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**HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES**

(HANSARD)

Wednesday 18 July 2018

House of Commons

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The House met at half-past Eleven o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

WALES

The Secretary of State was asked—

Leaving the EU

1. **John Mc Nally** (Falkirk) (SNP): What recent assessment he has made of the effect on the Welsh economy of the UK leaving the EU. [906435]

7. **Gavin Newlands** (Paisley and Renfrewshire North) (SNP): What recent assessment he has made of the effect on the Welsh economy of the UK leaving the EU. [906441]

9. **Stephen Gethins** (North East Fife) (SNP): What recent assessment he has made of the effect on the Welsh economy of the UK leaving the EU. [906443]

The Secretary of State for Wales (Alun Cairns): Wales approaches Brexit from a position of strength with a growing economy and falling unemployment, and our plan for Brexit will allow us to shape our own ambitious trade and investment opportunities, putting Wales and the wider UK at the forefront of global trade.

John Mc Nally: The Welsh Affairs Committee has now joined in the calls for the retention of membership of the single market and customs union to protect the agricultural sector, in which 80% of Welsh exports go to the EU. Will the Secretary of State confirm what representations he made to the Prime Minister ahead of the Chequers agreement for continued membership for the agricultural sector?

Alun Cairns: As the House would expect, I looked closely at that report, but of course the outcome that the hon. Gentleman suggests would mean that we could not honour the expectations of the British people following the referendum decision to leave the European Union; it would mean retaining free movement of people. The Chequers agreement protects the agricultural sector so that it has the opportunity to trade frictionlessly with the European Union.

Gavin Newlands: By 2020, the Welsh economy will have been supported by almost £150 billion of investment through EU structural funds. The Government committed to replacing that funding, along with support for farming and the English NHS, with money from the mythical Brexit dividend. Now that it is clear that the UK will not receive a single penny back from Brexit, will the Secretary of State confirm that there will still be money for Wales?

Alun Cairns: The Government have committed to consult later this year on the UK shared prosperity fund, which will be a Brexit dividend. We are already seeing a Brexit dividend with the £20 billion increase in health spending, which will have considerable consequences for Scotland and, rightly, for Wales. As their budgets are protected, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland will benefit significantly from that.

Stephen Gethins: The Secretary of State's answer directly contradicts the UK Government's own analysis, which shows that Wales and every other part of the United Kingdom will be badly hit by their plans for Brexit. If the Government do have a plan for Brexit, we would love to hear it—and is there any economic analysis for it?

Alun Cairns: The hon. Gentleman ignores the hard data, which shows record numbers of people in employment and sharp falls in unemployment. I have met a whole host of international investors from the US, Qatar, Japan and elsewhere, and we are seeing significant foreign direct investment projects coming to the UK. That shows the great opportunities there are as we leave the European Union.

Luke Graham (Ochil and South Perthshire) (Con) *rose—*

Charlie Elphicke (Dover) (Ind) *rose—*

Mr Speaker: We will hear from Mr Elphicke, but it is very nice to see you, Mr Graham.

Charlie Elphicke: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Does the Secretary of State agree that the most important market to the Welsh economy is the internal market of the United Kingdom? That is also true for Scotland, which is why it makes no sense that the Scottish National party wants to peel Scotland away from the United Kingdom and the success of this nation.

Alun Cairns: The hon. Gentleman makes an extremely important point. He is right to say that the UK market is more important to the Welsh and Scottish economies than any international market is. It has already been demonstrated that Scotland sells four times more to the rest of the UK than to any international market. That dependence on the UK economy is greater for the Welsh economy.

Stephen Kerr (Stirling) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the economic benefit of the city deals that have been agreed in Wales and Scotland is evidence of what is possible when the UK Government and the devolved Administrations pull together in the same direction?

Alun Cairns: May I pay tribute to my hon. Friend, who has worked so hard on the Stirling city growth deal? That exciting prospect, will offer real opportunities for long-term economic regeneration. I take the opportunity to highlight the fact that Wales will be the only part of the UK that is entirely covered by city deals and growth deals. That meets the UK Government's ambitions to close the wealth gap between the most prosperous and most deprived areas of the UK by raising the economic prospects of some of the poorest parts of the UK.

Liz Saville Roberts (Dwyfor Meirionnydd) (PC): Given the impact of Brexit uncertainty on the Welsh rural economy, the Minister will surely agree that technology and science opportunities must be seized. What is he doing to ensure that Snowdonia Aerospace at Llanbedr becomes the UK's first horizontal-launch spaceport?

