for regional airports throughout the United Kingdom, up to and including Scotland, and for Prestwick airport in particular, as well as the potential for one of the four construction hubs for Heathrow to be placed in Scotland?

Jesse Norman: My hon. Friend is absolutely right to say that the opportunities lie not only in the increased connectivity but in the potential for hubs across the UK.

Both the independent Airports Commission's analysis and our own show that a new runway can be delivered in line with our obligations under the Climate Change Act 2008. That position has been strengthened by a recent communication with the chair of the Committee on Climate Change. The Government's clean growth strategy published last year also sets out how the UK will reduce carbon emissions across all sectors, including transport, across the 2020s.

We must also recognise the continued progress that industry has made in this area—*[Interruption.]* My colleagues have had a chance to make speeches, and it is right that we should recognise them. I was pleased to hear support from many Members across the House, and I wish that we could have had the support of the hon. Member for Nottingham South (Lilian Greenwood), the Chair of the Transport Committee. She rightly said that the economic benefits were compelling, and I noted that other members of her Committee did not share her concern and will be supporting the proposal. I am delighted that the Committee supported the proposal at such a crucial moment earlier in the debate.

Our work on air quality shows that Heathrow can be delivered in line with our air quality obligations. It is a central requirement of the NPS that expansion will not go ahead—*[Interruption.]* I can tell the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Andy McDonald) that expansion will not go ahead unless the scheme meets strict legal

standards. Any application to build a new runway will have to show how air quality issues will be addressed. This could include an emissions-based charge to reach the airport, as the majority of air quality issues at airports stem from cars, not from planes.

The NPS also sets out specific measures to address noise impacts, including the provision of more predictable periods of respite through a runway alternation programme, an expected six and a half hour scheduled night flight ban, and clear noise performance targets. The details of these measures will be developed through consultation with local communities and will become legally binding through the development consent process. This is a historic moment for this country. It is the moment when we call on the Government and all Members across the House to show leadership. Any failure to support this NPS will have detrimental effects across the whole country. I am delighted, therefore, to urge all Members to support the motion.

Question put.

The House divided: Ayes 415, Noes 119.

Division No. 192]

[9.59 pm

AYES

Adams, Nigel	Buckland, Robert
Afolami, Bim	Burghart, Alex
Aldous, Peter	Burns, Conor
Ali, Rushanara	Burt, rh Alistair
Allan, Lucy	Cairns, rh Alun
Allen, Heidi	Campbell, rh Mr Alan
Andrew, Stuart	Campbell, Mr Gregory
Argar, Edward	Cartlidge, James
Ashworth, Jonathan	Cash, Sir William
Atkins, Victoria	Caulfield, Maria
Bacon, Mr Richard	Chalk, Alex
Badenoch, Mrs Kemi	Champion, Sarah
Bailey, Mr Adrian	Chapman, Jenny
Baker, Mr Steve	Chishti, Rehman
Baldwin, Harriett	Chope, Sir Christopher
Barclay, Stephen	Churchill, Jo
Baron, Mr John	Clark, Colin
Barron, rh Sir Kevin	Clark, rh Greg
Bebb, Guto	Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth
Bellingham, Sir Henry	Clarke, Mr Simon
Benyon, rh Richard	Cleverly, James
Beresford, Sir Paul	Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
Berger, Luciana	Coffey, Ann
Berry, Jake	Coffey, Dr Thérèse
Betts, Mr Clive	Collins, Damian
Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta	Cooper, Rosie
Blunt, Crispin	Cooper, rh Yvette
Boles, Nick	Costa, Alberto
Bone, Mr Peter	Courts, Robert
Bottomley, Sir Peter	Cox, Mr Geoffrey
Bowie, Andrew	Coyle, Neil
Brabin, Tracy	Crabb, rh Stephen
Bradley, Ben	Crausby, Sir David
Bradley, rh Karen	Crouch, Tracey
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben	Cummins, Judith
Brady, Sir Graham	Cunningham, Alex
Braverman, Suella	Dakin, Nic
Brennan, Kevin	Davies, Chris
Brereton, Jack	Davies, David T. C.
Bridgen, Andrew	Davies, Glyn
Brine, Steve	Davies, Mims
Brokenshire, rh James	Davies, Philip
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas	Davis, rh Mr David
Bruce, Fiona	Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Bryant, Chris	Dinenage, Caroline

Djanogly, Mr Jonathan	Hayes, rh Mr John	Mackinlay, Craig	Pow, Rebecca
Docherty, Leo	Heald, rh Sir Oliver	Maclean, Rachel	Powell, Lucy
Dodds, rh Nigel	Healey, rh John	Madders, Justin	Prentis, Victoria
Donelan, Michelle	Heapey, James	Mahmood, Mr Khalid	Prisk, Mr Mark
Double, Steve	Heaton-Harris, Chris	Main, Mrs Anne	Pritchard, Mark
Dowden, Oliver	Heaton-Jones, Peter	Mak, Alan	Pursglove, Tom
Doyle-Price, Jackie	Henderson, Gordon	Malhotra, Seema	Quin, Jeremy
Drax, Richard	Herbert, rh Nick	Malthouse, Kit	Quince, Will
Duddridge, James	Hermon, Lady	Mann, John	Raab, Dominic
Duguid, David	Hill, Mike	Mann, Scott	Rashid, Faisal
Duncan, rh Sir Alan	Hillier, Meg	Masterton, Paul	Rayner, Angela
Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain	Hinds, rh Damian	Matheson, Christian	Redwood, rh John
Dunne, Mr Philip	Hoare, Simon	May, rh Mrs Theresa	Rees, Christina
Eagle, Ms Angela	Hodge, rh Dame Margaret	Maynard, Paul	Rees-Mogg, Mr Jacob
Eagle, Maria	Hodgson, Mrs Sharon	McDonagh, Siobhain	Reeves, Rachel
Elliott, Julie	Hollingbery, George	McFadden, rh Mr Pat	Reynolds, Jonathan
Ellis, Michael	Hollinrake, Kevin	McGinn, Conor	Robertson, Mr Laurence
Ellman, Dame Louise	Hollobone, Mr Philip	McGovern, Alison	Robinson, Gavin
Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias	Holloway, Adam	McInnes, Liz	Robinson, Mary
Elmore, Chris	Howarth, rh Mr George	McKinnell, Catherine	Rosindell, Andrew
Esterson, Bill	Huddleston, Nigel	McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick	Ross, Douglas
Eustice, George	Hughes, Eddie	McMahon, Jim	Rowley, Lee
Evans, Mr Nigel	Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy	McMorrin, Anna	Ruane, Chris
Evennett, rh Sir David	Jack, Mr Alister	McPartland, Stephen	Rudd, rh Amber
Fabricant, Michael	James, Margot	McVey, rh Ms Esther	Rutley, David
Fallon, rh Sir Michael	Jarvis, Dan	Mercer, Johnny	Ryan, rh Joan
Farrelly, Paul	Javid, rh Sajid	Merriman, Huw	Sandbach, Antoinette
Field, rh Mark	Jayawardena, Mr Ranil	Metcalfe, Stephen	Seely, Mr Bob
Fitzpatrick, Jim	Jenkin, Sir Bernard	Miller, rh Mrs Maria	Selous, Andrew
Flint, rh Caroline	Jenkyns, Andrea	Milling, Amanda	Shannon, Jim
Ford, Vicky	Jenrick, Robert	Mills, Nigel	Shapps, rh Grant
Foster, Kevin	Johnson, Dr Caroline	Milton, rh Anne	Sharma, Alok
Fovargue, Yvonne	Johnson, Diana	Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew	Sharma, Mr Virendra
Fox, rh Dr Liam	Johnson, Gareth	Moon, Mrs Madeleine	Sheerman, Mr Barry
Foxcroft, Vicky	Johnson, Joseph	Moore, Damien	Shelbrooke, Alec
Francois, rh Mr Mark	Jones, Andrew	Mordaunt, rh Penny	Sherriff, Paula
Frazer, Lucy	Jones, rh Mr David	Morden, Jessica	Shuker, Mr Gavin
Fysh, Mr Marcus	Jones, Gerald	Morgan, rh Nicky	Simpson, David
Gaffney, Hugh	Jones, Graham P.	Morris, Anne Marie	Simpson, rh Mr Keith
Gapes, Mike	Jones, rh Mr Kevan	Morris, David	Skidmore, Chris
Garnier, Mark	Jones, Mr Marcus	Morris, James	Smeeth, Ruth
Gauke, rh Mr David	Kane, Mike	Mundell, rh David	Smith, Chloe
Ghani, Ms Nusrat	Kawczynski, Daniel	Murray, Mrs Sheryll	Smith, Jeff
Gibb, rh Nick	Keegan, Gillian	Murrison, Dr Andrew	Smith, rh Julian
Girvan, Paul	Kendall, Liz	Neill, Robert	Smith, Laura
Glen, John	Kennedy, Seema	Newton, Sarah	Smith, Nick
Glindon, Mary	Kerr, Stephen	Nokes, rh Caroline	Smith, Owen
Gove, rh Michael	Khan, Afzal	Norman, Jesse	Smith, Royston
Graham, Luke	Kinnock, Stephen	Norris, Alex	Smyth, Karin
Graham, Richard	Knight, rh Sir Greg	O'Brien, Neil	Snell, Gareth
Grant, Bill	Knight, Julian	Onn, Melanie	Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
Grant, Mrs Helen	Kwarteng, Kwasi	Onwurah, Chi	Soubry, rh Anna
Gray, James	Kyle, Peter	Opperman, Guy	Spellar, rh John
Grayling, rh Chris	Lammy, rh Mr David	Paisley, Ian	Spelman, rh Dame Caroline
Green, Chris	Lamont, John	Parish, Neil	Spencer, Mark
Green, rh Damian	Lancaster, rh Mark	Patel, rh Priti	Stephenson, Andrew
Green, Kate	Lavery, Ian	Paterson, rh Mr Owen	Stevens, Jo
Grieve, rh Mr Dominic	Leadsom, rh Andrea	Pawsey, Mark	Stevenson, John
Griffiths, Andrew	Lee, Dr Phillip	Peacock, Stephanie	Stewart, Bob
Gyimah, Mr Sam	Lefroy, Jeremy	Penning, rh Sir Mike	Stewart, Iain
Hair, Kirstene	Leslie, Mr Chris	Penrose, John	Stewart, Rory
Halfon, rh Robert	Letwin, rh Sir Oliver	Percy, Andrew	Streeter, Mr Gary
Hall, Luke	Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma	Perkins, Toby	Streeting, Wes
Hancock, rh Matt	Lewer, Andrew	Perry, rh Claire	Stride, rh Mel
Hanson, rh David	Lewis, rh Brandon	Phillips, Jess	Stringer, Graham
Harman, rh Ms Harriet	Lewis, rh Dr Julian	Phillipson, Bridget	Stuart, Graham
Harper, rh Mr Mark	Lidington, rh Mr David	Philp, Chris	Sturdy, Julian
Harrington, Richard	Little Pengelly, Emma	Pincher, Christopher	Sunak, Rishi
Harris, Carolyn	Lopez, Julia	Platt, Jo	Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
Harris, Rebecca	Lopresti, Jack	Pollard, Luke	Swire, rh Sir Hugo
Harrison, Trudy	Lucas, Ian C.	Poulter, Dr Dan	Syms, Sir Robert
Hart, Simon	Lynch, Holly	Pound, Stephen	Tami, Mark

Thomas, Derek
 Thomas, Gareth
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick
 Thomson, Ross
 Throup, Maggie
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Tolhurst, Kelly
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Tredinnick, David
 Trevelyan, Mrs Anne-Marie
 Truss, rh Elizabeth
 Tugendhat, Tom
 Turley, Anna
 Twist, Liz
 Vaizey, rh Mr Edward
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Walker, Mr Charles

Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben
 Warburton, David
 Warman, Matt
 Watling, Giles
 Whately, Helen
 Whittaker, Craig
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John
 Wiggan, Bill
 Williamson, rh Gavin
 Wilson, Phil
 Wilson, rh Sammy
 Wollaston, Dr Sarah
 Wood, Mike
 Wragg, Mr William
 Wright, rh Jeremy
 Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Ayes:

**Mike Freer and
 Wendy Morton**

NOES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
 Abrahams, Debbie
 Afriyie, Adam
 Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
 Amesbury, Mike
 Amess, Sir David
 Austin, Ian
 Beckett, rh Margaret
 Benn, rh Hilary
 Blackman, Bob
 Blomfield, Paul
 Brake, rh Tom
 Brown, Lyn
 Buck, Ms Karen
 Burgon, Richard
 Butler, Dawn
 Byrne, rh Liam
 Cable, rh Sir Vince
 Cadbury, Ruth
 Carden, Dan
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Clwyd, rh Ann
 Cooper, Julie
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy
 Cruddas, Jon
 Cryer, John
 Cunningham, Mr Jim
 Daby, Janet
 Davey, rh Sir Edward
 Davies, Geraint
 De Cordova, Marsha
 Debbonaire, Thangam
 Dent Coad, Emma
 Dodds, Anneliese
 Doughty, Stephen
 Dowd, Peter
 Drew, Dr David
 Duffield, Rosie
 Edwards, Jonathan
 Efford, Clive
 Evans, Chris
 Farron, Tim
 Frith, James
 Gardiner, Barry
 Gill, Preet Kaur
 Godsiff, Mr Roger
 Goldsmith, Zac
 Goodman, Helen
 Greening, rh Justine

Greenwood, Lilian
 Greenwood, Margaret
 Griffith, Nia
 Grogan, John
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hands, rh Greg
 Hardy, Emma
 Hayes, Helen
 Hayman, Sue
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Hopkins, Kelvin
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Hussain, Imran
 Jardine, Christine
 Jones, Darren
 Jones, Sarah
 Keeley, Barbara
 Killen, Ged
 Laird, Lesley
 Lake, Ben
 Lamb, rh Norman
 Lee, Karen
 Lewis, Clive
 Lloyd, Stephen
 Lloyd, Tony
 Lucas, Caroline
 Marsden, Gordon
 Martin, Sandy
 Maskell, Rachael
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonnell, rh John
 Mearns, Ian
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Moran, Layla
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, Grahame
 Nandy, Lisa
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Onasanya, Fiona
 Osamor, Kate
 Pearce, Teresa
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Pidcock, Laura
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Reed, Mr Steve
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reynolds, Emma
 Rimmer, Ms Marie
 Rodda, Matt

Rowley, Danielle
 Saville Roberts, Liz
 Skinner, Mr Dennis
 Slaughter, Andy
 Sobel, Alex
 Starmer, rh Keir
 Stone, Jamie
 Sweeney, Mr Paul
 Thornberry, rh Emily
 Turner, Karl
 Vaz, Valerie
 Villiers, rh Theresa

Walker, Thelma
 Watson, Tom
 West, Catherine
 Western, Matt
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Williams, Hywel
 Williamson, Chris
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Noes:

**Kate Hollern and
 Ruth George**

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House approves the National Policy Statement on New runway capacity and infrastructure at airports in the South East of England, which was laid before this House on 5 June 2018.

Justine Greening: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Even though this was a monumentally important vote, the House has had less than four hours to debate it, and in practice there were just over three hours for Back Benchers to contribute. Given how important the vote was, is that acceptable?

Mr Speaker: The determination of time available is not a matter for the Chair. The right hon. Lady has expressed her own view in characteristically succinct terms, leaving us in no doubt as to her dissatisfaction. All I would say to her and to other Members, on whichever side of the argument, who feel similarly, is that I have a sense that there will be a great many more debates on this important matter, in which we will hear from the right hon. Lady and from others similarly aggrieved this evening. I hope that that is helpful to the right hon. Lady.

Christian Matheson (City of Chester) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Have you had any indication from the Foreign Secretary whether he will be back in time for Foreign Office questions tomorrow?

Mr Speaker: Surprise, surprise, the right hon. Gentleman has not communicated with me today and I feel sure that he has other pressing matters on his agenda. I have received no notification that he will not be present and correct for Foreign Office questions, so I feel sure that he will be. I anticipate that the hon. Gentleman will look forward to those exchanges with eager anticipation and bated breath.

Business without Debate

ESTIMATES

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 145(3)),

That this House agrees with the Report of the Liaison Committee of 20 June:

(1) That a day not later than 5 August be allotted for the consideration of the following Estimates for financial year 2018–19:

(a) Ministry of Justice and

(b) Department of Health and Social Care and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government;

(2) That a further day not later than 5 August be allotted for the consideration of the following Estimates for financial year 2018–19:

(a) Department for Education, and

(b) Her Majesty's Treasury, so far as it relates to spending decisions and their consequences for grants to the devolved institutions.—(*Kelly Tolhurst.*)

Question agreed to.

DELEGATED LEGISLATION

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118(6)),

HEALTHCARE AND ASSOCIATED PROFESSIONS

That the draft Nursing and Midwifery (Amendment) Order 2018, which was laid before this House on 17 May, be approved.—(*Kelly Tolhurst.*)

The Speaker's opinion as to the decision of the Question being challenged, the Division was deferred until Wednesday 27 June (Standing Order No. 41A).

PETITIONS

Backing Our Servicemen and Women

10.18 pm

Mr Ranil Jayawardena (North East Hampshire) (Con): I believe that the Government's first duty is to keep us safe from those who would do us harm, whether here or abroad. Our fantastic servicemen and women sign up to do just that—to look after us—and in turn we ought to look after them. It therefore brings me no pleasure to present to the House this petition, which hundreds of people have signed, online and offline, in just one month. Those who have served our country are facing spurious and vexatious allegations. It must stop.

The petition states:

The Humble Petition of Hampshire and the wider United Kingdom,
Sheweth,

That urgent action must be taken by HM Government to protect British Military veterans from spurious and vexatious historic allegations and repeated prosecutions.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House urges HM Government to take all possible steps to immediately legislate for a Statute of Limitations that will prevent British Military veterans of the conflicts in Northern Ireland, the Falklands, the Balkans, Iraq, Afghanistan and other overseas combat operations suffering spurious and vexatious historic allegations and repeated prosecutions.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, &c.

[P002153]

Protection for British Service Personnel

10.20 pm

Robert Courts (Witney) (Con): Those who have protected us deserve in turn to be protected, to live their lives in peace with the full knowledge of their country's gratitude,

and to know that they will not be pursued in old age, and not be the subject of repeated prosecutions over events that occurred many years ago. This petition is signed by hundreds of the residents of West Oxfordshire. The first duty of any Government is to protect their people, but those who actually do the protecting must be assured of a peaceful retirement.

The petition states:

The Petition of residents of West Oxfordshire,

Declares that urgent action must be taken by the Government to protect British Military veterans from spurious historic allegations and repeated prosecutions. The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges HM Government to immediately legislate for the Statute of Limitations that will prevent British Military veterans of the conflicts in Northern Ireland, the Falklands, the Balkans, Iraq, Afghanistan and other overseas combat operations suffering spurious and vexatious historic allegations and repeated prosecutions.

And the petitioners remain, etc.

[P002158]

Camelford Bypass

10.21 pm

Scott Mann (North Cornwall) (Con): Over the past four years of knocking on doors in the Camelford area, the No. 1 issue that residents have raised with me is the need for a bypass. The A39 is a very busy road, running down the spine of North Cornwall, connecting some of my busiest towns, with thousands of lorries passing along it every day. Because of the layout of the town centre, the A39 acts as a narrow funnel running through it, with queues of cars, lorries and tractors. This causes lots of pollution, lots of noise and lots of disruption to my local residents. Cornwall Council has had to introduce the only air quality zone in Cornwall to take care of the matter. A bypass is essential not only for air quality and public health, but for the economy. It will allow traffic to navigate the area much faster and the town to be much more attractive to businesses that want to invest. It will also unlock land for potential economic development and housing, progress for which is currently hindered by the congestion on the A39. I am therefore very pleased to be presenting this petition today on behalf of 743 residents as well as of the wider community in Camelford who want something to be done to address the public health concerns and to boost our economy.

The petition states:

The Petition of residents of North Cornwall,

Declares that the request for a bypass for Camelford be accepted; further that an options report has been undertaken, which looks at different ways of addressing the congestion and air quality; further that a bypass is thought to be the best long term solution to the issues which locals are concerned about; and further the economic benefits that a bypass will bring to Camelford and North Cornwall. The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to support the earliest opportunity for a bypass for Camelford to help ease pollution and congestion.

And the petitioners remain, etc.

[P002157]

Veterans and Soldiers: Statute of Limitations

Motion made, and Question proposed. That this House do now adjourn.—(Kelly Tolhurst.)

Mr Speaker: Order. Before I call the hon. Member for Aldershot (Leo Docherty), I remind those speaking, or hoping to intervene in the debate, that, in line with the sub judice resolution agreed by the House, no reference may be made to cases that are active before the courts.

10.24 pm

Leo Docherty (Aldershot) (Con): I rise to call for legislation to bring forward a statute of limitations to protect soldiers and veterans, in the knowledge that today is the first day of Armed Forces Week. This is a week in which we have an opportunity to celebrate the contribution that our armed forces make to all aspects of our society and our national security, but also to express our collective gratitude to the armed services. This gratitude is universally felt throughout our society, and I know that it is strongly felt in this Chamber. It is for that reason that, when we see instances of soldiers and veterans being mistreated by legal process, we cannot help feeling—as they do—a strong sense of betrayal.

Bob Stewart (Beckenham) (Con): Speaking as someone who spent three years on operations in Northern Ireland, and on behalf of the men and women who served there, may I just say that it is about time that our Government sorted this matter out?

Leo Docherty: I am very grateful to my hon. and gallant Friend for his intervention. More than anyone else in this Chamber, he knows what it means to serve.

Like my hon. Friends the Members for North East Hampshire (Mr Jayawardena) and for Witney (Robert Courts), I have brought forward a public petition calling for a statute of limitations, and I have been amazed by the response. Hundreds of my constituents and members of the general public have signed the petition on a daily basis.

Gavin Robinson (Belfast East) (DUP): I congratulate the hon. and gallant Gentleman on the public support he has received in his constituency and on the turnout here this evening, which is testament to the strength of feeling in this Parliament, across the Chamber and across colleagues. I commend him for his work and support him in his efforts. The Democratic Unionist party supports him and we will work together to bring this forward.

Leo Docherty: I am very grateful to the hon. Gentleman.

When we see instances such as Dennis Hutchings—a man in his late 70s who served in Northern Ireland in the 1970s—being rearrested for an allegation for which he has previously been cleared of any wrongdoing on two separate occasions, we can see that there is clearly no public interest and that this is palpably politically motivated. The distressing point is that this situation is not just a few old men and a few last cases; there are a further 278 cases similar to that of Dennis Hutchings on the books of the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland.

Mr Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford and Woodford Green) (Con): I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing this debate. Like others, I served in Northern Ireland in the 1970s, and I know of many cases that could possibly be dragged forward and people who are waiting for that knock on the door. It is invidious. I did not go there because I wanted to. Like my colleagues, I went there because we were ordered to; we were there to protect the civilians from all the terrorism. Does he not think that this is poor reward for the hard work and dedication of the armed forces?

Leo Docherty: I agree entirely.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): The Belfast agreement released men and women from prison—from the possibility of prison—into political life. It was straightforward for them. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it should be straightforward for our armed forces, who were not terrorists but were following orders just as our soldiers still do throughout the globe? Any soldier with clean hands certainly deserves protection. Those terrorists with blood on their hands got a fresh start in life and appear to be attempting to call the shots.

Leo Docherty: I agree with the hon. Gentleman.

This is broader than only Northern Ireland. The House will be aware of the scandalous saga of legal pursuit in recent years of veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan. For example, 3,500 cases were brought before the Iraq Historic Allegations Team at a cost of £60 million to the taxpayer, resulting in no prosecutions. All those allegations were spurious. A case in point is the experience of Major Bob Campbell, who now faces his eighth investigation, despite having been cleared of any wrongdoing on numerous occasions.

Richard Benyon (Newbury) (Con): I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing this debate. Does he agree that this is a matter not just for veterans, for whom we rightly have concern, but for our armed forces of today and in the future? The impact that this could have, and is having, on recruitment and retention is palpable, as we know from those we know who are serving.

Leo Docherty: Absolutely. This is not a matter of history: it is a matter of the here and now and of future deployments.

I have two simple proposals. The first is that the Ministry of Defence legislate for a statute of limitations, perhaps for 10 years, meaning that after 10 years, unless there is significant new evidence, no case can be brought against a veteran or soldier. Soldiers and veterans do not wish or seek to be above the law—they just seek natural justice. We must allow veterans to get on with their lives without the constant fear of that knock on the door and legal pursuit.

My second proposal is that we return our armed forces to the legal jurisdiction of the law of armed conflict and the Geneva convention. The intrusion of the European convention on human rights, which was taken into British domestic law in the form of the Human Rights Act 1998, set the scene for the legal scandal that was IHAT in the case of Iraq, and Op Northmoor in the case of Afghanistan. Although the Government should be commended for the way that they closed IHAT,

hundreds of cases of a similar nature remain outstanding, with private law firms, that may be brought in the near future. IHAT will happen again unless we in this place change the legal jurisdiction of our armed forces.

Sir Nicholas Soames (Mid Sussex) (Con): I congratulate my hon. Friend on this very important Adjournment debate. Does he agree that both the Vienna convention and the Geneva convention need the closest study and early reform because they are no longer up to date?

Leo Docherty: I do agree and I am very grateful for that intervention.

Ian Paisley (North Antrim) (DUP): I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on introducing this debate. A previous British Government were able to find a legal mechanism to help a specific group of people called the on-the-runs, over 130 of them, who were all in different jurisdictions—the Republic of Ireland, Belgium and the United States—and got “get out of jail free” cards. Surely there must be some way in which Her Majesty’s Government can protect those who are there to serve our nation.

Leo Docherty: I am grateful for that intervention. I agree that the whole resolve of the Ministry of Defence and the legal capability of the Government must be brought to bear to find a legally viable route towards this, because it is, frankly, an issue of national security.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena (North East Hampshire) (Con): I commend my hon. Friend and neighbour for securing this debate. Does he agree that ultimately there is a simple but important contract that must be honoured, which is that our servicemen and women, whether today or in years gone by, have served us and we should stand by them?

Leo Docherty: Absolutely. My hon. Friend is right: it is a contract of trust and we must maintain that.

Vicky Ford (Chelmsford) (Con): I congratulate my hon. Friend on this important debate. Having spent my young years in Northern Ireland, I remember how many times it was British armed forces who kept civilians safe. I am delighted to see so many Members here tonight. I do not want to turn this into a political issue, but is it not sad that half the Chamber is empty?

Leo Docherty: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and I certainly agree.

What I am suggesting is not a new idea. As many hon. Members will know, the Conservative party manifesto of 2017 proposed exactly the same thing. On page 41, our manifesto stated:

“We will protect our brave armed forces personnel from persistent legal claims, which distress those who risk our lives for us, cost the taxpayer millions, and undermine the armed forces in the service they give. Under a Conservative government, British troops will in future be subject to the Law of Armed Conflict, which includes the Geneva Convention and UK Service Law, not the European Court of Human Rights.”

We must deliver what we promised. This is a matter of individual justice, but it is also a matter of national security. I regard it as a strategic necessity. How on earth can we deploy military force abroad with resolve if we are in any way doubtful, thinking that the Government may subsequently be challenged legally and that individuals serving on those operations may face legal pursuit?

James Heapey (Wells) (Con): My hon. Friend is absolutely right. This is not just about recruitment and retention, as important as those are. It is about the confidence to pull the trigger and apply lethal force, using one’s judgment, and having the confidence that the Government will not come after people years later. It is about current operational capability.

Leo Docherty: I agree entirely with my hon. and gallant Friend. This is a strategic necessity, and it guards against the wholesale enfeeblement of our capacity to deploy military power abroad and to execute with resolve our foreign policy and our security policy.

I seek humbly from the Minister two things: first, confirmation that urgent action will be taken by the Ministry of Defence on bringing forward a statute of limitations; and secondly, confirmation that the Government will fulfil their manifesto pledge and ensure that, when troops deploy abroad on combat operations in the future, they come under the law of armed conflict and the Geneva convention.

Mr Mark Francois (Rayleigh and Wickford) (Con): I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing this very important debate. I note that, by rough count, there are some 50 Members in the Chamber this evening, which shows the strength of feeling on this issue. I am also pleased to see the Secretary of State for Defence in his place on the Front Bench.

The Defence Committee, on which my hon. Friend and I both serve, has now agreed to look into this complex issue. If the Committee can find a way through this legal minefield, does my hon. Friend agree that Ministers—bearing in mind the manifesto commitment—would be morally obliged to take notice and act on it?

Leo Docherty: I commend my right hon. Friend for his knowledge of the subject and agree entirely with his point. We must show resolve, and the Ministry of Defence must deploy its whole effort to find a legally viable path to fulfil our collective manifesto pledge.

In conclusion, I would like to reflect on the damaging impact that the issue has on the morale and trust of those who have served and continue to serve. I have had a lot of correspondence on this subject, as one would expect, because of the petition and this debate. I am alarmed by the number of conversations I have had that involve the use of the word “betrayal”, but what alarms me more is when senior non-commissioned officers and officers who have served dozens of years all around the world in the most intensive and brutal operational environments tell me, after a lifetime of service, that on no account will they let their children serve as they have done. That pains me deeply.

Fundamentally, this is a matter of trust. It is about the Government fulfilling their duty of care to their soldiers, and it is about us collectively repaying the trust our soldiers have in us.

10.38 pm

The Minister for the Armed Forces (Mark Lancaster): I start by congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Aldershot (Leo Docherty) on securing the debate. That these issues were last debated just a month ago in Westminster Hall demonstrates Parliament’s commitment to supporting members of our armed forces, both serving and retired.

[*Mark Lancaster*]

The idea of a statute of limitations has recently drawn support from many in this place. My right hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Richard Benyon) has published a ten-minute rule Bill to provide for exactly that. Having been in the Chamber on that Friday when his Bill was before the House, may I recognise and pay tribute to the quiet and dignified protest of so many veterans out on Parliament Square? It would be wrong not to acknowledge that. Equally, I say to my right hon. Friend that while on that occasion—unfortunately, due to parliamentary constraints—we were unable to reach his Bill, I understand exactly why he chose, for technical reasons, to withdraw it to ensure that we can have a debate on it in due course.

So that there is clarity about what is meant by a statute of limitations in this context, let me set out briefly the key features of my right hon. Friend's Bill—the Armed Forces (Statute of Limitations) Bill. The Bill would introduce a 10-year cut-off point after which prosecutions of members of the armed forces for the offences of murder, manslaughter or culpable homicide could not be brought. The cut-off point, or limitation period, would apply in circumstances in which the person suspected of the offence had been, at the time it was allegedly committed, engaged in armed conflict or in peacekeeping overseas. It would also apply if the alleged offence took place in the UK, providing that a previous investigation into the events in question had already taken place.

This debate is also timely because, as we have heard, last week the Defence Committee announced a new inquiry into just these issues. It is worth highlighting, because they are key in this debate, the questions that the Committee is seeking to address:

“What are the reasons for investigations into former service personnel?...

What difficulties do the UK's international legal obligations pose for any attempt at protecting service personnel?

Can a Statute of Limitations, extended to all previous conflicts, be designed in such a way as to be consistent with these obligations?

What should be the cut-off date for the Statute of Limitations?”

These are very important questions. Aside from the question of whether a criminal limitation period is desirable in principle, those who support the idea must also engage with the complex practical reality of the legal framework within which our armed forces operate. That point was made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Rayleigh and Wickford (Mr Francois)

The Defence Committee heard evidence in its earlier inquiry that suggested that, in respect of Northern Ireland, any statute of limitations would need to apply to terrorist offences as well as to the armed forces if it were to be lawful under the European convention on human rights. The legal issues to be overcome by a more wide-ranging statute of limitations are more complex still. For example, what offences should be covered? How might it affect the possibility of investigations by the International Criminal Court? How might it be constructed in a way that is compatible with our obligations under the Geneva conventions and the ECHR? If it were to apply to service personnel operating in the UK, what activities would be covered? Should there be any exceptions to the limitation period, such as where new evidence becomes available after the cut-off point? I am

really pleased that the Defence Committee will be looking at each of these issues—and more—in depth. The Government look forward to the Committee's conclusions in due course, and I am confident that this will be a very valuable contribution to the debate.

The principal concerns that the idea of a statute of limitations seeks to address relate to historical investigations taking place in Northern Ireland, as well as to those in Iraq and Afghanistan. I would like to say something briefly about each of those issues. First, let me turn to Northern Ireland. It is only due to the courageous efforts of our security forces that we have the relative peace and stability that Northern Ireland enjoys today. This Government are sincere and unstinting in their gratitude to all those who served throughout the long years of the troubles, many hundreds of whom paid a very high price for doing so.

The Government understand the concerns that people have about the way in which the legacy matters are currently dealt with. Historical investigations in Northern Ireland currently include numerous inquests and investigations into the small minority of deaths attributable to the state. Meanwhile, many terrorist murders go uninvestigated. All those involved—not least the victims and survivors of terrorism, along with former members of the security services—deserve a better approach than the current flawed system, which is not working well for anyone. The Government are committed to putting this right.

The Government propose that the institutions set out in the 2014 Stormont House agreement are the best way to ensure a fair, balanced and proportionate approach to addressing the legacy of the past in Northern Ireland. That is why the Northern Ireland Office is consulting on the detail of how the Stormont House agreement institutions could be implemented. The institution most relevant to today's debate is the Historical Investigations Unit. The HIU would be responsible for completing outstanding investigations into troubles-related deaths within five years. That would include about 700 deaths caused by terrorists that are not currently being investigated. In addition, the HIU would be required to act in a manner that is fair, impartial, proportionate, and designed to secure the confidence of the public.

As we have heard, last year the Select Committee on Defence looked at Northern Ireland in particular and recommended the creation of a statute of limitations covering all troubles-related deaths involving the armed forces, alongside a non-criminal mechanism for ascertaining the facts surrounding those deaths. While the Committee's report demonstrated that there was support for alternative ways of looking at the legacy of the past in Northern Ireland, we must acknowledge—this is my understanding—that none of the Northern Ireland parties felt this was an approach that they could consider.

Dr Julian Lewis (New Forest East) (Con): I am glad that the Minister has paid attention to the previous report that we produced on Northern Ireland. I was even more glad that the official response to that report said that the consultation would include a section of alternative approaches that would consider a statute of limitations and a truth recovery mechanism. Unfortunately—and it seems to have happened with the change of Secretary of State for Northern Ireland—that policy has been dropped. My impression, having spoken to

ardent loyalists and ardent republicans, is that they are trapped by their rhetoric. They cannot say that they would go along with a statute of limitations, but in reality, if the Government took the lead, they would be able to live with it.

Mark Lancaster: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. I will address that point if he will bear with me.

Because there are a range of opinions, as well as requesting contributions as to how the Stormont House institutions could be implemented, the Northern Ireland Office consultation includes an open question inviting wider views on alternative ways of addressing Northern Ireland's past. That open question ensures that all those who believe in an alternative way forward will be given a full opportunity to express their views and put forward proposals. As I said in the Westminster Hall debate a few weeks ago, I hope that everyone who has contributed to the debate will find the time to respond to the consultation. I can reassure the House that the Government are committed to considering all contributions carefully before deciding next steps. In that consultation, it is in their response to the open question that hon. Members can express their views on the subject.