Alun Cairns: The hon. Lady is absolutely right. Llanbedr offers great opportunities. The Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and I have spoken on a number of occasions about this, and I hope that the hon. Lady will welcome the statement that was made last week and the additional money that is being made available to exploit the opportunities in Llanbedr. I am excited by this prospect, and we will put the hon. Lady's constituency at the forefront of space technology.

Mr Speaker: Let us hear more about the horizontal port situation.

Liz Saville Roberts: I will say more about the situation of the rural economy, given that the former Wales Office Minister, the hon. Member for Aberconwy (Guto Bebb), stood down this week to oppose the Brexiteers' wrecking amendments. At next week's Royal Welsh show, will the Secretary of State announce his resignation in protest at the Government's policy of wrecking Welsh livestock farming?

Alun Cairns: First, I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Aberconwy (Guto Bebb) for his excellent work at the Ministry of Defence in supporting the defence services across the whole UK, as well as his role in looking after agriculture as a Wales Office Minister. The hon. Lady will be well aware that the Chequers agreement provides a frictionless trading opportunity for Welsh farmers that will allow them to continue to sell Welsh beef and lamb, and other Welsh produce, to the European Union as they do at the moment.

Mr Speaker: In calling the hon. Member for Vale of Clwyd (Chris Ruane), I congratulate him on what I understand is, unbelievably, his 60th birthday.

Chris Ruane (Vale of Clwyd) (Lab): It's a hard life!

The shadow Wales team recently met Farmers Union of Wales representatives, who are desperately worried about the future funding of Welsh agriculture post Brexit. If future farm funding is allocated using the Barnett formula, Welsh farmers will lose £133 million a year, taking £1 billion out of the Welsh economy. That would decimate rural communities and thousands of family-run farms. What steps is the Minister taking to guarantee Welsh agriculture the same level of funding post Brexit?

Alun Cairns: I, too, congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his significant birthday. The Under-Secretary of State for Wales, my hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Stuart Andrew), and I meet Welsh farming unions regularly, and we also meet them jointly with the Welsh Government's Agriculture Minister. That demonstrates the collaborative approach that we are taking. If I have said once, I have said 100 times that we will not be using the Barnett formula to distribute agricultural spend. Clearly, the current level of spend is the starting point, and we will be consulting in due course. The financial

protection that the UK Government have given to Wales, whereby Wales now receives £120 for every £100 spent in England, demonstrates the priority that we put on protecting Wales's interests.

International Trading Opportunities: Promotion

2. **Mr Ranil Jayawardena** (North East Hampshire) (Con): What recent steps he has taken to promote Wales's international trading opportunities. [906436]

The Secretary of State for Wales (Alun Cairns): My Department continues to work closely with the Department for International Trade on promoting Wales's trading opportunities. During my recent trips to Qatar, Kuwait, Hong Kong and the US I saw at first hand the enthusiasm for Welsh exports as well as the potential for foreign direct investment projects to come to Wales.

Mr Jayawardena: Given Wales's connectivity on the M4 corridor, does my right hon. Friend agree that we can truly capitalise on trading opportunities internationally for Wales and, indeed, the Thames valley by improving the Reading to Gatwick road corridor?

Alun Cairns: My hon. Friend will be aware that I have been a strong supporter of the third runway at Heathrow because it is important to the Welsh economy, and connectivity to airports is vital to deliver its prospects and objectives. He is right about the M4 corridor. With the abolition of the Severn tolls, it creates an opportunity for a natural economy to develop between Bath, Bristol, Newport and the south Wales economy in general, to create further economic growth.

Owen Smith (Pontypridd) (Lab): The Secretary of State knows that Airbus is one of Wales's most important trading entities and companies, so does he think it is a good or bad sign that the chief executive of Airbus is so worried about the Government screwing up Brexit that he is now stockpiling goods that he feels he will not be able to get in to make his finished products?

Alun Cairns: I think the hon. Gentleman is out of date. The latest statements from Airbus have welcomed the Chequers agreement, because it will allow the company to protect its supply chain. That demonstrates the positive relationship that we have with large international companies, in seeking to protect their interests but taking the opportunities of leaving the European Union and looking to new markets elsewhere.

15. [906449] **Jonathan Edwards** (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr) (PC): Is it not the case that following the passing of the Trade Bill yesterday, Wallonia, a region of Belgium, will have more influence over EU trade policy than Wales will have over post-Brexit UK trade policy?

Alun Cairns: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Trade announced that we will have the widest, most extensive consultation in relation to future trading arrangements. We will not only talk to the devolved Administrations regularly, as I always do, but talk to key stakeholders in Wales to ensure that we respond to their priorities. We are determined to have the widest consultation to ensure that people have the facts at hand rather than sometimes inaccurate reports.