Given the time, I should like to move on briefly to Iraq, where the eye-watering number of allegations and the several forms of investigation have created the perception of a witch hunt against service personnel and veterans. While the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal's decision to strike off Phil Shiner shows that many of these allegations were improperly sourced, and some media reports have suggested that many of the claims brought through Leigh Day may be exaggerated, we must not lose sight of the fact that some service personnel in Iraq acted improperly. The death of Baha Mousa, the severe ill-treatment of detainees at Camp Breadbasket, and a small number of other incidents cast a long shadow. It would be remiss of us not to treat all allegations seriously, and we should expect them to be investigated professionally, but no one wants to see prolonged or repeated investigations over many years into the same incident. The Iraq Historic Allegations Team closed on 30 June 2017. When it was established in 2010 it was conceived as a two-year investigation into about 100 allegations of ill-treatment

of detainees, but subsequent court decisions here and in Strasbourg opened the floodgates to over 3,600 allegations of ill-treatment and unlawful killing. It was simply overwhelmed, and struggled to identify quickly the few serious allegations and to conclude those investigations promptly and effectively. The service police legacy investigations have fared much better, concluding 73% of their case load within the first nine months. The bulk of the SPLI's work will be complete by the end of 2018.

On Afghanistan, the number of historical investigations arising from Afghanistan has been far lower. This is due partly to the much smaller number of claims brought by law firms, but also to the more proactive approach taken during operations. By establishing a detention oversight team, which interviewed detainees while in UK custody and following transfer into the Afghan criminal justice system, we were able to ensure that most allegations were identified and investigated at the time. As a result, the Royal Military Police's Operation Northmoor has had a far smaller case load and has been able to progress its investigations more rapidly than the Iraq bodies. Operation Northmoor has completed over 90% of its investigations, and its case load will be substantially complete by the end of this year.

Today's debate can have left nobody in any doubt as to the strength of feeling on this vital issue. Inevitably, it is enormously difficult to investigate historical events and to bring those investigations to a satisfactory outcome for the armed forces, for bereaved families or for wider society. I am genuinely grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Aldershot, and to all hon. Members who have attended tonight's debate, for providing the House with the opportunity to debate this very important issue. I look forward very much to the Defence Committee's inquiry, because I believe it will play a valuable part in helping to move this issue forward. Finally, I again encourage everyone to engage with the consultation in Northern Ireland. I reassure the House of the Government's determination to try to find a way through this minefield and come to a satisfactory conclusion.

Question put and agreed to.

10.51 pm

House adjourned.

Westminster Hall

Monday 25 June 2018

[MR LAURENCE ROBERTSON *in the Chair*]

Football: Safe Standing

4.30 pm

Mr Laurence Robertson (in the Chair): I remind Members that the House has agreed, in its resolution on matters sub judice, that cases that are active before the courts should not be referred to in debate. There is currently a case involving six people who have been charged with offences relating to responsibility for the Hillsborough tragedy. That case and the individuals concerned may not be referred to in today's debate.

As right hon. and hon. Members can see, this is a very heavily subscribed debate. I am therefore imposing a three-minute speaking limit and suggest that interventions are not made.

Luke Hall (Thornbury and Yate) (Con): I beg to move,

That this House has considered e-petition 207040 relating to allowing Premier League and Championship football clubs to introduce safe standing.

I am delighted to have the opportunity to open this debate on what is clearly an incredibly important issue for football supporters across the country. The petition was launched by supporter Owen Riches and calls for current legislation to be changed to allow football stadiums in the top two divisions of English football to install safe standing in certain areas. I commend Owen for the hard work and passion he has invested in his campaign and for all the time he has taken to work with my office ahead of the debate.

I represent Yate in South Gloucestershire and my local club, Yate Town football club, was the first in the UK at which supporters watched from rail seats in 2011. Our country has both a glorious heritage and an enduring past in football ground safety. It is therefore vital that we debate the issue with the respect it warrants. It is right that we seek to ensure that football supporters across England and Wales have the best possible match day experience but equally important to remember the lessons the football world has learnt and why changes were first introduced.

John Spellar (Warley) (Lab): The hon. Gentleman rightly indicates that there is a case to be made. Indeed, West Bromwich Albion, based in my constituency, produced a very well researched case for safe standing at The Hawthorns, looking at national and international experiences. Can he imagine the disappointment when the proposal was slapped down by the Minister?

Luke Hall: I will talk about specific clubs later on. Standing was common practice at football grounds across the country until Lord Justice Taylor's recommendations were acted on following the 1989 Hillsborough disaster. The findings from the final report in 1990 have shaped supporter safety ever since, and from August 1994 clubs in the English premier league and championship have been required to have all-seater stadiums. This matter

remains complex and sensitive, but the debate's purpose is to explore safe standing in a modern era and new climate of technological advancements.

As football clubs' capabilities and technology to enhance the security and safety of supporters have evolved, there have been renewed calls for an examination of safe standing options. Paramount in the debate is maintaining supporter safety. Concerns about introducing safe standing have stemmed from genuine efforts to guarantee and uphold supporters' safety and wellbeing.

Lord Justice Taylor remarked in his 1990 report:

"There is no panacea which will achieve total safety and cure all problems of behaviour and crowd control. But I am satisfied that seating does more to achieve those objectives than any other single measure."

It is therefore right that the Government have asked for clear proof that an alternative could deliver the same levels of stability and safety.

Mr George Howarth (Knowsley) (Lab): As the hon. Gentleman pointed out, the Taylor report led to no standing areas. He will be aware that Margaret Aspinall, who speaks on behalf of the Hillsborough families, has said that this is a "sensitive time" and that most families of the victims

"don't want standing ever brought back".

Does he not agree that those views should be given some weight?

Luke Hall: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for putting those remarks on the record and commend him for all the work he has done to represent his constituents on this matter.

Rail seating, the most commonly advocated safe standing system, is the method currently operated in all examples of safe standing. It can be found at Celtic Park as well as several top-flight German football clubs. It operates in much the same way as existing seats, with each ticket holder allocated their own seat in the stadium. The rail seating design allows for the seat to be folded and locked upright when necessary, allowing supporters to stand. Each row has a safety barrier, which spectators can hold on to or lean against for stability. Those barriers seek to aid crowd control by keeping groups of supporters separate and restricting movement around the terrace.

Melanie Onn (Great Grimsby) (Lab): On that point, Nick Dale, Grimsby Town football club's stadium manager, suggests that weight should be given to the argument that safe standing in small areas should be made permissible and licences more freely available to clubs such as Grimsby Town. Does the hon. Gentleman agree?

Luke Hall: I thank the hon. Lady for raising that point. I will talk later about suggestions from my local football clubs and the mechanisms by which they could be introduced.

Mr Paul Sweeney (Glasgow North East) (Lab/Co-op): The hon. Gentleman is making a powerful case. He referred to rail seating at Celtic Park, which has been in operation since July 2016. Does he agree that, since its installation, there have been no safety concerns whatever and it has been highly successful for the club and its fans?

Luke Hall: I thank the hon. Gentleman for putting that point on the record. That highlights the potential for devolution. Importantly, Celtic's application was just for a change in the type of seating; there was no increase in the number of people in the stands. The density of people at Celtic Park was therefore the same, which is important when we look at safety in that example.

The Football Supporters Federation has consistently argued that the controlling of crowds at football games, as well as crowds' entry into grounds and the ability to monitor capacity, has drastically improved in the last 10 to 15 years. As the hon. Gentleman alluded to, that may be best evidenced by the fact that Celtic football club has reported that there has been no increase in incidents.

Alex Sobel (Leeds North West) (Lab/Co-op): On that point, a broad range of supporters have come to me in favour of rail seating. That includes a 24-year-old female Liverpool fan and a much older male Man United fan, both constituents of mine in Leeds, as well as a Leeds United supporter.

Luke Hall: The hon. Gentleman is right to put his constituents' comments on the record, which are duly noted and replicated by many Yate Town football fans who have spoken to me on this matter.

As we explore the various arguments, we are tasked with comparing a 30-year period of improvements in supporter safety with the relatively early years in the introduction of safe standing and some of the examples already mentioned. The Government are asking for a long period of time to assess the impact of rail seating.

One solution is to devolve responsibility on safe standing to local authorities, who could in turn take advice from the safety advisory groups, which often consist of a local authority, the police, fire and ambulance services, and other relevant groups. We already trust local authorities to listen to SAGs when making recommendations and decisions on rugby matches, horse-racing events and music concerts. It is argued that there is an opportunity for those bodies to take on a new and enhanced role, with the Government allowing the decision for a club to introduce safe standing to be recommended and determined by authorities already in place.

Ashton Gate is the home of Bristol City football club and Bristol Rugby—the matches are held in the same ground. Yet the ground regulations on standing, for each sport, are in stark contrast to each other. Bristol City football club previously applied to the local safety advisory group to consider the possibility of introducing safe standing. Rail seating was considered at the start of the redevelopment of Ashton Gate in the 2013-14 and 2014-15 seasons, when the club was in league one. The possibility of progress on that was part of the reason why Bristol Rugby started to play at Ashton Gate. However, Avon and Somerset police have explained that it never took off following advice from the local safety advisory group. That clearly shows that football clubs already adhere to the advice and guidance of local experts and authorities.

The sort of devolution I am describing would require only for the Secretary of State to direct the Sports Grounds Safety Authority through secondary legislation under section 11 of the Football Spectators Act 1989 to

allow safe standing in specified areas of the ground. That would allow clubs to future-proof their grounds in case their league status should change, and would allow for grounds such as Ashton Gate to adapt to their dual purpose. If they moved up or down a division, they could make changes to rail seating and whether seats were locked or not, depending on their status.

With the ability to install such seating, each club could be in a position to comply with the legislation but could also have the opportunity to consult their SAG on whether safe standing in certain areas could be pursued. Introducing safe standing could become an individual case-by-case decision, taking into account the varying opinions at each club, and the differing circumstances. It is argued that local authorities and SAGs are best placed and most suitably equipped to recommend safe standing.

Mary Glendon (North Tyneside) (Lab): Would the hon. Gentleman say that there is an exception in which it might always be important to install safe standing, because away supporters tend to stand? At Newcastle United the away supporters are right up in the gods, and stand in a dangerous position. Might that be an exception for every ground?

Luke Hall: The point that the hon. Lady highlights is right. The important point is that devolving the decision to local authorities, which would take into account the police's experience of dealing with issues at specific clubs and in specific stands, would provide more flexibility.

The debate centres on enhancing safety and control. It is about the extent to which devolution is required, and to which we trust local authorities to make the decisions in question—while ensuring that supporters get the best possible match day experience. I would welcome clarification from the Minister of the exact evidence that will be required before progress can be made. I would also welcome her thoughts about whether the sport might be best served by devolving the decisions to local authorities, which might be better placed to consider each application to install safe standing on its individual merits. The matter is one of particular sensitivity to people on all sides of the debate, and I hope that the points that are raised during the debate will receive fair and careful consideration and understanding.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Laurence Robertson (in the Chair): Order. There will be a three-minute time limit on speeches.

4.42 pm

Stephen Morgan (Portsmouth South) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Robertson. I want to thank the chair of the Pompey Supporters Trust, Simon Colebrook, for talking with me about the issue, as well as our excellent shadow Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Tooting (Dr Allin-Khan), who has led our party in backing safe standing across the football league. I thank, also, the owner of Portsmouth football club, who has written to me about this important issue today.

In a debate about safe standing in championship and premier league games, Pompey fans will be painfully aware that, despite a prolific history of European and

top division football, not to mention multiple FA cup wins, our club are currently enjoying a short break from the pressures of the premier league. Nevertheless, our time in this country's top two divisions means that, under current legislation, we are required permanently to remain all-seater. Our club is therefore a prime example of the injustice of the Government's stance on safe standing, because in reality the issue is not whether to bring safe standing into football grounds; it is already there. When Portsmouth fans travel to the grounds of Bristol Rovers, Peterborough United, Wycombe Wanderers and countless other sides in the football league, they see stadiums where fully licensed standing sections are operated. Yet back at Fratton Park they have no choice: standing sections are not allowed. That is all because we previously spent more than three seasons in the top two tiers. I must admit that I am puzzled about why the Government think standing becomes safer as the quality of football gets worse. If that is true, Southampton fans should not be made to sit.

Why should divisional status—and historical divisional status, at that—have implications for whether clubs can have standing sections at their grounds? It is nonsensical, and fans in my constituency are understandably frustrated. Listening to supporters is not just a courtesy. It is important for securing the future of the game. Not every fan wants to stand, but nearly every fan I have spoken to wants to have the choice. I implore the Government to trust fans. They know their clubs best.

The Minister is well respected and highly sensible. However, she is a Spurs fan and so, like Pompey fans, cannot stand safely to watch her team; but her colleague, the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Alex Chalk), can. Why? It is because the legislation is outdated and unjust. Surely, as a fellow victim of the Football Spectators Act 1989, she shares my frustration and that of Pompey fans. I urge her not to review the issue—which many fans consider to be shorthand for ignoring it—but to listen to fans, listen to common sense and change the law.

Alex Chalk (Cheltenham) (Con): As the hon. Gentleman suggested, Cheltenham Town football club is in league two, and therefore we have safe standing. Does he agree that it will be regrettable if, when the time comes and the club is catapulted into the premier league, it has to rip out the safe standing? That would be to snub some of its most loyal and passionate supporters.

Stephen Morgan: I could not agree more.

Opportunities for any Government to do something that an overwhelming majority of people want, and that will boost community assets and generally make people happy—for free—are few and far between. The Government have an open goal. Yet, like a Southampton striker, they have skied it. On behalf of supporters in my constituency I urge the Minister to reconsider and back fans in their call for safe standing across the league.

Mr Laurence Robertson (in the Chair): Order. Members may remove jackets if they wish.

4.46 pm

Royston Smith (Southampton, Itchen) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Robertson. I shall try to make some comments while ignoring the taunting of the Portsmouth fan on the Opposition Benches

to my right—although it is difficult to ignore. If we want to see who is successful in football, we need only note that Southampton has survived in the premier league again this year, while Pompey languishes somewhere closer to the Sunday leagues.

All-seater stadiums have been required by law since 1994. There were good reasons for introducing them, but I think that now is the time to consider whether we can have safe standing as well as seating. Safe standing has been trialled and is now accepted as being safe. In 2011 the Scottish premier league relaxed its requirement for all-seater stadiums and Celtic, as has been mentioned, now has a safe standing space for 3,000 supporters. Next season, league one team Shrewsbury Town will join Celtic and have its own safe standing area.

The stunning St Mary's stadium in Southampton has a capacity of more than 32,000. Frequently 32,000 fans attend to watch—unlike at Portsmouth, not far down the road. The Saints moved from the iconic Dell ground in 2000. We used to stand on the terraces until the move to the new stadium. Many football fans want to continue to stand, and Southampton fans are no exception. Fans in the North stand all too often still stand, although by law they should not. That presents the club with a difficult decision about how to police the situation; thus far it has not managed to do it. However, the situation proves that safe standing, even in an environment where there is standing between seats, has been safe for some 18 years at Southampton football club.

A recent survey by the Football Supporters Federation received more than 33,000 responses and discovered that 94% of fans wanted the choice of whether to sit or stand at English Football League matches. Personally, I prefer to sit, which perhaps is an age thing—but not everyone does, and thousands would prefer to stand. That said, if safe standing can be introduced we must not lose sight of the fact that there are those who want to sit.

Eddie Hughes (Walsall North) (Con): Does my hon. Friend accept that it has become very expensive to attend football matches, and standing areas might allow cheaper access to football for genuine fans?

Royston Smith: I think that has been said—that it may be cheaper if tickets are sold for standing. I have no evidence of it, but there is no reason why it should not be part of the mix.

As a Southampton fan, I am no stranger to nail-biting finishes to the premier league, and last season was no exception. I am not especially vocal, although by all accounts people with offices near mine could hear me shouting my relief when we managed to stay in the premiership for at least one more season—which Portsmouth, of course, failed to do. Many people are vocal and spectators at football like to sing, chant and explain to the referee when he may need to review a decision or change his glasses. That is part of the enjoyment of the match.

There are laws that are made for good reason—goodness knows, this law was made for good reason; no one could deny that—but that, in their implementation, do not always work in the way they were intended. This is one such law, and I am pleased that the Minister is open-minded about changes. With safety as the top priority, of course, I hope that a compromise can be reached to accommodate everyone.

4.49 pm

Alex Norris (Nottingham North) (Lab/Co-op): I will start with a fact: standing happens at every football match, whether that is legal standing up the pyramid to league one or the blind eye turned to it in the premier league and the championship. Every match-going fan knows that away from home they will stand whether they want to or not, and they know the areas of their own ground where stewards will let it go. The choice before us is not between football fans standing and not standing; it is a question of how to make it safe and as enjoyable as possible. The rules are out-of-date and we need our Government to act.

It is clear from the turnout how many MPs this campaign has reached. I was pleased to host an event on this important issue for the Football Supporters Federation, safety experts and parliamentary colleagues before today's debate. Safe standing is an issue whose time has come, a fact borne out by the simple numbers. It is borne out by its successful use outside the top two flights week in, week out. It is borne out by the 94% of fans surveyed by the EFL, who made it clear that they wanted a choice in the type of match day experience they had. It is also borne out by the more than 100,000 football fans and supporters who signed the petition to secure today's debate. Fans want safe standing even if they do not want it for themselves, and it is increasingly clear that clubs want safe standing, too.

I was delighted that earlier this month my hon. Friend the Member for Tooting (Dr Allin-Khan) announced that the Labour party backs safe standing. I salute her leadership on the issue.

Andy Slaughter (Hammersmith) (Lab): I am delighted that my hon. Friend the Member for Tooting (Dr Allin-Khan) made that announcement in my constituency, at Queens Park Rangers. I am blessed to be probably the only MP whose borough has three top-flight football clubs: my club Fulham, Chelsea and QPR. We hope to see QPR also in the premiership quite soon, making it three out of three. There are two questions to be asked here. Can standing be made safe? Yes, it can. Is it safe at the moment? No. That is why my hon. Friend is right to change our policy and that is why we want to see the Government follow suit.