Chris Evans (Islwyn) (Lab/Co-op): The expanding digital economy will bring further opportunities for Welsh businesses, yet they tell me all the time that broadband speeds are still too slow to trade. What are the Government doing about this?

Alun Cairns: On average, the superfast broadband threshold in Wales is higher than it is across the rest of the UK, but the hon. Gentleman is absolutely right that more work needs to be done. Significant sums have been available, with £69 million going to the Welsh Government from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, in addition to the £56 million of gainshare that has come from that. Of course, the priority for how the Welsh Government spend that has largely been driven and directed by them. I am keen to work closely with them to see that we can get to the communities that have not yet received superfast broadband, because clearly that brings them opportunities economically.

Cross-border Rail Services

4. **Justin Madders** (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab): What discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Transport on improving cross-border rail services to and from Wales; and if he will make a statement.
[906438]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Stuart Andrew): The Government recognise that cross-border connectivity is critically important. That is why my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I have regular meetings with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport to look at what improvements can be made to support better journeys for Welsh and English passengers.

Justin Madders: People in Neston are concerned that the rail timetable to be introduced by the new operator on the Wrexham to Bidston line may lead to an inferior service on the English side of the border. When I asked the rail Minister about that recently, he told me that it was the Welsh Assembly's responsibility, not his; but my constituents have no representation there. Who is accountable for services on the English side of the border within this Parliament?

Stuart Andrew: The hon. Gentleman will know that the Wales & Borders franchise is part of the Government's commitment to devolving powers, so there is a joint responsibility between the two Governments. If he wants me to make representations on his behalf to the Welsh Government, I would be more than happy to do so.

Stephen Crabb (Preseli Pembrokeshire) (Con): Has my hon. Friend had the chance to speak to the management of Great Western Railway about the total shambles that was its rail service last Sunday afternoon, when thousands of passengers faced cancelled or disrupted trains due to staffing problems arising from the World cup final? England did not qualify for the final and Wales was not even at the tournament, so it should not have led to meltdown on the rail network last Sunday.

Stuart Andrew: My right hon. Friend raises a very important point. When these services do not run effectively, that has a massive impact on his constituents and all

commuters. I would be happy to meet him to discuss this further, so that we can take it up with the people responsible.

Jo Stevens (Cardiff Central) (Lab): My constituents were promised electric trains running into Cardiff Central by last year. This week, we found out that they will not even be coming into Cardiff Central by the end of next year. When will the Minister sort out the shambles that is the Great Western Railway line from London to Cardiff?

Stuart Andrew: It is important to recognise that we are investing a massive amount of money to ensure that the electrification brings about improved journey times. The Welsh Government have come up with some suggestions about how we might resolve these issues, and we will work with them collaboratively on that. Let us not forget, though, that this Government are making a massive investment in the railway system.

Mr David Jones (Clwyd West) (Con): How is work progressing to develop the business case for the north-east Wales metro?

Stuart Andrew: My right hon. Friend will know that we are looking at a host of different projects that will improve journey times for passengers in north Wales, such as the Wrexham to Bidston line. On the specific issue that he raises, we are looking at that across the board, including through the growth deal that we are developing at the moment.

Mr Speaker: Order. In generously but appropriately congratulating the Minister not on his birthday but on the magnificence of his tie, may I urge him to face the Chamber so that we enjoy the benefit of his mellifluous tones?

Stephen Doughty (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op): It is not just the cancellations and the delays to electrification—it is the short trains, the short-staffed trains, the lack of reservations and the lack of catering. Great Western Railway is an absolute shambles. What on earth is the Minister going to do about it? Is he going to talk to the Secretary of State for Transport, as it is his responsibility?

Stuart Andrew: I am glad that you like my tie, Mr Speaker.

First, I point out that the Government are investing more in our railways than any Government since Victorian times. I accept that there may be some issues with the service, and I will happily arrange to meet GWR to raise the points that the hon. Gentleman made.

Leaving the EU: White Paper

5. **Tommy Sheppard** (Edinburgh East) (SNP): What discussions he has had with the Welsh Government on the UK Government's White Paper on leaving the EU.
[906439]

6. **Stuart C. McDonald** (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East) (SNP): What discussions he has had with the Welsh Government on the UK Government's White Paper on leaving the EU.
[906440]

10. **Peter Grant** (Glenrothes) (SNP): What discussions he has had with the Welsh Government on the UK Government's White Paper on leaving the EU. [906444]

The Secretary of State for Wales (Alun Cairns): In line with commitments made by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, the Government shared the White Paper on our future relationship with the European Union with the Welsh Government in advance of its publication. This followed a regular dialogue with Welsh Ministers as the paper was being drafted.