Alex Norris: I appreciate that intervention and I could not agree more. Now we need the Government to catch up, because they are out of step with public opinion. Two weeks ago the Minister, in response to multiple written questions I had tabled, said:

“An announcement will be made shortly.”

I hope we hear today when that announcement might be.

The crucial thing, from my own experience, is that match-going fans want safe standing to be part of the mix. I have been one of them for 30 years; I will confess to my constituents, although it is not a secret, that I am a Manchester City fan rather than a Nottingham Forest or Notts County fan.

Jeff Smith (Manchester, Withington) (Lab): Hear, hear!

Alex Norris: My hon. Friend gives me support from a sedentary position. I am very grateful for it. I have been going for 30 years and I have been a season ticket holder for the last 20. Not long ago, I moved from an area

where there was a weekly pitched battle between fans and stewards about standing up, because it stopped being fun. My instinct is not to break rules—funnily enough, I suspect that is the case for everybody here—but I had to stand because people in front of me stood. The stewards, who are often on low wages and just doing their job, have to try to manage an impossible situation. That is no fun for anybody. Anyone who thinks that the current, arbitrary rules on standing are being enforced is kidding themselves. It is a muddle that pleases nobody.

I want to briefly address Hillsborough, because it is exceptionally important and I would hate to think that any of my campaign activities would ever, even inadvertently, cause pain for those families. I rang Spirit of Shankly to talk about the issue. I learned a lot from my conversation with Jay McKenna and I am grateful for it, but what I took from that conversation was his suggestion that we let Merseyside MPs talk about the views and experiences of Merseyside fans. That seemed reasonable to me and that is what I will do. As might be expected, I have talked to Nottingham Forest fans about it; I have spoken at length with both Forza Garibaldi and the Nottingham Forest Supporters Trust. Both are supportive, some because they want to stand and others because they are sick of people standing in front of them.

I will conclude by saying that these calls for safe standing are not only rooted in what fans want, but based on engagement. My hon. Friend the Member for Tooting had an incredible event with 40 different clubs represented. The calls are based on research and an understanding of the reality in the stands week in, week out, that the default is not good enough and that we have to change. They make a compelling case for choice, not for a one-size-fits-all approach. We do not need Whitehall to tell us what to do at Meadow Lane or the City Ground. We should let our safety advisory groups do it; we should let our clubs and fans get hold of it and come up with something sensible and safe, because our game would be better for it.

4.54 pm

Chris Green (Bolton West) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Robertson, and to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Thornbury and Yate (Luke Hall), who opened the debate.

In recent years, the call to change the requirements for all-seater stadiums has become louder and louder. People look at the change of culture within football and the environment within the grounds, which has lost much of its more troubling element, and see an opportunity to return to some standing, whether in the form of terracing or a variation of safe standing.

The overwhelming response that the English Football League received on this issue reflects why we need to change the existing arrangements. In just two weeks, the English Football League received 33,000 responses to its survey on the issue, with 94% being in favour of a choice between seating and standing. That shows the level of interest in changing the current situation and also that fans overwhelmingly support having the option to stand. It is not a marginal decision to have that option, but an overwhelming one.

At the end of last season, Bolton Wanderers just about held on to their position in the championship by their fingertips. If someone is going through a tense

game, which will determine the future of their club and whether they stay in the championship, they do not want to sit down. They want to be standing up, on their feet, part of the experience and not merely a spectator to it. It is natural for fans to want to stand up and it is reasonable for us to look at the current arrangements, which are not safe for fans when they stand up.

Fans naturally want to be part of things. Just as when we speak and engage in debates in the Chamber, it is better to stand up to engage with people. If someone is at a rock concert and enjoying music, it is much better to stand up and be part of that experience. That is what we must reflect on for football, because it applies just as much, if not more, when someone is viewing a football match. We have examples in Scotland and further afield that demonstrate that a standing option can not only be safe, but give that far better experience for the fans. There will also be less time spent by stewards telling people to resume their seats.

There needs to be a change of mindset that allows a devolution of decision making to enable collaboration between fans, clubs, local authorities and the police, along with the Sports Grounds Safety Authority, to ensure the right provision is made at each and every ground. That may be completely different from one ground to another; we have to respect and appreciate the local culture within each football club.

I welcome the debate. We need to listen to the fans. We cannot allow a loss of safety, but we can make the football spectator's experience far better.

4.57 pm

Ruth Cadbury (Brentford and Isleworth) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Robertson. I apologise that I may not be able to stay for the end of the debate and the winding-up speeches, because I will need to be in the Chamber.

I am a huge admirer of Brentford football club in my constituency, just around the corner from where I live, although I cannot call myself a football fan and I do not go regularly to football. On the occasions I have been, I have stood on the terraces there and have enjoyed the experience very much, but I recognise that, after the tragedy of Hillsborough, those terraces are no longer appropriate for the 21st century.

When the 2018-19 season kicks off in August, Brentford football club will be the only club in the championship with standing terraces. In June 2018 the club received special dispensation to continue standing terraces for another season, given that they have started construction work on their new 17,250-seater stadium near Kew Bridge in my constituency. The chief executive of Brentford football club, Mark Devlin, recently said:

“It is clear to us from our discussions with supporters that Brentford fans want the option to stand to watch their football. New stadiums, and even older grounds like Griffin Park, are now very safe places to attend matches. Safety is paramount whenever we hold a game, procedures are rigorous and all our staff are highly trained.”

Brentford will support the Stand up for Choice campaign and would like to be given the chance to gather evidence to inform the debate when they move to the new stadium. They want the change of legislation. They have seen the rail seats. I have seen the rail seats, and I now understand the difference between rail seats and the old-fashioned terraces. There are other clubs around Europe that

already have standing areas that we can learn from. Brentford fans are used to standing, so the education process for fans would be minimal. Brentford have designed a brand-new, purpose-built stadium, ready to accommodate dual-purpose seating. They are willing to put in the very latest rail seats to become an effective pilot for standing.

Brentford need a quick decision on this, because of the cost of the rail seats and the project planning for the new stadium. The west stand provides a number of different options and they want to get on with it. They are working closely with the Football Supporters Federation and other groups to understand best practice on safe standing from all clubs and how to work together to deliver it.

The operations team at Brentford is well used to managing standing audiences and already working on detailed operations policies and procedures, including for managed, zoned areas to restrict the amount of movement within a stand or specific rail seat allocation to ensure that all concourses and exits are managed safely at all times. On behalf of the Brentford fans, I would like the Government to support safe standing.

5 pm

Mr Simon Clarke (Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Robertson. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Thornbury and Yate (Luke Hall) for putting the case for safe standing so clearly. This is a day for huge congratulations to all the fans who have made that case and lobbied with such passion, thoughtfulness and commitment for many years to move the debate to the point that we have reached today.

The first Middlesbrough match I ever went to was a thrilling 0-0 draw with Wimbledon on 26 October 1996. I was hooked. That was the year after the Riverside stadium opened. It was one of the first truly modern stadiums to open in the aftermath of the Taylor review and was financed by Steve Gibson, the man who more than any other has come to embody the saving of Middlesbrough football club. Why did the Taylor review happen? We all know the tragic Hillsborough story and the very good reasons why standing was abolished.

However, I returned to the Riverside a few weeks ago to meet a delegation including Middleborough's chief operating officer, Mark Ellis, Chris Joseph from the Middlesbrough Supporters Forum, Rob Nichols from the *Fly Me To The Moon* fanzine and Dave Roberts, the commentator. We enjoyed a really good discussion on the pros and cons of safe standing, which are actually quite complex. Whether the club would even choose to go ahead with it, were it an option, is not a done deal, given that, in essence, the cost of a ticket would not be reduced. Only one rail seat can be installed in place of an ordinary seat, so there would probably be no change in the cost of a ticket for a fan.

None the less, this comes down to other things, including safety—it is not safe to stand in an all-seater stadium; the trip hazard of a low plastic seat in front of a fan is very real—atmosphere and the fan experience. As we heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton West (Chris Green), it is simply not sensible to expect people in a highly passionate environment to sit down politely throughout the experience.

Laura Smith (Crewe and Nantwich) (Lab): Several Crewe Alexandra supporters are currently in Russia enjoying the World Cup and are tweeting at me all the time about the atmosphere. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, as football fans around the world and in Europe enjoy safe standing, UK fans should be given the same choice?

Mr Clarke: I agree. The case that rail seats work has been well made in Germany over a number of years, so the idea that we would be taking a step into the unknown is simply untrue. We see that this works abroad; indeed, I think most people would say that the atmosphere in German stadiums is better than in ours. The case for safe standing has been made. We will obviously need to consult on this change if we are to make it; it would not be appropriate for us politicians to prejudge all the different aspects of this debate. I hope the Minister will encourage a review of this, because the case deserves sensible consideration.

In that meeting at the Riverside, we watched a really impressive presentation put together by a Bristol City fan. I can certainly obtain it and I urge hon. Members to watch it, because it sets out that case very clearly and emphasises that we are not returning to the bad old days of the '80s and terraces. This debate is obviously in the shadow of history and it is all too easy to imagine that we are calling for a regressive step, which this is not. It is absolutely about embracing the latest technology.

Paula Sherriff (Dewsbury) (Lab): The hon. Gentleman has actually taken the words about those '80s terraces right out of my mouth. There is a perception among some that we are going back to crowded terraces with far too many people being admitted. I thank the Huddersfield Town Supporters Association and Stand Up For Town. I was initially very cynical about safe standing, but they taught me about what it involves.

Mr Clarke: I think that that is right, and I absolutely agree that this is something about which we need to listen and learn. The ground has moved.

A favourite story of my family's is about my grandfather taking my uncle-to-be to watch Hartlepool United in the late '70s. He famously remarked, "We are probably going to win today; our star striker is back." My uncle asked, "From injury?" My grandfather replied, "No, from prison." The days of that sort of culture in football are long gone, as I think the debate has reflected. We have heard Members from across the parties express passionately that our fans want to see safe standing. I hope the Minister listens and responds with favourable news in due course.

5.4 pm

Liz McInnes (Heywood and Middleton) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Robertson. My constituency is home to some of the most passionate football fans in the world. Manchester City and Manchester United—the premier league's top two teams last season—have large fan bases in my constituency, and supporters of both clubs have been in touch with me in recent months to voice their concerns about the current legislation on safe standing.

Those fans are not as fortunate as fans of another local team, Rochdale AFC, who have a standing section in their Spotland stadium. The Minister will recall that

I recently questioned her about the dual use of that stadium for football and rugby league and the differing attitudes to safe standing dependent on the type of game being played. It is therefore particularly important to me to make the case for safe standing in the debate. It is important to say that there are understandable sensitivities owing to the Hillsborough disaster. We are all aware of the tragedy of Hillsborough and we respect the views of the families. However, we are debating the introduction of safe standing, which has the support of many fans, and much evidence to support it.

It is also important to look at the technological advancements that have developed since the Taylor report. We have seen the introduction of rail seating in several European stadiums, particularly in Germany. Notably, seats in Borussia Dortmund's stadium can be locked upright, allowing supporters to stand, and each row has a safety barrier to improve crowd control. Dortmund's fans have a reputation for being among the most boisterous in the world, so if Dortmund can have good crowd control in a safe standing environment, it sends a clear message to the rest of Europe that those advancements are working.

We must also look at our own stadiums and how they are adapting to the modern game. My recent visits to Old Trafford have involved standing in the singing section, and as somebody said to me earlier today, there is a reason why people stand up in church to sing hymns. The seats in that singing section are not used by anybody, and those fans would be far safer in a railed safe standing area than being hemmed in by tip-up seats. Hon. Members who have visited Wembley stadium will have encountered this problem too, and I am told that the same thing happens at Manchester City's Etihad stadium, although I am not a frequent visitor to that particular ground. [*Interruption.*] My hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham North (Alex Norris) says that they would not have me.

Football supporters have made it clear that they want this choice, which is provided at rugby matches, music festivals, horse racing and other events. The Government now need to listen to supporters who, along with clubs and safety experts, want reform of the all-seater legislation.

5.7 pm

Mr Marcus Jones (Nuneaton) (Con): Safe standing has been a somewhat vexed issue for many years; it actually predates the times that hon. Members have talked about. I think back to when I first started getting interested in and following football. Sometimes we do not know why we have done some things, but I decided to become a fan of Coventry City. That was around the time in 1981 when the late, great Jimmy Hill, who was Coventry's chairman, decided to change the Highfield Road ground in Coventry from being mainly all standing to an all-seater stadium. That was seen as revolutionary at the time. Sometimes we do not like revolution that much in this country, and that decision was quickly found to be very unpopular. The upshot was that the all-seater stadium lasted for approximately two years.

I commend to the Minister a very interesting report released by the University of Leicester's sociology department in 1984, which actually looked into that experiment and discussed it at some length. While things have moved on greatly since that time, some things in that report are extremely pertinent today. However, we

all know the events that took place following that decision and the deeply distressing disaster at Hillsborough in 1989. Although I do not want to go into the detail of that, when we look at the context for this debate, we need to look carefully at the history and why we went to a system of all-seater grounds in the top two leagues in 1994.

I have been watching football for 30 years and I know that, back then, at many grounds that were all-seater, most people sat down, but there is a challenge now. I take my son to watch Coventry City—some people would think that is a good thing; he seems to enjoy it. When I took him to an FA cup game against Arsenal when he was only eight, he spent 90 minutes standing on a seat because we could not see, and he would not have seen a thing if he had not done so. We went to Brighton this year in the FA cup, and he stood for another 90 minutes. Fortunately, he is nearly as tall as me, which is not that tall, and he managed to see.

The point is that there are large sections of our football grounds where people choose to stand in seating areas, and we should consider that in the context of this debate. I ask the Minister to reflect on that choice that people are making and on whether, as many hon. Members have said, there is another way of doing things, given the more modern technology and the advances that we have made in football over the period from 1989, the time of the Hillsborough disaster, to where we are now.

5.11 pm

Jo Stevens (Cardiff Central) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Robertson. I should start by declaring an interest as an officer of the all-party parliamentary group for football supporters, as the Football Supporters Federation has been the driving force behind the campaign to allow standing safely at premiership and championship grounds in England and Wales.

I have canvassed the views of football supporters in my constituency of Cardiff Central—it will not be a surprise that many are supporters of Cardiff City, newly promoted to the premiership—through face-to-face discussions and through social media with the different stakeholder groups, such as the supporters club and trust, but also through discussions with Cardiff City directors and senior management. I am delighted that Cardiff City's operations manager, Wayne Nash, and supporter liaison officer, Adam Gilliatt, are here listening to the debate.

Much of the debate will rightly concentrate on safe standing through rail seating. For those clubs with grounds that can accommodate rail seating, it is an obvious choice to make, but my club, Cardiff City, has taken and will continue to take a different approach to standing safely. Cardiff openly allows standing in designated areas and has published a sixth update to its 2013 report, "Management of Persistent Standing at the Cardiff City Stadium"—I recommend it to colleagues—saying why it believes that the current law does not preclude it from offering standing areas.

Cardiff City has been on what it describes as an incredible journey since the wake-up call that it received in 2001. From a near-bankrupt club, in an antiquated stadium, with management constraints, cultural apathy and infamous supporters, it has been transformed into an award-winning, supporter-friendly business, and our

fans have a vastly improved reputation. The club's success is demonstrated in season ticket sales and other revenues, awards won and record low arrest figures.

We have two famous stands at the City ground: the Canton and the Ninian. The majority of fans in the Canton stand want to stand to watch a match, and the majority in the Ninian want to sit. Since 2013, the club has enabled both things to take place safely by ensuring that any security and service risks are actively and properly managed. The club takes reasonable and proportionate action through stewarding against the tiny minority of fans in the Ninian stand who continue to stand despite it being a seating area. If someone is standing persistently and will not respond to advice from stewards, their seat number is sent to the control room. The identity of the spectator is verified using CCTV and the club's season ticket database, and they are sent a text message to warn them of the implications of persistent standing.

I have chosen today to focus on Cardiff's approach to emphasise one specific aspect of the campaign for safe standing. This must be about choice. All clubs want to deliver the best possible experience for supporters and visitors, and to do that by offering a choice.

5.14 pm

Stephen Doughty (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Robertson. I, too, declare interests as a member of the Cardiff City Supporters Trust and Cardiff City Supporters Club, as an ambassador for the Cardiff City FC Foundation and as someone who has been a fan for 31 years. I have stood and sat at games home and away during that period and I have seen remarkable change. I will be frank: some of the experiences that I had as a youngster going to watch Cardiff games were quite scary, particularly at some of the away matches. I have seen an absolute transformation, not only in the club at home but at away matches, during those 31 years. My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff Central (Jo Stevens) spoke of the incredible journey that Cardiff City has been on, and I absolutely second that. It is why the family stand—the Grange stand—was nominated for and won the best customer experience award at the StadiumBusiness summit in Barcelona in 2011. The same year, the club won the family football club of the year award, and it has won the family club award every year since 2011. In 2018, we won the EFL family club gold award. That shows the transformation that we have been through as a club.

I commend the club for the steps that it has taken in encouraging standing safely. It has commissioned a series of independent reports and has been working with academics and experts. There is a fantastic team at the club. My hon. Friend mentioned Wayne Nash and Adam Gilliatt, who are here today and who have worked with supporters and the relevant authorities to ensure that we can facilitate a differentiated customer experience for all fans, so that everyone can enjoy the matches.

We have referred to the difference that the club facilitates, particularly between the Canton and Ninian stands. That shows that things can be done—that clubs can have different approaches and meet the different needs of fans. A club can introduce proportionate and differentiated responses to ensure that the experience is safe for all involved. The reality is that safe standing already occurs up and down the country. There are

[Stephen Doughty]

many aspects to that success. Examples include ensuring an even spread of fans throughout the stand by checking tickets and stopping that movement towards the back, as we have seen at Cardiff City, ensuring that gangways are kept clear and that fans are encouraged not to overflow into gangways, and looking at issues in stand design—for example, the differences in rake at different stadiums. Our rake is below 25° in all our stands. That enables, I believe, a safe environment. It is obviously not the case at all clubs. People have to look at those issues. There are also the issues of the wideness of seats and seating row depths and the ticketing policy overall and whether stands are being sold to capacity. Of course, safety goes much wider than whether there are seats or no seats. It is about a whole series of other issues, including access points and safety arrangements with the relevant authorities.

All the things that I have mentioned need to be considered by the Government, but fundamentally I very much support the position taken by the Football Supporters Federation. We have already seen the example of the Scottish premiership. We have seen the response in the EFL-FSF survey, with 94% of fans wanting a pro-choice situation. Fundamentally, just as the technology and the evidence have evolved, so too the Government's policy needs to evolve. I fully support the campaign.

5.17 pm

Maria Eagle (Garston and Halewood) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Robertson. I have taken particular note of the advice that you gave at the beginning of the debate, about what can and cannot be mentioned.

I represent many members of the Hillsborough Family Support Group executive committee. That group represents the majority of the families bereaved at Hillsborough. It has recently considered this matter privately and still opposes standing at football grounds.

As has been mentioned, all-seater stadiums were one of the main recommendations—a really important one—that came out of the final report of the Taylor inquiry, which was the public inquiry designed to establish the cause of the disaster, in which 96 people were crushed to death on the terraces while standing at the Leppings Lane end of the football ground. No one has been crushed to death at a football ground that is all-seater since then in the UK.

That matters to the Hillsborough families. Safety at football grounds is one of the biggest issues for them and has been for almost 30 years. I would say that they have the most locus of anyone. They have opinions, experiences and views that deserve to be heard and taken into account in this debate. However, they cannot say what they think, and why they think it, publicly at this time, and the House will understand why. I cannot engage in the merits of the debate today and the merits of this case, because I cannot say what I think at this time as a result of the sub judice rules to which you have referred, Mr Robertson—quite properly, I might add. I do not believe it is right for the debate to be concluded and for changes to be made to the current arrangements without those affected by the Hillsborough disaster being fully consulted, their voices being heard and their views being considered.

How can it be right that those who have the most to say about this matter cannot publicly say what they think or why, while those who wish to promote the change have no such constraints on them? I do not criticise those who are campaigning for the changes that they want. I congratulate them for the effort and work they have put in, and both Front Benchers for the work that they have done. I criticise nobody. It would be wrong, however, to make changes to the rule without those who have been most affected over the last 30 years having a full say in what those changes ought to be and being able to say fully why they believe what they believe.

I know that it is frustrating for those who have been campaigning to contemplate any kind of delay, but the Hillsborough families have faced frustrations over the last twenty-nine and a half years. I promised my constituents that I would put these points in the debate. I hope that both Front Benchers, whom I commend for their receptiveness to these difficulties, will understand and act on those concerns in a way that ensures that the bereaved families of the 96 can be at the heart of the consideration of this issue, as I would say they must be.

5.20 pm

Dan Carden (Liverpool, Walton) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Robertson. I am delighted to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Garston and Halewood (Maria Eagle). It is an honour for me to represent the constituency of Liverpool, Walton, which is home to our two great football clubs. This issue is of enormous significance to the people in my constituency and my city. The solidarity shown by both clubs, their fans and the city as a whole following the Hillsborough disaster will forever remind us that the power of the people is greater than the people in power. Twenty-nine years later, however, the issue of standing at football grounds sharply divides opinion across the city.

I welcome the Chair's guidance to hon. Members to avoid commenting on matters that might be considered to have a bearing on the responsibility for what happened on that terrible day in 1989. I simply want to set out briefly the position of those groups that I have met and which I represent in my home city. I have met with the Hillsborough Family Support Group, along with my hon. Friend the Member for Garston and Halewood. I have spoken to the Hillsborough Justice Campaign and Liverpool supporters' groups. It should be noted that the Hillsborough Family Support Group committee asked for this debate to be postponed. I, too, ask for all hon. Members to be vigilant in their contributions. In any event, hon. Members must be mindful that we are having this debate at a time when the families themselves are unable to engage fully and frankly with it.

I will briefly relay the positions of the groups in my constituency that have asked for their views to be heard in this debate. The HFSG position has been set out thoroughly. The Hillsborough Justice Campaign has not taken an official position on standing at football grounds. A spokesman for HJC told me:

“Safety will always be paramount to the HJC, but equally so is respecting the choice of supporters. It has never been our role to dictate on wider football issues.”

The Spirit of Shankly supporters union, after consultation with fans, fully supports the introduction of safe standing rail seating at football grounds.

Hon. Members will appreciate that my constituency, like others, is at the heart of this debate. For my part, I ask the House to bear in mind the sensitivities surrounding this issue, particularly for the Hillsborough families and survivors, who have fought so valiantly over the last 29 years in pursuit of truth and justice. Although we now know the truth, the fight for justice goes on to this day.

5.22 pm

Anneliese Dodds (Oxford East) (Lab/Co-op): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Robertson. I pay tribute in particular to the previous two speakers, my hon. Friends the Members for Garston and Halewood (Maria Eagle) and for Liverpool, Walton (Dan Carden). They speak from experience and their discussions with people who have been through a huge amount.

I do not want to talk specifically about the principle of safe standing, but an issue related to the design of football grounds that crops up in this general policy area. It is an issue of great importance to supporters at the largest of my local football clubs, Oxford United FC. Oxford United currently plays in League 1 and is hoping soon to move back up into the championship, where it used to play. There are a number of fans at Oxford United who consistently stand. A number of hon. Members on both sides of the House have made that point. From my discussions with the club, it is clear that it is difficult to prevent some of those fans from standing. We have heard interesting examples from parts of the country where that process goes better and from others where it is harder.

In many areas of the country, we are asking stewards—who are relatively low-paid people, as my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham North (Alex Norris) said—to carry out a difficult and potentially quite confrontational task, when they have many other activities to conduct at the same time. That is not the case at Oxford United FC, where the stewards are paid the living wage—I am pleased that they are—and where the approach to safety generally is very consistent.

Oxford United wants to put in place a special system of rails in the ground. Known as the Ox-rails method, it involves the erection of rails, independent of the seats, as an additional control measure. That is not on the assumption that everybody will stand—quite the opposite—but it could give additional support to fans who end up standing, thereby hopefully obviating some of the safety problems that have occurred in other places. It also enables banners to be hung on the rails, which is obviously important to a lot of fans.

The Ox-rails approach has been supported by local fans and has largely been supported by the local safety advisory group. The problem is that the club cannot get a guarantee from the Sports Grounds Safety Authority—and, by extension, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport—that if it moves up to the championship, it can retain the Ox-rails. I find that pretty ludicrous, because it is a safety measure. If it is good enough for League 1, surely it will be sufficient when the club moves up into the championship, but it cannot get that guarantee.

It is unclear to me what the logic behind that is. From what I can see, the rules for voluntary and compulsory all-seater orders have identical implications for the Ox-rails approach, which is quite a bit fairer than the approaches

adopted in some other places, so it would be helpful if the Minister spoke specifically about the Ox-rails method in her response.

5.26 pm

Karen Lee (Lincoln) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Robertson. I have been contacted by many constituents and by my local football team, the Imps. They all support giving fans a choice on safe standing. Lincoln has one of the highest numbers of respondents in support of this e-petition of any area. A huge proportion of my local community are Imps fans. Weekly games at Lincoln's Sincil Bank bring our whole community together. The atmosphere is electric.

Lincoln Imps are a club on the up. We were promoted in 2017 to league two and earlier this year, we won the Checkrade Trophy. We are really proud of that. The managers won the Lincoln civic award, too.

Danny Cowley—an Essex lad, actually—who manages the Imps with his brother Nicky, has said many times how struck he is by the allegiance people have to their club and city, and how proud people are to be Lincoln. The bottom line is that communities identify with their football clubs and football connects communities. That is why we have to get it right with safe standing.

Clive Lewis (Norwich South) (Lab): Norwich City football club supports safe standing, as do many of the fans. One concern many fans have, however, is that some clubs may use the increase in supply as a cash cow, to generate more money from sales, rather than increase the supply of tickets for those loyal fans, who are currently priced out of many football games.

Karen Lee: Coincidentally, I was just coming to the point that in my view, safe standing spaces should be capped to keep numbers at a safe level. Safe standing zones would then be more safe than they currently are.

Anybody who has been to a football match knows that people still stand in narrow seated areas that are dangerously unsuitable for 90 minutes of standing. That obstructs the view of people who want to sit, which is particularly unfair for children, families and elderly fans. The Lincoln people who have contacted me, like a lot of football fans, believe that they should have the option to stand in safe areas of football stadiums and safety experts support their view.

I believe we should listen to our constituents—the fans—and grant them the choice to support their team in a manner that is safe and preserves that special atmosphere which brings communities together at Sincil Bank and stadiums across the UK. I will be cheeky here and say, “Up the Imps!”

5.28 pm

Jeff Smith (Manchester, Withington) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Robertson. It is always nice when parliamentarians can bring their personal experience to debates. I can bring thousands of hours of lived experience as a Manchester City fan, going back to the '70s and '80s, standing and sitting on terraces.

The first point is that nobody wants to go back to those bad old days. I have stood on terraces in the past, in the old days, where I was genuinely fearful for my safety.

[Jeff Smith]

There must be no return to poorly managed, overcrowded and badly designed terraces. The football environment, however, has changed. Crowds have changed. Stadium design has improved and we have learnt the lessons of the past. In my view, the standing ban is a 1990s solution to a problem the nature of which has changed in recent years. In my view it is time for change.

There are good reasons for change, including choice. The overwhelming evidence is that fans across the country in almost all clubs support safe standing—it is one of the few things that unite United and City fans in Manchester. Other reasons include the betterment of our national game's atmosphere and the lack of logic in the current regulations.

None of those reasons would be enough in themselves if safety were compromised in any way, but I agree with many hon. Members, particularly my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham North (Alex Norris), who made an excellent contribution, that the key point is that at the moment, in almost every ground in the country, people are standing on terraces designed for sitting, which must be less safe than people standing on terraces designed for standing. When I am at the Etihad, the seat in front of me comes to just about halfway up my shin. I do not stand, but if I did and somebody pushed me, I would tumble straight down on to the person in front of me. It is even worse for people in the steeply raked terraces in the third tier at the Etihad and at St James' Park. The potential for an accident if people are standing in those sorts of sitting areas is a consideration.

The other point to be aware of is the difficulty of maintaining order and peaceful relationships on terraces. Many hon. Members will have experienced the friction that develops when people who want to sit and people who want to stand are next to each other on the terrace. It cannot be properly managed by the stewards and it is very unsatisfactory for older people, disabled supporters, children and anybody who wants to sit but who ends up on a terrace where the majority stand, as we have heard. That is a big problem at the away end.

Given that the current rules clearly do not make grounds safer, the status quo is no longer justified. I add my voice to the overwhelming number of hon. Members we have heard today, and fans across the country, who say that it is time for change and time for safe standing on our terraces.

5.31 pm

Julie Cooper (Burnley) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Robertson. I am proud to represent Burnley, not least because of our fantastic premier league team, the mighty Clarets. Burnley were founding members of the Football League. They finished seventh in the premier league this season, and next season, for the first time in 51 years, they will compete in Europe—a tremendous achievement for a town of fewer than 100,000 people. I put on record my thanks to our manager Sean Dyche, the players, the board and everyone at Burnley football club.

On behalf of all Burnley football fans—I must declare an interest because I am a season ticket holder—I support the introduction of safe standing areas. I have been going on Turf Moor since I was six years old and for many years, I stood on the terraces with my dad

and brother. The atmosphere was terrific even though, as a little girl, I was regularly lifted off my feet as the crowd surged forward.

It was clearly right that steps were taken to make stadiums safer after the Hillsborough disaster. Now, however, it is time to revisit the issue. It is a fact that many fans prefer to have the option to stand; some fans would like to stand throughout the match and others would like to stand for parts of the action. In all-seater stadiums, the situation is that some fans stand for long periods, which leaves fans behind with no option but to stand as well, so large numbers of fans are standing with no rail to hold on to. In an animated crowd, there is a real chance that fans will fall forward over the seat into the next row, which could create a domino effect that pushes more people forward. It is incredibly dangerous.

Introducing designated safe standing areas with rails would be a sensible option for fans who wish to stand. There are many examples of that, as we have already heard. I would like clubs to be given the right to introduce safe standing areas as part of a package that would include a requirement to ensure that people in seated areas remain seated throughout the game. I would also like clubs to see it as an opportunity for some increased capacity and to offer less expensive match tickets. Football used to be the people's game, but many people have been priced out. I want to see more families and children enjoying the beautiful game in the certain knowledge that their safety is prioritised.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Laurence Robertson (in the Chair): Order. Because hon. Members have been disciplined, I will relax the time limit on speeches to four minutes, but that change can be reversed.

5.34 pm

Nic Dakin (Scunthorpe) (Lab): I only wish Scunthorpe United's finishing was as good as England's last night. During my time supporting the mighty Iron, they have played in leagues one and two of the Football League, with occasional visits to the championship. When Scunthorpe moved from the Old Showground to the newly built Glanford Park in 1988, it was the first new Football League stadium to be built for 33 years. Home fans have enjoyed standing there for the last 30 years.

An examination of the league one play-offs this season illustrates the problems with the current legislation. Sadly, Scunthorpe lost to Rotherham, who went on to beat Shrewsbury and will play in the championship next season. Rotherham's ground is an all-seater, so they have no issue with the current law and regulations, but had Shrewsbury been promoted, they would have been able to use their brand new rail-seating area, which was installed in May, for just three seasons. Assuming they stayed in the championship, under the current arrangements, they would then have had the Football Spectators (Seating) Order 2016 served on them, which would have required their ground to provide seated accommodation only. It would have been necessary to replace rail seating with conventional seating in the fourth season. That so-called three-year rule forced Peterborough United to demolish their standing terrace in 2013, despite the fact that the club and the fans wanted to retain it. Needless to say, as many hon. Members have observed, many fans continue to stand in the seated area.

Had Scunthorpe been promoted to the championship next year, the existing regulations would have meant that over the summer, they would have had to install seating on the terrace that has provided safe standing for thousands of fans for 30 years—clearly nonsensical.

Football fans want a choice between sitting safely and standing safely. The Sports Grounds Safety Authority and safety advisory groups are expected to enforce legislation and regulations that are not viable and have failed. Some fans will always stand. The time is right to review and change the legislation, which was introduced in 1989—an age ago—to try to solve problems that existed then. The right solution is for clubs, along with their local safety advisory group, the police and fans, to be allowed to implement what is safe, risk-assessed and reasonable for their ground. There should be no one-size-fits-all approach.

I support an evidence-based review that will fully involve fans groups such as the Iron Trust, and use the knowledge of people such as John Needham, the Iron Trust's secretary, and others, who see safety at football grounds as paramount but believe it can be better delivered through rail seating or safe standing.

I hope that the law and relevant regulations will be changed in time for the 2019-20 season, by which time Glanford Park will be going through redevelopment. Hopefully, it will be third time lucky for the mighty Iron and they will be back in the championship. I wish safe standing to continue at Glanford Park, as it has for 30 years.

5.38 pm

Dr David Drew (Stroud) (Lab/Co-op): I am delighted to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Robertson. Now I have four minutes, I can take a bit longer. I have to declare an interest: I was the chairman of Forest Green Rovers. I was then vice chairman until I was re-elected as a Member of Parliament, and standing down from the board was one of the sacrifices that I have had to make. I will make a couple of pertinent points.

I heard what my hon. Friends the Members for Garston and Halewood (Maria Eagle) and for Liverpool, Walton (Dan Carden) said, and I deeply sympathise with all that has happened as a result of Hillsborough, but the big difference is that directors now have direct responsibility for the crowd's safety. That was never previously as clear as it is today, and it is a responsibility they take seriously. CCTV, active stewarding and the grading of games, for which clubs rely on the police, make a huge difference; those safety measures allow more flexibility with regards to the crowd's willingness to stand or sit.

We are a very small club—potentially the smallest club ever to enter the Football League—and this issue matters because we are in the process of trying to get a new ground. One of the problems is the lack of clarity from the Football Association and the Football League about what our future progress should be and what that entails for how we should design our ground.

As someone who has stood for decades, I would always prefer to have safe standing, but we need clarity now. If clubs are looking to move, they need to know what their future requirements will be. It is about time the football authorities realised where the demand is coming from. It is important that we realise that that demand can be satisfied with safe standing, but it has to

be designed into the ground. As we all know, it is much more difficult to do so retrospectively, and that is where some problems may arise. For football to flourish, however, we need to allow it.

I say this without a note of irony, but rugby supporters and cricket supporters can drink to their hearts' content in the ground without anyone thinking that that is in any way alien. Anyone who takes a glass into a football ground is immediately thrown out, so compared with other sports, our standards and requirements in football are much tougher. All we ask for is a degree of flexibility. We have to remember that fans are on CCTV, so the days when they could just get away with it are long gone. They will get a lifetime ban if they misbehave. The clubs are responsible if they fail to organise what happens at their grounds efficiently. That is why things have moved on. It is about time we gave the fans what they want, which is the ability to stand as well as sit, if they so desire.

5.41 pm

Mr Clive Betts (Sheffield South East) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Robertson. This year it is 60 years since I first went to Hillsborough to watch Sheffield Wednesday. For more than 30 years, I had a season ticket on the Kop. I stood watching Wednesday play along with friends and family, including my father until he died at the age of 84. Standing at football grounds is a different experience and a different atmosphere, and I enjoyed it most of the time. However, as my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Withington (Jeff Smith) said, there were concerns at the time about standing at all grounds in the country. Frequently, there was at least a degree of discomfort around it, if nothing else. No one is talking, however, about going back to having that sort of standing in that sort of way. Indeed, I was at Hillsborough on the day of the disaster. I thoroughly understand the views and feelings of survivors, families and friends. We have to respect and understand that.