Tommy Sheppard: The Government have proposed 26 policy areas where joint arrangements will be necessary with the Welsh Government after Brexit. Given the proposal in the Chequers agreement and the White Paper for a common rulebook with the EU, in how many of those areas will such arrangements no longer be necessary?

Alun Cairns: The hon. Gentleman refers to an ongoing relationship and dialogue with the Welsh Government. He will be aware that the Welsh Government were happy to give a legislative consent motion to the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill as it passed through the Palace of Westminster, which demonstrates the mutual respect and ongoing productive relationship that we have. I only wish that the Scottish Government would work in the same constructive, positive way.

Stuart C. McDonald: The White Paper's mobility proposals for business visitors and intra-company transfers might be all right for large multinational companies in London, but they offer nothing to small businesses in Wales and important public services. What is the Secretary of State doing to ensure that they can still recruit the EU workers they need, if Brexit happens?

Alun Cairns: I have referred on several occasions to the expert panel I formed, which is being extended, and to joint meetings I have held with Welsh Government Ministers. We are keen to engage with businesses of all sizes. Large companies such as Airbus often receive much attention, but it is only right that small businesses, which often depend on their supply chains, receive a similar amount of attention.

Peter Grant: I do not think even the UK Government still believe that the Joint Ministerial Committee on Europe is fit for purpose. Does the Secretary of State agree that it is time for it to be replaced by a statutory forum that gives equal power of esteem to all four nations in these islands?

Alun Cairns: A previous Joint Ministerial Committee committed to look at intergovernmental arrangements and how we can best develop and evolve them in the light of our exit from the European Union. My relationship with the Welsh Government is positive. It takes a lot of hard work on both sides, and I am keen to maintain the warmest sort of arrangements because we respect the outcome of the referendum and the importance of the UK internal market.

Mr Speaker: The Secretary of State is stoical in the circumstances, but there is an excessive number of rather loud private conversations taking place. An air of solemnity should descend on the House as we are about to hear from the Chair of the Select Committee.

12. [906446] **David T. C. Davies** (Monmouth) (Con): We are seeing record numbers of people in work in Wales and record amounts of foreign direct investment, and we have a set of proposals that will allow Wales to benefit from access to the single market and new trade deals across the world. Is it not about time that Members of Parliament on both sides of the House got behind the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Wales as they lead Wales to a better future outside the European Union?

Alun Cairns: My hon. Friend is right, and I pay tribute to him for his work as Chair of the Welsh Affairs Committee. Not only does the UK remain the No. 1 destination for foreign direct investment, but Wales has seen a 20% increase in the employment created out of that investment. Our exports are growing to record levels and, interestingly, those to areas outside the European Union are growing at a faster rate than those to the European Union.

James Duddridge (Rochford and Southend East) (Con): The White Paper is a little light on the benefits of World Trade Organisation rules. Will the Secretary of State discuss the benefits of those rules with the Welsh Government alongside the White Paper?

Alun Cairns: I will naturally continue an ongoing dialogue with the Welsh Government about a whole host of issues. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Trade yesterday agreed to and committed to consult widely, including with the devolved Administrations. My hon. Friend is absolutely right that there are great opportunities as we leave the European Union to look at new markets, but nor should we undermine the existing complex supply chains that have built up over 40 years. The Chequers White Paper, I believe, allows us to do both.

Bob Blackman (Harrow East) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend reach out beyond the Welsh Government to businesses in Wales to exemplify the opportunities that will be created as we leave the European Union?

Alun Cairns: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We often, rightly, give a lot of attention to the devolved Administrations because they are elected bodies in the nations themselves, but businesses in Wales depend on the UK market and their view is also important as we develop and evolve our policy towards the negotiations to leave the European Union.

Christina Rees (Neath) (Lab/Co-op): I join in the birthday wishes to my youthful shadow Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Clwyd (Chris Ruane).

It has been two years since the Prime Minister met the First Minister of Wales in Cardiff Bay and stood on the steps of the Senedd, telling politicians and journalists how important the Union is and that she wanted the Welsh Government to be involved in Brexit discussions, so why was the White Paper not shared with the Welsh Government until barely 12 hours before its publication?

Alun Cairns: The hon. Lady is right that the document was shared with the Welsh Government before it was published. I can also say that many extracts—[*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. I apologise to the right hon. Gentleman. The microphone is not functioning as well as it should be, and I therefore suggest that a modest bellowing by the right hon. Gentleman will suffice.