I did not really read the Taylor report, but I spoke to Lord Justice Taylor after his inquiry. He clearly believed that seating was the safest way, but he did not say that standing was inherently unsafe. We also have to remember that he was dealing with a situation where it was compulsory to have fences around grounds. I hope that that is a very different sort of arrangement from one that anyone is suggesting for the future.

I want to pick up on two points. Other Members have referred to the fact that all-seater stadiums are compulsory in some leagues, but not in every league. If standing is safe in some grounds in some leagues, why is it not safe in others? That point has to be addressed, but I want to speak in particular about standing in seated areas. As well as being a home season ticket holder at Hillsborough, I am also an away season ticket holder, so I have been to most football grounds in the country. Last season, I do not think I sat down once in an away ground. A few years ago, stewards and police tried to get people to sit down, but frankly they have given up these days. It is not possible to do it.

We have a situation that is fundamentally discriminatory, because it depends on someone's size. Women are likely to be smaller than men and therefore have the most problem seeing when stood up in a seated area. As the hon. Member for Nuneaton (Mr Jones) said, children

[Mr Clive Betts]

have the same problem. Whatever the dangers of standing in seated areas, it is really dangerous for children to have to stand on tip-up seats, and that happens. I have taken my godson Dan to games for many years. When he was younger, he had to stand on a tip-up seat. At Charlton one day, a steward came over and said, "Get him sat down. It's unsafe." I said, "He will sit down when everybody in front of him sits down, because he cannot see otherwise." That was at the age of eight, nine or 10, and that problem has to be addressed. Not allowing standing is also discriminatory against people with disabilities. If someone is not disabled enough to go in the disabled area—they might have bad arthritis, a problem with their back or a heart condition—but cannot stand up for 45 minutes, they cannot go and follow their team at an away ground. That is the reality at present. It is discriminatory, and we have to address that.

I hope we can have the discussion. The answer could be rail seating. I had emails recently from Grand Stand Seating Systems, which has another way of looking at the problem. In the end, we have to find a way of having safe standing and safe seating at football grounds so that everyone can enjoy the game they love in the way they want.

5.45 pm

Jonathan Reynolds (Stalybridge and Hyde) (Lab/Co-op): I will never forget my first proper experience of football. It was Christmas 1989. I remember the anticipation walking through the streets to get to Roker Park. I remember how close I felt to the action once I was inside. I remember the freezing cold wind off the North sea that used to hit me on the terraces. What I genuinely do not remember was feeling unsafe, because I have never felt unsafe in a football ground. I tell that story not because I am nostalgic about the past—I think Members have correctly said that we are not trying to look back to the past in this debate; by the way, there is far too much nostalgia in some of our policy debates in this place—but because it is a reminder of what football is really about. I did not just discover football as an experience that day; I discovered my tribe. Football is about sport, of course, but it is also much more than that. It is about culture, family and identity. That is why it is so special, why it matters and why so many of us are here today when some serious business is going on next door.

It would be wrong to say that such issues as hooliganism and racism, which scarred football in the 1980s, have gone away entirely, but the situation today is fundamentally different. This country is fundamentally different—for the better—from how it was in the 1980s. Most of all, policing is fundamentally different. I am proud to see my predecessor Lord Pendry of Stalybridge in the Gallery, because I know he tried to influence the Taylor report at the time to allow for safe standing. As shadow sports Minister, I think he tried to introduce a policy similar to the one our current shadow sports Minister has introduced.

Football fans like me would like two things: first, to be treated with respect, and secondly, to have the choice that so many Members have talked about today. If I go to a football match, ideally I would stand if I could, because football is a participatory event. At a music gig

—this is not as good an example as that of my hon. Friend the Member for Heywood and Middleton (Liz McInnes), who talked about singing in church—people can be seated at the sides or be in front of the stage standing up. Where is the best place to be? It is standing up, being right in the centre of the gig. I want to jump up and down when we get a chance or a corner, because as a Sunderland fan, you have to take what you can get, frankly. I want to sing songs. I do not just want to go and watch a live version of what we see on TV. I want something different from that. I want to be with my people, sharing in that collective experience.

A lot of people have mentioned the World cup, and how much we are enjoying it so far in this country for once—I have probably jinxed it. It sounds ridiculous, but it is a proven fact that while the World cup is on, suicides decline in participating countries. That is not because a country is doing particularly well or badly, but because that shared experience is genuinely good for people. There is a book called "Soccernomics" that looks through some of the data around football. That fact is also true for big collective events, such as when Princess Diana died or when JFK was assassinated. The shared experience makes the game what it is. It is why I can sit next to my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead (Ian Mearns), who is a Newcastle fan. The derby games are so important for that.

In terms of the practicalities, people can stand up and watch horse racing or rugby, or football in Germany and now in Scotland. They can stand up and watch football in the lower divisions. It seems particularly egregious that league one clubs that have been promoted and sustained that success have to remove their standing areas. In reality, as so many Members have said, people stand up at matches anyway. That is particularly so for away matches, which are by far and away the best way for someone to watch their team. We need to look at the law, and we need to change things. We need to consider just how far we have come from the 1980s and celebrate what football means for this country. Most of all, we need to give football fans the respect and choice that they deserve.

5.49 pm

Thelma Walker (Colne Valley) (Lab): I remember going to the football with my dad when I was a child, holding on to his hand as we headed for the terraces, wearing our team's colours, laughing and joking with other fans, and the whole stadium would be standing cheering the team on throughout the match. The excitement and the atmosphere were electric. Everyone should be able to enjoy supporting their team, whether standing or sitting.

Having heard Huddersfield Town Supporters Association's views about safe standing last summer, the demand and support for the campaign has become more and more apparent. My local team, Huddersfield Town football club, is the first premier league club to survey season ticket holders about standing tickets, and 96% of those who responded were in favour. The Premier League's research shows that 70% of people surveyed are in favour.

There are times during matches when the whole crowd are already on their feet, but, as stadiums are seating only, no safety precautions such as rail bars are currently in place. We have had tragedies in our stadiums

where safety has failed, and we must never forget the victims and their families. Technology, design and safety standards have moved on since then, and our stadiums are hopefully safer for it.

Standing at sporting events happens across the country. Teams such as the Leicester Tigers, who are in the rugby union premiership, still have terraces where fans can enjoy the thrill of cheering on their team without being confined to a seat. Further afield, there is evidence of effective safe standing practice. In Germany, the Bundesliga team Borussia Dortmund has a stadium that has a rail between each row of seats, and there have been very few incidents or accidents since they were introduced. The solution is simple: if there is sufficient evidence that standing can be safe and fans are in support, it should be introduced. I would argue, however, that it should not be enforced across the whole stadium but in designated parts, as some people would prefer or need to be seated and it would not be fair on those fans if they had people standing in front of them.

We need to catch up with practices in Europe and deliver on an energetic but safe environment for spectators. They are integral to their clubs and should have their voices heard. Let us make sure that a generation of children can experience the excitement and enjoyment of standing at a football game, as I had the opportunity to do with my dad.

Mr Laurence Robertson (in the Chair): I call Gerald Jones.

Hilary Benn (Leeds Central) (Lab): It is a great pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Robertson. I have a confession to make. When the idea of safe standing—

Mr Laurence Robertson (in the Chair): Order. I am sorry; my voice did not carry. Gerald Jones.

Hilary Benn: I am terribly sorry. [*Laughter.*]

5.53 pm

Gerald Jones (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney) (Lab): I started having an identity crisis there, Mr Robertson. It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship as we debate the e-petition on allowing premier and championship football clubs to enable safe standing. I will be brief because I know other Members want to speak. May I say at the outset that I am not a typical premier football supporter? However, I am a season ticket holder at Merthyr Town football club and enjoy spending time watching home games at that club and supporting the many activities that it organises in our community. Whatever the outcome of the current discussions, any decision on safe standing will have no direct impact on supporters at Penydarren Park, Merthyr Tydfil—at least until they graduate to the premiership in the perhaps not too distant future—or at any other clubs in my constituency. Many people from my constituency travel to support premier and championship matches, and my contribution to today's debate reflects my conversations with them.

[*Siobhain McDonagh in the Chair*]

As we know, there has been much in-depth consultation with football clubs, fans and safety authorities, and the outcome of that consultation suggests it is time for change, as recognised by Labour's recent policy announcement. I share the view that it is important to

give the power to fans and clubs, in consultation with and with guidance from local safety authorities, to allow safe standing areas to be designated in stadiums. As with most grounds, it is the clubs, local fans and local authorities who know their stadium far better than anybody else. It is therefore sensible that the decision should rest with them, and that they are empowered to take such decisions.

I am sure we all agree that safety has to be paramount. We have to recognise that the current system, as we have heard numerous times this afternoon, is not working. People routinely stand in seated areas and that creates dangers in itself. I have seen evidence of that. In seating areas that are not designed for standing, seats are often damaged, potentially making them more unsafe.

I feel, Ms McDonagh—we have had another change of identity this afternoon—that the proposal for the installation of specialised rail seating where appropriate, or standing in current seated areas where it can be made safe to do so, is a sensible approach. Surveys from the Football Supporters' Federation demonstrate that fans want that choice, with 94% in support.

Kate Green (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab): Fans have told me that they want that choice, not least because they see specifically designed safe standing areas as also offering the potential to offer better sightlines than is currently the case when smaller fans like me stand up in seated areas.

Gerald Jones: I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention. She outlines a point already raised today and I totally agree with her.

We have heard about the Government's planned review of the issue. However, the Government's actions do not suggest that they are addressing the issue with any urgency. We need to make progress, and I urge the Minister to hear the calls from football fans and supporters' organisations across the country and to respond positively and in good time.

5.56 pm

Ian Mearns (Gateshead) (Lab): Unlike my hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Jonathan Reynolds), I have stood in the Roker end and felt very unsafe indeed. [*Laughter.*] As a founder member and chair of the all-party group for football supporters, I felt it was vital for me to be here today to represent the interests of football supporters.

I attended my first game at St James's Park in Newcastle in the 1966-67 season, so not quite as long ago as my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield South East (Mr Betts). I have visited 70-plus football league and premier league grounds and dozens upon dozens of non-league grounds, many of which I have heard mentioned today. For me the issue is not an abstract concept. It is something that I and many fans experience week in, week out through the football season. Standing in football grounds in all-seater stadiums happens now. The problem currently exists. We are not advocating a return to the large open terraces of the past.

Hillsborough was a tragedy, but it is not the only tragedy to befall football fans in this country. Ibrox in Glasgow has had two significant disasters in the past century. Bolton Wanderers had a significant disaster at

[*Ian Mearns*]

Burnden Park. Bradford had a dreadful fire that took many lives. There have been other smaller incidents where walls have fallen down or crush barriers have gone.

When I was a young person going to football matches, I remember people being crushed on crush barriers on open terraces on a regular basis, and the accident and emergency wards of our local hospitals were testimony to that. However, 27 years have passed since the Taylor report. Grounds, fans and football have changed, but there is a problem that needs to be addressed.

Having seen the improvement, I was a fan and MP who remained to be convinced about safe standing at football grounds, but now—regularly attending football games at St James's Park where I am a season ticket holder, and travelling round the country going to away games—I am part of the experience where fans stand week in, week out in the away ends and in many parts of home grounds as well. Safe standing is much safer than standing in designated seating areas; there is no doubt about that whatever. In designated seating areas where fans are standing in numbers, the seats in front of them are undoubtedly a trip hazard. I myself have tripped over seats, and seen many others doing so as well.

It is unlikely that safe standing will reduce ticket prices. In the Bundesliga, Dortmund, for instance, has one and half people standing for every seated place, but at Celtic—the experiment in Scotland—it is one for one. There will not be any real return from the football clubs' perspective, but there is demand. No one wants it to become compulsory; it will be in selected parts of football grounds. However, there is no doubt that standing in sitting areas is less safe than safe standing. We need to think about it, and do something about it as soon as we can.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Siobhain McDonagh (in the Chair): Order. Owing to the previous Chair's great chairing and the great behaviour of all Members, I am unprecedentedly extending the length of speaking time. Members may now speak for five minutes, and if anybody wants to take interventions that will be okay as well. I call Clive Efford.

6 pm

Clive Efford (Eltham) (Lab): Thank you, Ms McDonagh. I think this is the first time I have spoken in a debate with you in the Chair, so it is a pleasure to see you in your place.

In this debate we must listen to fans, because the fans we are talking about are those who commit themselves passionately to their club. They give up their time, go to the matches and create the atmosphere in the grounds that makes football in the British Isles a brand that is popular across the globe. People are prepared to pay money to watch the English Football League, English football matches and British football clubs, because of the atmosphere created in the grounds by those fans. Imagine if those games were played in empty stadiums and then broadcast around the world. They would not be as attractive as they are, so the fans are incredibly important to the future of football, and we need to listen to them.

We are speaking particularly today about those fans who go to away games—the ones who make that extra commitment—because they are the ones who predominantly stand. I am a Millwall season ticket holder. I do not have to stand when we are at home games, but people in large sections of the ground do. When I go to an away game, I have to stand. If anyone wants to go to an away game who cannot, or does not want to, stand, they are discriminated against, because they have no choice. If they want to go to the game, they have to stand, so what about those fans?

We need to create these designated areas. I pay tribute to the Football Supporters Federation and Supporters Direct for their persistent campaigning to get recognition for the voice of fans. It is not about recreating areas where clubs can cram people into a standing area; this is about creating rail seating where someone will stand in the place of a seat. We can therefore designate areas where people who choose to stand can do so safely, and those who want to sit can do so without the interference of those who want to stand.

The question we have to ask ourselves is whether the current situation, where people stand in areas that are designed for seating, is safe. The answer to that is clearly no, so the next question to the Minister has to be: "What are we going to do about it?" The Government cannot continue to put the telescope to a blind eye and say, "I see no fans standing." They are, and they are standing in areas that are dangerous and not designed for it. We should deal with that.

When fans have been asked whether they want to stand, they have said in large numbers that they do. More than 3,000 Middlesbrough fans were consulted, and 99% of them said they wanted to stand. More than 7,000 Arsenal supporters were consulted, and 96% of them said they wanted to stand. Spirit of Shankly consulted 20,000 of its fans, and the overwhelming majority wanted to stand. Consistently, throughout the football league, fans are telling us that they want to stand in safe areas.

The Minister could allow a relaxing of the regulations to allow rail seating to be introduced in grounds. For games where the regulations demand that fans have a seat, seats could be put down and it would become a seated stadium. For those games where an area is designated for standing, those seats could be locked back by the grounds staff and the area could be used for standing. When we have consulted with the local authority, the Sports Grounds Safety Authority, the police, the fans and the local club, I do not see why we cannot designate safe areas where fans can stand. I do not see why we cannot relax the regulations to deal with a situation that is currently unsafe.

In answer to some questions last week, the Minister very helpfully said that she was looking to hold a fundamental review of safety in football stadiums, but over the weekend we heard rumours of No. 10 pushing back against that. Can she assure us that that did not happen over the weekend, and that we will get a full, fundamental review of safe standing in football stadiums?

6.5 pm

Mr Roger Godsiff (Birmingham, Hall Green) (Lab): I congratulate the hon. Member for Thornbury and Yate (Luke Hall) on initiating the debate. In the late 1990s,

I initiated a similar debate and introduced a private Member's Bill, which the Government of the day, in their wisdom, talked out. I hope that the hon. Gentleman has better luck with his current campaign.

Every week, hundreds of thousands of people attend football matches in leagues 1 and 2, and non-league games. They attend rugby matches, rugby league matches and horse racing, and they can stand up at all those events. Indeed, if one wishes to include fishing as a sport, one could say that for fishing—the most popular participatory sport in the country—one can choose to stand or sit. However, at championship and premiership matches, one cannot choose to stand. Furthermore, literally hundreds of thousands of people attend pop concerts such as Glastonbury, many of which are held in football grounds where the fans cannot stand up to watch a game. Yet they can stand up to watch a concert. They can jump up and down, and that is perfectly legal.

The Minister is on record as saying:

“While I appreciate there is a vocal minority who want a return to standing, I don't think they speak for the majority and I remain to be convinced of the case. The clubs aren't convinced either. I know there have been surveys done and there is no desire among the top clubs to change this policy.”

That is just not true. As my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Clive Efford) and other speakers pointed out, club after club have asked for the right to have a safe standing area.

Reference was made earlier to the fact that West Bromwich applied to the Minister when they were still in the premiership to be allowed to have a safe area for 3,800 people. She turned it down. The great club of Aston Villa, on the edge of my constituency, wrote to me saying, “Here at Aston Villa, we believe that existing legislation should be changed to afford all EFL clubs the opportunity to offer their supporters the choice to sit or stand at matches in safe, licensed stadiums.” One after another, clubs in the championship and premiership have said that they would like to have that option.

Ever since I initiated, many years ago, the debate that I referred to, I have never had a satisfactory answer from any Minister to this question. How can it be safe for hundreds of thousands of pop fans to jump up and down at pop concerts, but not safe for a few thousand football fans to stand up behind rail seats? It happens in the Bundesliga and other European leagues, and it is perfectly safe. Nobody has ever given me a convincing argument about why it is safe for hundreds of thousands of people to jump up and down and not safe for a few thousand people to stand up.

The Scottish Parliament rightly recognises that ridiculous contradiction and has allowed clubs in the Scottish Premiership to trial safe standing. Celtic, which 50,000 supporters watch every week, has introduced safe standing in a small segment of the ground, and it has proved very popular. It is about time that we in England caught up with Scotland. It is about time that football fans in England were allowed to stand up.

6.10 pm

Emma Hardy (Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms McDonagh. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Tooting (Dr Allin-Khan) for her work on raising this issue.