Alun Cairns: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I can point out to the hon. Lady that not only was the document itself shared with the Welsh Government before publication, but—I would say, probably more importantly—as the document was being drafted, various extracts were shared with the Welsh Government and their input during the drafting stages contributed to the document in its totality.

Christina Rees: It is not good enough. The Secretary of State knows the terms of the JMC, which state that the UK Government will work with the devolved Administrations

“to agree a UK approach to...Article 50 negotiations”.

After two years of broken promises on Brexit talks, who should the people of Wales blame for the contempt shown to them—the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for Wales or both?

Alun Cairns: The hon. Lady is ignoring that we shared the drafting of the document with the Welsh Government before we had concluded the document itself. They had an integral part in contributing and sharing their views. I would also say that it was considered at length at the JMC that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster chaired days before the document was shared.

Welsh Guards: Afghanistan

8. **Kwasi Kwarteng** (Spelthorne) (Con): What recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Defence on the Welsh Guards’ tour of Afghanistan. [906442]

The Secretary of State for Wales (Alun Cairns): I have regular discussions with the Secretary of State for Defence about the armed forces in Wales, including about my recent visit to Kabul to meet the Welsh Guards. During the visit, I saw at first hand the important role that our servicemen and women play in the UK’s operations, and I pay tribute to them.

Kwasi Kwarteng: Does my right hon. Friend welcome the Prime Minister’s announcement of an added commitment from the Welsh Guards to secure and to help NATO’s capacity-building mission in Afghanistan?

Alun Cairns: Having seen the Welsh Guards in action in Afghanistan, I have nothing but admiration and respect for the work that they do. The additional support to help them embed and the important steps they are taking to support the ongoing work of the Afghan Government will be extremely important, and I pay tribute to them for the work that they do.

Universal Credit

11. **Hywel Williams** (Arfon) (PC): What recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on the roll-out of universal credit in Wales. [906445]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Stuart Andrew): Universal credit is already operating in 24 jobcentres across Wales, with a further two scheduled to roll out this month. The number of people receiving universal credit in Wales is over 44,000, and 36% of these are in employment. Wales jobcentres are in the latter part of the roll-out schedule, with full roll-out to be completed by the end of this year.

Hywel Williams: I thank the Minister for that answer. Early indications show that there are huge problems in implementing universal credit, with the Flintshire citizens advice bureau, for example, receiving 340 new cases—serious cases. What is he doing to make sure that our hard-pressed citizens advice bureaux are not overwhelmed when universal credit is fully implemented?

Stuart Andrew: It is important to recognise that universal credit is a transformational benefits system that is working to get people back into work. The recent employment figures, showing that employment in Wales is up by 5,000, are a significant step, but the issues that the hon. Gentleman raises are exactly why we have been careful. We have made significant changes as we have carefully rolled out the project.

Transport Infrastructure: North Wales

13. **Christian Matheson** (City of Chester) (Lab): What discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on upgrades to transport infrastructure in north Wales. [906447]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Stuart Andrew): The Secretary of State and I hold regular discussions with Cabinet colleagues and the Welsh Government on Wales and road infrastructure, and we recognise the benefit to communities on both sides of the border.

Christian Matheson: The M56 is the main arterial route not just through Cheshire but into north Wales. What discussions has the Minister had about upgrading the M56 as part of the next road investment strategy for Highways England?

Stuart Andrew: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right to highlight the importance of the M56 and the whole of the cross-border connectivity routes, because the amount of people who live in Wales but work in England is significant. That is why the Secretary of State recently met the Under-Secretary of State for Transport, my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford and South Herefordshire (Jesse Norman), to discuss these issues—*[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. These matters are of the utmost importance to the people of north Wales, and the question and the answer must be heard.

Albert Owen (Ynys Môn) (Lab): My daughter, Fiona, celebrates her birthday today, along with my hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Clwyd (Chris Ruane) and the late, great Nelson Mandela, who would have been 100 today.

The north Wales economy depends on the port of Holyhead as the main port from the Republic of Ireland. Many businesses are concerned about a no-deal Brexit scenario. Will the Minister tell us whether there is a contingency plan for a no deal and if not, why not?

Stuart Andrew: First, may I wish the hon. Gentleman's daughter a very happy birthday?

As an Anglesey boy myself, I know how important the port of Holyhead is not just to the Isle of Anglesey but to the whole of north Wales and the whole of the country. That is exactly why this Government are working closely with ports around the whole country as we prepare for our exit from the European Union.

Cross-border Transport Links

14. **Kevin Foster** (Torbay) (Con): What assessment his Department has made of the (a) adequacy of cross-border transport links to and from Wales and (b) effect of those links on economic growth. [906448]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Stuart Andrew): Abolishing the Severn tolls will drive the biggest economic stimulus Wales has seen in decades and create the most natural cross-border economic growth corridor, spanning Cardiff through to Bristol and Newport. The UK Government are looking at the capacity and investment needed for roads in the south-west of England once the tolls are abolished.

Kevin Foster: I thank my hon. Friend for his answer. The value of removing those tolls to the economies of both south Wales and south-west England cannot be overestimated. What, in his assessment, would be the impact on economic growth of removing those tolls on the bridge?

Stuart Andrew: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. This is a significant announcement. The fact that people will be able to cross the border between Wales and England and not have to pay a toll will, we hope, increase economic activity and improve the number of people who enjoy tourism in both the south-west and Wales.

PRIME MINISTER

The Prime Minister was asked—
Engagements

Q1. [906520] **Alison Thewliss** (Glasgow Central) (SNP): If she will list her official engagements for Wednesday 18 July.

The Prime Minister (Mrs Theresa May): Today marks 100 years since the birth of Nelson Mandela. I am sure that the whole House will want to join me in paying tribute to his extraordinary life and agree that his message of forgiveness, peace and reconciliation is as relevant today as it ever has been.

This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall have further such meetings later today.

Alison Thewliss: I am proud to have Nelson Mandela Place in my constituency, and we celebrate that today as well.

There were 934 drug-related deaths in Scotland last year. Each one of those deaths is a tragedy, and a preventable one at that. Drug laws are reserved to

Westminster. How many more families is the Prime Minister willing to devastate before she will allow Glasgow to get on with the work of building a drug consumption room to save lives?

The Prime Minister: I agree with the hon. Lady that each death due to drugs is a tragedy, and I am sure that every Member of this House will have known people in their own constituency who have gone through that terrible suffering when they have lost members of their family. There is no legal framework for the provision of drug consumption rooms in the UK and we have no plans to introduce them. A range of offences is likely to be committed in the operation of drug consumption rooms. It is for local police forces to enforce the law in such circumstances and we would expect them to do so, but our approach on drugs remains very clear: we must prevent drug use in our communities and support people dependent on drugs through treatment and recovery.

Q4. [906523] **Andrea Jenkyns** (Morley and Outwood) (Con): Could the Prime Minister inform the House at what point it was decided that Brexit means remain?

The Prime Minister: At absolutely no point, because Brexit continues to mean Brexit. I know that my hon. Friend wants us to talk about the positives of Brexit and I agree with her: we should be talking about the positive future for this country. I understand that she has also criticised me for looking for a solution that is “workable”. I have to say, I disagree with her on that. I think what we need is a solution that is going to work for the United Kingdom, ensure that we leave the European Union and embrace that bright future that we both agree on.

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Lab): I, too, pay tribute to Nelson Mandela on the centenary of his birth. The people of South Africa stood up against the most vile injustice of apartheid. Their solidarity and the solidarity of people around the world freed him and ended the scourge of apartheid. We should pay tribute to all of them on this day.

People are losing trust in this Government. The Transport Secretary, the International Trade Secretary and the Brexit Secretary were all members of the Vote Leave campaign committee. The Environment Secretary was the co-chair. They have been referred to the police by the Electoral Commission, having refused to co-operate with the Electoral Commission. Will the Prime Minister guarantee that her Cabinet Ministers will fully co-operate with the police investigation?

The Prime Minister: I say to the right hon. Gentleman that I actually question the way in which he put his question. He has made an accusation in this House against Members of this House—[*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. The question was heard and the Prime Minister's answer must be heard.

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman has made an accusation in this House against individual Members of this House and of the Government, and I suggest that, when he stands up, he reflects on whether or not it was correct to do so. The Electoral Commission is an independent regulator, accountable to Parliament,

not to the Government. It has, as we know, taken steps in relation to the Vote Leave campaign. I would expect that all those involved and required to do so will give the evidence that is required and respond appropriately to any questions that are raised with them. But I say again to the right hon. Gentleman that I think he should stand up, think very carefully about making accusations about individual Members, and withdraw.

Jeremy Corbyn rose—[*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. People can rant from a sedentary position for as long as they like. It will not change the way proceedings are conducted in this session. The Prime Minister's answers will be heard and the questions from the right hon. Gentleman will be heard, and no amount of orchestrated barracking will change that fact this day or any other.