When I was a child, it was evident to everybody who came to my house that I had an incredibly obsessive football-supporting father. They spotted it from the moment they stepped into the lounge and saw the football shrine made up of memorabilia collected over years, which outgrew the area it was originally assigned to. The evidence of my father's support for his team even pushed away the family photographs. If people failed to miss that, they would notice the football programmes in frames throughout the house and up the stairs, which my dad would happily point out to anyone who showed a bit of interest in them. I witnessed the weekly rituals he went through. Every time his team played a match, we had to make mum sit upstairs in the bedroom, because if she set foot in the lounge, the opposition would score against the team we were all cheering along. I learned from a very young age how important football is. I believe that the vast majority of football fans are entirely decent, law-abiding people—although some, like my dad, are utterly obsessed.

I am very proud to have Hull City in my constituency. In 2012, it announced that it supports safe standing in principle. In June, representatives of the club came to Parliament to lobby MPs about this issue, although I was sadly unable to attend that event. Geoff Bielby, the chairman of the Hull City Supporters' Trust, and Barbara Wilkinson, the secretary of Senior Tigers—a supporters' group for over-55s—expressed a preference for safe standing. They suggesting designating a small area of the KCOM stadium for safe standing—they suggested it could accommodate 7,500 people.

A survey has shown that 47% of fans would be more likely to attend a football match if there was safe standing. I cannot speak for everyone else's team, but Hull City certainly want to encourage as many people as possible to come down and cheer it on. If this is one way to do it, I say, “Let's go for it.” If more fans come to matches, that will hopefully bring in a lot of extra income.

As many hon. Members have said, people stand anyway. A Hull City supporter who is unable to stand as he finds it difficult told me that he wants safe standing. I asked him why, and he said that he wants to be in a seated area where the stewards can enforce sitting and can make sure people in that area sit down. He said that, at the moment, people stand all over the place, but giving people the choice and saying, “If you want to stand, go here. If you want to sit, respect the fact that everybody in this area wants to sit,” would be a practical solution to the problem.

It is time that we allow local clubs to make these decisions, based on local information. I am not saying that we should create a rule that affects every club in every city, but for clubs such as Hull City, surely it should be up to the local authority, the police and the football club to work together and think about what really works for our football fans and our city. I do not believe that one size fits all. Allowing a local decision-making body to decide on the amount of safe standing means that it can adapt quickly to changing circumstances. We would not need to have a big debate if, a bit further down the line, we want to reduce or increase the amount of safe standing. That would be the best solution and the best decision for obsessive fans such as my dad and clubs such as Hull City.

Siobhain McDonagh (in the Chair): I call Hilary Benn.

6.14 pm

Hilary Benn (Leeds Central) (Lab): I have got it this time. It is a great pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms McDonagh.

I confess that, when I was first approached by constituents who said, “We would like safe standing,” my gut reaction was to say, “I really don’t think so.” I remember replying to, I think, the first person who ever wrote to me on the subject, that, “Nothing we do should in any way jeopardise safety, because we all remember the horror of Hillsborough.” I am here today because I changed my mind.

I pay tribute to the Leeds United Supporters’ Trust for its work—Jon Darch is its lead campaigner on safe standing. It polled its members—to add to what my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle (Emma Hardy) just said, 97% were in favour—and recently organised a safe standing roadshow at Elland Road. Angus Kinnear, the managing director of Leeds United, wrote to me, as the local Member of Parliament—it is a great honour to represent Leeds United and Elland Road—and said, “The club wants to see a change in the law.”

My initial reaction was as it was for the reasons that my right hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley (Mr Howarth) and my hon. Friend the Member for Garston and Halewood (Maria Eagle) set out. It should be obvious to the Minister, who is passionate about football, that two truths have been expressed in this debate: the current situation is not working and it is not safe. It is not working, because fans are standing. We have heard evidence about that. Everyone can see it with their own eyes when they go to matches or watch them on the telly, and hon. Members have talked about that today. It is not safe for reasons that my hon. Friends the Members for North Tyneside (Mary Glindon), for Manchester, Withington (Jeff Smith) and for Burnley (Julie Cooper) set out very clearly. I am quite tall, and it is a terrible risk for me to stand with a seat in front of me, because if I am knocked, I will tumble forward. I do not see how we can accept the reality that some fans want to stand, but allow the safety risk to be incurred.

I had never heard of rail seating—I did not know what it was—but as part of my education I saw the pictures and read the evidence, which has been referred to today, from places where rail seating has been used. It is not a return to the standing of the past; it is a completely different method. It is safe and gives fans the choice.

I simply say this to the Minister: this is an idea whose time has come. I hope very much that, after listening to the debate, she will respond in a similar way to my hon. Friend the Member for Tooting (Dr Allin-Khan), who has announced our party’s support for safe standing. If she wants to have a trial in the premiership or the championship as a way of demonstrating its safety in that context, fine. I, for one, look forward to the day when Leeds United fans who want to stand are able to do so, and when those who want to sit are able to do so and see, because they are not sitting behind people who are standing.

This point will appeal particularly to the Minister—I am revealing my true passion, as well as my representative pleasure and privilege. I look forward to the day when safe standing is also permitted at the new White Hart Lane.

6.19 pm

Matt Western (Warwick and Leamington) (Lab): I genuinely appreciate your including me in today’s debate, Ms McDonagh. It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Tooting (Dr Allin-Khan) for bringing this timely debate to the House.

This is another good example of where we as legislators are not slightly but significantly behind public opinion. It is clear from the evidence that many football fans are pressing for a change to the situation in our stadiums. Something like 69% of football fans—96% of Arsenal fans according to one colleague—would prefer to have a safe standing area. Right across the country there is a real movement for safe standing, which we need to respond to.

I have been to many grounds, although not as many as some hon. Members in this debate. I have been to a great number of non-league clubs, such as Barnet, Brentford, Leamington football club obviously, and even Nuneaton Borough on three occasions. There is a terrific atmosphere on the terraces, as is to be expected at those sorts of grounds. I have been to the San Siro stadium, home of AC Milan, and to some of the other larger stadiums in Europe, but the most unsafe and threatened that I have ever felt was on steeply tiered seating areas such as at the Parc des Princes, watching Paris Saint-Germain. It can be so dangerous if there is a movement from behind in some of these seated areas. Some sort of tragedy could happen so easily. We need to be cognisant of changes in fan behaviour.

The all-seater stadium is a hangover from another era. Some of us remember those dark days in the 1980s. We are here, 27 years on. It is a significant length of time, and it is worth reflecting on how much the game has changed, particularly since 1990: the approach, the professionalism and the ownership of the game but also how fans engage with it.

Other hon. Members commented about the use of stadiums for all manner of different sports events and for rock concerts. I have been to the Ricoh arena recently to watch Coventry City and also to see the Rolling Stones. I felt no threat and no sense of risk in the crowd in the centre of the stadium. Let us look to Germany and abroad at what happens there. In the Bundesliga, 10 of 18 stadiums have safe standing areas. Borussia Dortmund and other clubs are so far ahead in club ownership, in terms of not just safe standing areas but the introduction of railed seats. There is so much we need to do to change our game in this country. As I said, 27 years is a very long time. It is long overdue that we change our approach to fans’ enjoyment of our beloved game. I very much support the petition.

6.22 pm

John Mann (Bassetlaw) (Lab): There are many things I would like to say and many things I would like to challenge. Ten MPs made a point that I would like to challenge, but I am not able to do so because of the ongoing court proceedings. I point that out as a fact but also because there are people with far greater expertise, such as one of my constituents, who has a dramatic amount of expertise in this area and could contribute greatly, who cannot speak because that would compromise court proceedings. The timescale is important, because

some issues need to be discussed. I refer specifically to the comments made by 10 MPs today that it would be highly inappropriate for me to respond to.

As it happens, I am a football fan who for 25 years has sat only twice. Because one of those occasions led to a very unlucky defeat, I refuse to do so other than when one could only get a ticket at Wembley. There is not a corner, wall or even roof of Elland Road where I have not stood. The concept of standing is very pleasant and the concept of seating is not.

Spiritually, I am totally in support of what the Football Supporters Federation wants to achieve and the practical way it is going about it, but there are some issues that the Minister ought to consider. First is the safety or otherwise of current football stadiums, which has been raised in a different context. Many MPs have suggested that they are much safer than they were, but I challenge that notion. The ability to get out of a football stadium in a disaster has not been tested in real time in any stadium in this country. Seating is probably worse than railed standing would be. The Leeds University model that is used to test the design of stadiums is flawed. I would like to illustrate my point by giving precise examples that are unsafe, but it would be problematic to do so. When I have challenged football safety officers and owners on this, I have been given confirmation that there is no system. Therefore, there needs to be a review of all aspects of safety, including the remaining banks of seating and the inability to get out of stadiums quickly in an emergency.

Secondly, 11 MPs mentioned Germany. I have been to most of the Bundesliga grounds with the chief safety officer, the chief family liaison officer and with the ultra leader. I went to quite a number of major Italian grounds last season with the safety officers. Safe standing is quite possible, but other issues emerge. The Minister should talk to the safety officers in Italy; there, the big safety issue is the firing of pyrotechnics as missiles from one end of the stadium to the other. That is a major issue in Italy. The supporter who fell to his death in a stadium this year and the racism at Lazio compound the safety issue.

Let us be clear: in the Bundesliga, there is a whole series of safety problems—some in the seating but some in the safe standing areas, too, which the safety officers have to deal with all the time. Fans have to have a season ticket. The amount of alcohol provided is significantly less in standing areas than in seating areas. The body checks at the entrance are significantly greater because of the risk of pyrotechnics. Culture changes over time. I am not against standing at all—quite the opposite—but I hope the Minister will visit Italy, Germany and perhaps Ajax in Amsterdam and look at what the safety officers say of the problems that they face, so we get it all right, not partially right.

Siobhain McDonagh (in the Chair): Do any other Back-Bench Members wish to speak?

Clive Efford: I'll have another go.

Siobhain McDonagh (in the Chair): No, Mr Efford, I think you will find you have spoken already. I call Sandy Martin.

6.28 pm

Sandy Martin (Ipswich) (Lab): Thank you, Ms McDonagh. I will not speak for long because I was not here at the start and I cannot be here at the end. I just want pay tribute to the hon. Member for Thornbury and Yate (Luke Hall) for introducing the petition, and for being an Ipswich Town fan.

6.29 pm

Gavin Newlands (Paisley and Renfrewshire North) (SNP): It is a pleasure to serve with you in the Chair, Ms McDonagh, for the first time, I think. I am pleased to take part in today's debate. I start by congratulating the hon. Member for Thornbury and Yate (Luke Hall) on setting out the case and the current situation so well. I add my thanks and congratulations to Owen Riches who launched the petition and all who worked so hard to get this issue brought to the House.

Throughout the debate a number of Members have been dreaming—I use that word advisedly—of the day that their local club will reach the heights of the premier league. Some Members took the opportunity to indulge in a bit of local football banter. The hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Royston Smith) claimed that he would not retaliate against taunts from the hon. Member for Portsmouth South (Stephen Morgan) before describing Portsmouth as playing closer to the Sunday league than the premier league. As always, politicians are lying.

The hon. Member for Nottingham North (Alex Norris) made the vital point, since made by others, that standing is happening anyway and we should get on with making it safer. I agree with him and others that in doing so we must remain sensitive to the Hillsborough disaster and the families of those affected by that awful day.

Like the hon. Member for Cardiff Central (Jo Stevens), I declare an interest as an officer of the all-party parliamentary group for football supporters. Despite that, the sport I played week in, week out for 17 years was rugby. My first love was football, and for my sins I am a loyal St Johnstone fan. The Saints are going through what is probably the club's most consistent and best footballing spell in their history, having qualified for Europe numerous times in recent years and—touch wood—been a regular fixture in Scotland's top flight for the last 10 years.

When that top flight was formed in 1998, it followed the Taylor review in England in stipulating that all grounds must be all-seater, with a minimum of 10,000 seats—although that has been reduced to 6,000. That measure cost many Scottish clubs dearly: many are still in debt as a result and some have gone into liquidation. Coincidentally, St Johnstone were the first club in the UK to open a purpose-built all-seater stadium, just weeks after the Hillsborough disaster. Indeed, Lord Justice Taylor visited the stadium during his inquiry into that disaster.

The debate has been brought about by the growing appetite across these islands for safe standing sections to be introduced at grounds throughout the country. More than 110,000 people signed the petition, highlighting that growing demand. The Football Supporters Federation, referenced heavily throughout the debate, has done an excellent job in championing safe standing areas in grounds. That grassroots campaign has even managed to unite Manchester United and Manchester

[Gavin Newlands]

City supporters—no mean feat, though not quite Rangers and Celtic, or St Mirren and Morton in my area.

Standing at football has always been part of the game. Even after the Football Spectators Act 1989, supporters have chosen still to stand. Indeed, my first recollection of football was, I think, 1986, for the Stanley Rous cup, standing on the terraced slopes of Hampden against the auld enemy, England. My selective amnesia forbids my telling the House the result of the game. [Interruption.] The hon. Member for Bassetlaw (John Mann) is correct.

Ninety-four per cent. of respondents to the survey that has been mentioned believed that fans should be able to choose whether to stand or sit at football matches. That does not surprise me in the slightest. However, not one single football supporter would place the safety of other fans at risk. This debate is so important because it is fan-led. Fans can provide a range of examples of where safe standing has been produced in other countries across Europe, including Scotland. I would be grateful for the Minister's expanding on any recent conversations she has had with the footballing authorities in Scotland, Germany or anywhere else in Europe on that point. In addition, what assessment have the UK Government, FA or premier league carried out on any individual stadiums across Europe that allow safe standing as a means by which to judge whether the policy in England and Wales can be relaxed in some way?

I mentioned that the Scottish Professional Football League's seating requirements were relaxed. At the time that announcement was made, the chief executive of the then Scottish premier league, Neil Doncaster, said the decision was driven by "supporter demand" and that

"Whenever we talk to supporters about what they'd like to see, safe standing comes up as one of the things they'd like to see".

Scottish football is doing a lot of work to improve the fan experience for those attending a game at the weekend. I should note that that is not being done at the expense of fan safety. In making that decision, the SPFL not only listened to its member clubs and to supporter groups, but gathered information that allowed it to make an evidence-based decision. It assessed the systems in place in Germany, specifically looking at Borussia Dortmund's ground, where Mr Doncaster found that they have a fantastic set-up that improves the fan experience and creates a great atmosphere.

In response to fans' demands, Celtic made history in 2016 by being the first club in the UK to install a safe standing system in their stadium, as was referenced, with 3,000 rail seats put in place at Parkhead. That installation was warmly welcomed by Celtic fans and endorsed by Jon Darch of the Football Supporters Federation. Celtic manager Brendan Rodgers also said that the installation of safe standing at Celtic Park has helped to create an even better atmosphere in the ground.

With its design based on barrier technology and its robust seat and high back, the rail seat forms a strong and continuous handrail to facilitate safe standing. The seats are compact and have been approved for use by both UEFA and FIFA for champions league and World Cup matches. Indeed, St Mirren, Paisley's newly promoted top-flight club, have visited Celtic Park and are looking very seriously at introducing a safe standing section at St Mirren Park.

It is vital that we ensure the safety of all supporters who trek through the turnstiles each and every week. The memory and legacy of Hillsborough demand that. However, now is surely the time to review safe standing in football stadiums. I hope the Minister hears the demands of supporters and announces a review that assesses the examples in Scotland and across Europe of safe standing at football stadiums.

6.36 pm

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan (Tooting) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms McDonagh. I thank hon. Members on both sides of the House for their fantastic contributions to this important debate.

I start by paying respect to the 96 fans who went to a football match but never came home after the tragic events at Hillsborough. I pay tribute to those hon. Members who have not only spoken today, but campaigned for justice for many years, even decades. Their continued courage and determination will bring about justice for the 96. I extend my thanks to Mr Speaker and to the Petitions Committee for issuing guidance around the ongoing court case, and I am grateful to the Chair for keeping a close eye on proceedings today.

I also thank Owen, who is here today. For those who do not know, Owen is 17 and he started the safe standing petition online just a few months ago. He is already making footballing history. I am sure my colleagues will join me in thanking him for his contribution to today's discussion. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

As many colleagues from all parts of the House have said, when discussing safe standing it is vital to understand and acknowledge that it is not a step back for football or a return to the terraces of the '80s; it is the opposite. It is about moving football spectating forward and into a new era—into the future—so that it becomes safer, more inclusive and gives fans this choice.

The data and extent of the surveys provided by the English Football League and fan groups clearly show that fans want a safe standing option. More than 50 representatives from supporter groups joined me at my parliamentary roundtable, where I heard about a fantastic example of safe standing being used in Orlando. It is an inclusive area that puts wheelchair users at the heart of the action—not seeing them as an afterthought. They are in among the crowd and can experience football along with every other fan. It is a fantastic example of how safe standing can make football more inclusive for all.

However, at the heart of the debate is safety. It always has been and always will be, and it is not something that I will ever compromise on. The safety of fans at football matches is the first and foremost factor that we looked at when discussing safe standing. As many colleagues have already pointed out with interesting examples, the current system is not working. It is not safe. Week in, week out, fans like myself stand in seated areas, which is not safe. Owen himself started the petition because he was injured at a football match by people behind falling on top of him. Stewards are powerless. Clubs do not want to get involved and the police will intervene only if an argument escalates. Anyone who has travelled away with their club will have had the experience of steep upper tiers, where the seat in front barely comes above their socks. As my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Withington (Jeff Smith) said, it is simply not safe.

I cannot and will not stand by while fans are being injured, especially when we have alternative ways to improve things and minimise risk. That is why I am proud to support the installation of specialised rail seating, where appropriate, or standing in current seated areas where it can be made safe. That could be by the addition of bars or by other means. It is a matter of converting a small section of a stadium to be designated for safe standing—capped at 7,500 safe standing spaces. That is in line with what the EFL has proposed. We want to give fans, clubs and the safety authorities the power to allow a small area inside a stadium to be designated for safe standing. Clubs, fans and safety authorities know their stadiums better than anyone in Whitehall. The decision should rest with them. A different set of rules applies to football fans, and it is not right. At the time of my parliamentary roundtable, the Sports Grounds Safety Authority told me that the last time it met a Minister was more than three months ago. Every supporters group that I speak to tells me that every Minister has refused to meet them in the past few months. It is time that the Government stopped taking fans for granted, and started listening to them.