Jeremy Corbyn: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I stated the fact that the Electoral Commission has made that reference. That is what I said. I asked the Prime Minister for a guarantee that her Ministers will co-operate with the police on any investigations that they may make. That is not judgmental—it is a guarantee they will co-operate. These are serious issues. Current Cabinet Ministers were indeed central to the Vote Leave campaign. After two years of dither and delay, the Government have sunk into a mire of chaos and division. The agreement that was supposed to unite the Cabinet led to the Cabinet falling apart within 48 hours, and on Monday the Government U-turned to make their own White Paper proposals unlawful. Given that the proposals in the White Paper are now obsolete, when will the new White Paper be published?

The Prime Minister: I heard the right hon. Gentleman say in his first question that members of the Government had failed to co-operate with the Electoral Commission investigation. I say again that he should withdraw that. It is very important in this country that politicians do not interfere with police investigations, that the police are allowed to do their investigation and that everyone is innocent until proven guilty in a court of law. I still contend that he made accusations against individual members of the Government that were unjustified and he should withdraw them.

The right hon. Gentleman then came to the amendments that the Government accepted to the customs Bill on Monday night. I will explain the position to the House. [*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. We are less than a third of the way through—possibly significantly less—and people are becoming over-excited. They must calm themselves and we must hear the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Member for Brent Central (Dawn Butler) said, “This will be interesting”. I will go through each of the amendments in turn for the purposes of the House. Amendment 72 related to parliamentary scrutiny on plans under clause 31 to form a customs union with the EU. We are going to leave the customs union with the EU so we accepted that enhanced parliamentary scrutiny. Amendment 73 related to regulations on the application of VAT in certain circumstances. Such an

arrangement is not part of the White Paper and the Chequers agreement, and we were able to accept that too. New clause 37 was to prevent a customs border down the Irish sea. That is Government policy. New clause 36 related to reciprocity and accounting for tariffs collected, and that concept is in the White Paper. The Chequers agreement and White Paper are the basis of our negotiations with the European Union, and we have already started those negotiations.

Jeremy Corbyn: That is all very interesting, but could the Prime Minister explain why the Defence Minister had to rebel against the Government in order to support the Cabinet's position of a few days before? The Government are in complete chaos. The centrepiece of the White Paper was something called the “facilitated customs arrangement”. Having spent a week trying to convince their own MPs that this cobbled-together mishmash was worth defending, they abandoned it. So what is their plan now for customs?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is wrong. We have not abandoned the facilitated customs agreement. We are discussing it with the European Union.

Jeremy Corbyn: Does the Prime Minister seriously expect 27 member states of the EU to establish their own bureaucratic tariff-collection infrastructure just to satisfy the war within the Conservative party in Britain? On Monday evening, the new Brexit Secretary was starting the next round of Brexit negotiations. No wonder he didn't turn up—he doesn't know what he is supposed to be negotiating. Two years on from the referendum and 16 months on from triggering article 50, is it not the case that the Government have no serious negotiating strategy?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is just plain wrong in his interpretation of what is happening. I have a copy of the White Paper here and I am very happy to ensure he gets a copy after these PMQs so that he can perhaps read it and understand what the Government are doing. There are indeed differences between the Leader of the Opposition and me on this issue. I will end free movement; he wants to keep it. I want us out of the customs union; he wants us in. I want us out of the single market; he wants us in. I want us to sign our own trade deals; he wants to hand them over to Brussels. I have ruled out a second referendum; he won't. There is no doubt which of us is respecting the will of the British people and delivering on the vote, and it is not him.

Jeremy Corbyn: We are 11 days on from the so-called Chequers agreement, and the Brexit White Paper did not even survive contact with the Cabinet or the Tory Back Benches, and has not yet even been discussed with the EU. The White Paper states:

“The UK is committed to membership of the European Convention on Human Rights”.

Is the new Brexit Secretary signed up to that?

The Prime Minister: Let me say to the right hon. Gentleman that we are signed up to that: it was in our manifesto. Let me also say to him that he has stood up and asked virtually the same question, and obviously

has not listened to any of the answers that I have given him. The point of this is not that you just read out the question you thought of on Tuesday morning, but you actually listen to the answers that the Prime Minister gives.

The Chequers agreement stands. The White Paper stands. The right hon. Gentleman said that we had not even discussed the White Paper with the European Union. I think I have told him in at least two if not three answers that we are already discussing it with the European Union.

Jeremy Corbyn: The Prime Minister obviously forgot the question that I just asked her, which was about the Brexit Secretary's support or otherwise for the European convention on human rights. He is on record as saying:

"I don't support the Human Rights Act and I don't believe in economic and social rights".

He is obviously backsliding to keep his job, or that is the new policy of the Government.