People who go to a football game at the Emirates or Etihad stadiums on a Saturday will be asked to sit down. At the same stadiums a few days later people can, without the threat of being evicted, stand at a pop concert and jump up and down. They can go to the rugby, stand and enjoy supporting their team without the threat of being evicted. Three weeks ago I was pleased when the Sports Minister announced a review of safe standing; but we have heard nothing since—no details and no timetable. Nothing. I am told there is a rumour—I hope it is wrong—that the Minister will announce the postponement of the review. We must all remind ourselves that while the debate is about how we enjoy football it is also about how we make the current system—which is not safe—safer for all, including the elderly who want to enjoy the national game, families who want to attend with children, and everyone who wants to enjoy football.

Today's debate is about safe standing in 2018, not the terraces of the 1980s. It has been about how fans can stand safely at a football match and prevent serious injury. There are 112,000 people who have filled in a petition online, and almost 6,000 people responded to my fan survey. More than 30,000 fans gave their views to the English Football League. More than 4 million Twitter uses have seen a tweet relating to safe standing in the past month. The premier league has spoken about safe standing. So have the EFL and the Football Association; and finally so have we today in the Chamber. If the Minister is thinking about postponing the Government's review of safe standing, I strongly urge her to reconsider.

Football can, as has already been shown, have a sensible debate about safe standing that focuses on safe standing in the future. The Minister, for whom I have great respect, has an open goal. She can listen to the vocal majority or choose to ignore us.

6.44 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Tracey Crouch): It is as always a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms McDonagh.

I have been a football fan for as long as I can remember. I played football, I collected the sticker books—I still do—and as soon as I was old enough, I started to go to football matches. I used to walk across the rec to Reachfields to watch Hythe Town. If I had earned extra pocket money, I used to jump on the bus to watch Folkestone play. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle (Emma Hardy) will be pleased to hear that when I was at university I watched Hull a few times a season. Finally, when I started to earn money, I began to watch Spurs, the team I began idolising at the age of eight.

Why do I say that? It is not because of the nostalgia that many have said we should employ in our discussions. I say it to explain that football runs through my veins. It is only because I care so much about the game that I felt so disappointed with my own loose language on safe standing, which rightly led to outrage, but which sadly turned into abuse and threats of violence, both physical and sexual. I did not expect that from those with whom I have stood shoulder to shoulder throughout the years.

Let me say from the outset that I did not mean to suggest that only a vocal minority support safe standing—surveys show otherwise, but they also show that only a small percentage would want to stand throughout the match. I confused the two and we are here today as a result, but the debate gives us the opportunity to talk about the future of all-seater stadiums. In my speech, I will try to reflect some of the comments made by 33 colleagues during the debate, set out Government thinking and explain some of the challenges we face.

Alison McGovern (Wirral South) (Lab): I want to reflect on what the Minister has just said. I implore everybody to ensure that all sides can be heard in the debate. That is what is important. We need conduct that enables the broadest possible debate.

Tracey Crouch: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for her intervention. I still feel quite scarred by the response I received on social media to my initial comments. They were loose and wrong, but were not a reflection of my views on football. It was certainly unfair of people to say that I did not understand the game with which I have been personally involved since I was knee high to a grasshopper. That shows a lack of understanding that Ministers and Members of Parliament have views and sometimes make mistakes.

It is useful to start by summarising very briefly the framework in which we operate. As colleagues have heard, Lord Justice Taylor's report following the terrible Hillsborough disaster ushered in the all-seater policy for the top two divisions of English football, as well as Wembley stadium and the Principality stadium in Cardiff. The wider safety regime, which includes the all-seater policy, also took into account other tragic events, such as that at Bradford. No Government of any political persuasion should ever be complacent about safety or other measures that have enabled us to achieve such consistently high levels of safety since the all-seater regulations were introduced. That must be paramount in our considerations.

Ian Mearns: One thing that has changed since Hillsborough is that the Government and the establishment have taken safety at football grounds much more seriously.

[*Ian Mearns*]

Ibrox had two disasters in the space of less than 50 years, and Bolton Wanderers had a significant one. Crushing injuries occurred week in, week out at football grounds. The evidence of earlier years shows that football's fans and their safety were not taken seriously by people in the halls of power.

Tracey Crouch: I was about to say that the all-seater policy has served football and football fans well over many years—the hon. Gentleman makes that point. It is not just a domestic measure: FIFA and UEFA both mandate that host stadiums for their main competitions must be all-seater. Let us not forget that all-seater stadiums provided the impetus for clubs to transform their grounds after years of neglect, which meant the widespread improvement of facilities for fans, which has brought about a welcome increase in the diversity of those choosing to attend.

I recognise the increasing support for the Government to change the all-seater policy in the top two tiers of English football, and the interesting innovations in spectator accommodation in recent years. They include various forms of seats incorporating barriers, or seats with independent barriers, which provide both a safety rail and a seat. They have been installed at grounds in Germany and at Celtic Park. More recently, they have been installed at Shrewsbury Town in League One. Those developments led the then premier league club West Bromwich Albion to make the request to the Sports Ground Safety Authority to run a rail seating pilot. The request to install rail seating made it clear that the intention was to create a permanent area within the ground where supporters would be freely permitted to stand. That would have been in breach of the licence conditions imposed on all clubs in the top two divisions under the powers set out in the Football Spectators Act 1989, the current legislative framework.

Ministers make decisions based on the evidence put in front of them within the legal framework permitted. Contrary to media reports, I did not receive a recommendation from the SGSA to approve the application. The club's request would have required an immediate change in the law as it stands. As the application was for permission to start this coming season, colleagues will appreciate that the processes required would have taken more than the few months that Albion wanted them completed in. However, more significantly, the current legislative framework means that I cannot allow for any pilots. There is no wriggle room. It is either the status quo or changing the legislation.

So, what next? What are we going to do? The one thing we need to do is to collect and analyse the evidence that exists and ensure that all views on this issue can be heard and considered before we make any decision on changes to the all-seater policy—a point that many hon. Members have made today. We need proper evidence and solutions about how risks associated with standing would be addressed and what systems might be needed to achieve this. The first step is to gather that data and to conduct further research if necessary.

Today I can announce that we will commission an external analysis of evidence relating to the all-seater policy. My Department will be going out to tender for

this piece of work shortly, and my aim is that the initial analysis work will be completed by the end of the year. As well as looking at what evidence already exists and assessing its reliability, that work will look to identify any important gaps in data, including injury data, and recommend the best ways of filling them.

The premier league has already shared some of its injury data with me, collated in the SGSA format from its clubs. What is clear is that not enough information is collected to determine the circumstances, severity or outcome of injuries. For example, data collected so far shows that, of the 1,550 injuries reported over the season at 19 premier league clubs, none related to persistent standing and 242 may have been caused by some standing—the equivalent of two injuries per 100,000 match attendances. Hon. Members have today made it clear that people are standing in unsafe ways, yet the current injuries log suggests otherwise. Some colleagues have outlined their own experiences of being injured at football matches, yet the injuries log says otherwise. Given that that fan experience is very different from the data, it is clear that the data needs further probing, and that is what I am announcing today.

The precise scope of that work will be defined in conjunction with the SGSA and other expert stakeholders. I am grateful to the Premier League and English Football League, with whom we have discussed this approach, and with whom we will work to improve the evidence base from the start of next season.

Clive Efford: I associate myself with the comments made earlier. The Minister is a passionate supporter of Tottenham and dedicated to football, and I know that she is passionate about it. I am sure that we all oppose those who have attacked her on social media. Does she agree that football clubs need to report where injuries are taking place within their grounds? If they are in locations where people are predominantly standing where they should be seated, that may give us a better idea of how those injuries are coming about. I suspect they are not being recorded properly.

Tracey Crouch: That perfectly outlines the challenge we face. At the moment, we do not have the data or the evidence to make a decision either way on the issue. What I am announcing today is that we will start the data and evidence collection, because as the hon. Gentleman says, it is clear that there are gaps in the injury data. We know that the current format of data collection does not allow people to specify some of the issues around the injuries that are happening at football matches.

I look forward to working closely with the Premier League, the English Football League and other organisations, including the Football Supporters Federation, which I met last week, to make progress together. I would like to thank the FSF, the Premier League, Mike Davis from Shrewsbury Town Supporters and the Plymouth Argyle management, who, in the middle of all the abuse, were kind and considerate in their conversations with me about the issue, which I appreciate. I also thank those at Spurs, and the chairman of Norwich City, for explaining the pragmatic approach that they are taking to ensure fans' safety while still adhering to the law.

I acknowledge the evolution of stadium design, seating technology and modern crowd management approaches that has taken place in recent years. The data-gathering

work will look at the impact of those changes and consider any existing data on the wider impact of introducing the type of rail seating accommodation used in Germany and elsewhere on attendances, ticket prices, the atmosphere, the diversity of supporters, fan behaviour, the management of various parts of the stadiums and, of course, safety.

Mr Betts: In the review, will the Minister look at the discrimination that occurs at present? If there is no standing area and people insist on standing in seated areas, it means that there is no alternative for smaller people, such as women and children, who are prevented from enjoying the game and viewing it properly, or for people who have a disability and simply cannot stand up for 45 minutes.

Tracey Crouch: That is why I praise Norwich City's pragmatic approach in recognising that some fans who were persistently standing in a family section were causing a great deal of distress to people who pay a significant amount of money to watch their team with young children. It has effectively moved those fans to a different part of the stadium, which allows the family supporters to continue to watch the football match.

Mr Betts: Will the Minister give way?

Tracey Crouch: No, I will carry on.

On top of what I have already announced, the SGSA is currently revising the "Green Guide", which sets out the standards of sports ground safety that apply in this country. It is influential around the world, as it is absorbed by sports bodies and Governments looking for authoritative advice on sports grounds safety. The revised guide is due for publication later this year, and will offer refreshed technical guidance that sets out the standards for seats incorporating barriers and seats with independent barriers within the prevailing legislation and competition rules.

Clubs and local authorities are responsible for managing their grounds, and I and the SGSA will expect them to continue to apply the all-seater policy while we gather the evidence and data. To be clear, no one expects any fan to stay rooted in their seat for 90 minutes through goals, near misses and last-minute match-winners—or, in the case of Spurs fans, usually match-losers. That was never the intention of the all-seater policy.

There are many different views about the future of the all-seater policy and they all need to be heard. Some people feel unable to contribute to the discussion while legal proceedings are under way, as outlined by the hon. Member for Garston and Halewood (Maria Eagle). We need to be mindful of that. While the proceedings continue, we shall gather the missing data and evidence by working with the authorities, leagues, supporter groups and others.

With something as serious as football ground safety, change cannot and should not happen overnight, but, contrary to the reports on social media, my mind is open about the future of the all-seater policy. However, due process must be followed to ensure the safety of fans now and in the future—fans who, like me, stay loyal and true through the good times as well as the bad, and who spend a lot of money providing the lifeblood of their clubs up and down the country.

A million people watch football every week. I conclude by thanking those who signed the petition and hon. Members for reflecting their views and those of their constituents. I hope that we can move forward with the required data gathering, continue the discussion with key stakeholders and develop the "Green Guide" so that we all know where we stand.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House has considered e-petition 207040 relating to allowing Premier League and Championship football clubs to introduce safe standing.

6.58 pm

Sitting adjourned.

Written Statements

Monday 25 June 2018

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Childhood Obesity: Plan for Action Chapter 2

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Steve Brine): Today, Government have published the second Chapter to the Childhood Obesity Plan. This plan is informed by the latest evidence and sets a new national ambition to halve childhood obesity and significantly reduce the gap in obesity between children from the most and least deprived areas by 2030.

A copy of the plan can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childhood-obesity-a-plan-for-action-chapter-2>.

[HCWS794]

TRANSPORT

Haulage Permits and Trailer Registration Bill: Standing Order No. 83L

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 Commons for the Haulage Permits and Trailer Registration Bill.

[HCWS792]

WORK AND PENSIONS

Personal Independence Payments

The Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work (Sarah Newton): I am pleased to inform the House that two review exercises will begin today. One with regard

to the MH and RJ judgments and one for claimants whose main disabling condition is haemarthropathy. The first payments will be made in late summer.

The Secretary of State made a commitment to keep the House updated on MH. This statement is fulfilling that commitment and is the third update so far.

On 21 December 2017 the High Court handed down its judgment in the judicial review challenge against regulation 2(4) of the Social Security (Personal Independence Payment) (Amendment) Regulations 2017 S.I. 2017/194. This regulation reversed the effect of the upper tribunal decision in MH. This decision broadened the interpretation about how symptoms of overwhelming psychological distress should be assessed for the purpose of mobility activity 1 in PIP.

The Secretary of State informed the House on 19 January 2018 that after careful consideration she would not be appealing the High Court judgment, in order to provide certainty to claimants. Since then the Department has been working at pace and taking the necessary steps required to implement the decision in MH.

I am pleased to tell the House that this work is now complete and I have today published the new guidance required in order to implement the change. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/personal-independence-payment-assessment-guide-for-assessment-providers>

On 2 November 2017 the Department published updated guidance following an upper tribunal judgment on RJ that was handed down on 9 March 2017 on how the Department considers a claimant to be carrying out an activity safely and whether they need supervision to do so. The review exercise will now also look back at PIP claims to consider whether an increase in entitlement should be awarded as a result of RJ.

In addition, the Department is also beginning a review of approximately 420 PIP cases where the main disabling condition is haemophilia to identify and review claimants with haemarthropathy, following feedback from external stakeholders that the functional needs of claimants with haemarthropathy were not being adequately assessed. We expect this exercise to be completed in six weeks.

I will continue to update the House.

[HCWS793]

Petition

Monday 25 June 2018

OBSERVATIONS

HOME DEPARTMENT

Closure of Solihull Police Station

The petition of residents of Solihull,

Declares that local residents have great concern over the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner's proposals to close Solihull Police Station.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to encourage the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner to reconsider his proposals to close Solihull Police Station.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Julian Knight, *Official Report*, 5 June 2018; Vol. 642, c. 279.]

[P002151]

Observations from the Minister for Policing and the Fire Service (Mr Nick Hurd):

Prior to the police funding settlement, I spoke to each police leader from each force in England and Wales. The Government understand that police demand is changing and becoming increasingly complex. We have responded by providing a comprehensive funding settlement which increases total investment in the police system by

over £460 million in 2018-19. This includes increased funding to tackle counter-terrorism and increased funding for local policing through Council Tax precept.

The 2018-19 settlement is resulting in an increase in funding for West Midlands Police of £9.9 million this year to £534.3 million. This increase in funding reflected the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC) decision to use flexibility to increase precept provided by the Government. The West Midlands (PCC) held £106 million resource reserves in March 2017 (20.2% of total cash funding), an increase of £26.9 million from 2011.

It is important for forces to make best use of available resources including making efficient use of front counters. I understand that the West Midlands PCC has stated that of the 24 stations set to close in the West Midlands over the next six years, only two are currently open to the public—Sutton Coldfield and Solihull. He has said that this will free up £5 million a year to invest in improving police buildings and will protect 100 officer posts. The PCC has also given an undertaking that no police station that is currently open to the public will close without being replaced by a building nearby.

However, the Government appreciate the residents of Solihull's concerns regarding the decision of the West Midlands PCCs to close Solihull police station in late 2020. As I said in the House on 6 March, this decision is an active choice made by the West Midlands PCC and he has to make an argument to the public about why this decision is being taken. It is clear that Mr Jamieson has failed to take the people with him on the sensitive issue of police stations with public counters and I urge him once again to engage with the people whom he serves.

Ministerial Corrections

Monday 25 June 2018

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

Rolls-Royce Redundancies

The following is an extract from the urgent question on Rolls-Royce Redundancies on 14 June 2018.

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): 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**, 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.

[*Official Report, 14 June 2018, Vol. 642, c. 1088.*]

Letter of correction from Greg Clark.

An error has been identified in my answer to the urgent question on Rolls-Royce Redundancies.

The correct response should have been:

The Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Greg Clark): 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 **£78.5 billion**, 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.

DEFENCE

Defence Fire and Rescue Project: Capita

The following is an extract from the urgent question on Defence Fire and Rescue Project: Capita on 21 June 2018.

Fabian Hamilton (Leeds North East) (Lab) (*Urgent Question*): To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the awarding of the defence fire and rescue contract to Capita.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence (Mr Tobias Ellwood): I am grateful for the opportunity to put on record the justification for the awarding of the contract. The defence fire and rescue project has been examining potential improvements in how fire and rescue services are provided to the Ministry of Defence, both here in the United Kingdom and overseas. The total value of defence fire and rescue operations is around £1.3 billion. We intend to award a 12-year contract worth around **£400 million** to Capita Business Services Ltd. However, this is open to possible challenges—the normal process ensues—following the issuing of the contract award decision notice and possible parliamentary challenges to the contingent liability.

[*Official Report, 21 June 2018, Vol. 643, c. 467.*]

Letter of correction from Mr Tobias Ellwood.

An error has been identified in my answer to the urgent question on Defence Fire and Rescue Project: Capita.

The correct response should have been:

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence (Mr Tobias Ellwood): I am grateful for the opportunity to put on record the justification for the awarding of the contract. The defence fire and rescue project has been examining potential improvements in how fire and rescue services are provided to the Ministry of Defence, both here in the United Kingdom and overseas. The total value of defence fire and rescue operations is around £1.3 billion. We intend to award a 12-year contract worth around **£550 million** to Capita Business Services Ltd. However, this is open to possible challenges—the normal process ensues—following the issuing of the contract award decision notice and possible parliamentary challenges to the contingent liability.

ORAL ANSWERS

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Monday 25 June 2018

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Monday 2 July 2018**

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