With only three months to go until the final withdrawal agreement is due to be signed, the former Brexit Secretary has resigned, the White Paper is in tatters, and the new Brexit Secretary is skipping negotiations. After two years of negotiating with themselves, the Government wanted to shut down Parliament five days early. They have even given up on negotiating with each other. Is it not the case that the Government are failing to negotiate Brexit and failing to meet the needs of the—*[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. I know what the attempt is, and it is not going to work. The right hon. Gentleman will complete his question. He will not be shouted down, not today and not any day. Learn it: it is quite simple.

Jeremy Corbyn: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Is it not the case that the Government are failing to negotiate Brexit and failing to meet the needs of the country because they are too busy—far too busy—fighting each other?

The Prime Minister: Let me tell the right hon. Gentleman what I have been doing over the last week, and let me also look at what the right hon. Gentleman has been doing over the last week. While I was agreeing the future of NATO with President Trump—*[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. Mr Lewis, you are a very over-excitable denizen of the House. You are not as well behaved as your little baby daughter.

The Prime Minister: While I was agreeing the future of NATO with President Trump, the right hon. Gentleman was joining a protest march against him. While I was delivering a plan for our future trade with the EU, he was delivering a plan to teach children how to go on strike. While I was negotiating our future security relationship with Europe, he was renegotiating the definition of anti-Semitism. He protests; I deliver.

Hon. Members: More!

Mr Speaker: There will indeed be more. Helen Whately.

Q5. [906524] **Helen Whately** (Faversham and Mid Kent) (Con): Thirty-one member countries of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance have an agreed definition

of anti-Semitism. Does my right hon. Friend agree that all political parties should adopt that definition, and its examples, without amendments or omissions?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that all political parties should do just that. The Conservative party has done that, but sadly the Labour party does not agree. The Labour party is trying to redefine anti-Semitism to allow people to say that Israel is a racist endeavour. The Chief Rabbi says that what the Labour party is doing is sending "an unprecedented message of contempt"

for British Jews. Even some of the right hon. Gentleman's own MPs are saying that this is anti-Semitic. Anti-Semitism is racism. The Labour party should accept that. The right hon. Gentleman should accept that. We should all sign up, as the Conservative party has, to the definition of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance and all its annexes.

Ian Blackford (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP): We should all welcome the 100th anniversary of the birth of Nelson Mandela. Those of us in Scotland are very proud that the city of Glasgow was the first in the world to give the freedom of a city to Nelson Mandela, something of which he in turn was also proud.

This week the Prime Minister caved in to her right-wing Brexiteers, undermining her negotiating position with the EU. In her attempt to hold together her fractured party, she has managed to unite the country against this Government. Playing fast and loose with her own position makes the UK a laughing stock with our negotiating partners. The Prime Minister has put her narrow party interest before that of the country. Is it not the case that the events of this week make a no deal much more likely?

The Prime Minister: As I explained in answer to the questions from the Leader of the Opposition, we are negotiating with the European Union on the basis of the Chequers agreement and the White Paper. Those discussions started this week and have been continuing this week. The right hon. Gentleman talks about putting a political party's interests before that of the country. I think the Scottish National party should really think about what it is doing when it promotes the independence of Scotland, which is clearly against the interests of its country.

Ian Blackford: The reality is that this is a Prime Minister who has lost control of her own party, a Prime Minister who is in office but not in power, and a Parliament that is so divided that it simply cannot function. Mr Speaker, to use a good Gaelic word, it is a *bùrach*. We cannot crash out of the EU without a deal. We need to think of the next generation, who will pay a price for this folly. They will see lost opportunities and lost jobs. Did the Prime Minister come into Parliament to have this as her legacy? Will she now face up to the reality and extend article 50?

The Prime Minister: No.

Q8. [906527] **David T. C. Davies** (Monmouth) (Con): The Prime Minister's proposals offer a practical and reasoned way to deliver Brexit. Does she agree that it is high time that Labour MPs, and, yes, some

Conservatives, stop the fear-mongering, get behind their country and support the Prime Minister as she leads us out of the European Union?

The Prime Minister: There are strong feelings around the whole House on this issue, but what we need is a deal that is credible and workable, that protects jobs and protects our precious Union, and that delivers on the result of the referendum. That is exactly what we are doing with the Chequers agreement. It allows the UK to leave the European Union, and to take back control of our money, laws and borders. That is what our plan delivers. As my hon. Friend says, let us work together and deliver for the British people.

Q2. [906521] **Rosie Cooper** (West Lancashire) (Lab): If I may, in relation to ongoing matters—*[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. This is extremely serious and it will be heard.

Rosie Cooper: Thank you, Mr Speaker. In relation to ongoing matters, may I, on a personal note, thank the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and every single Member of this House for the kindness they have shown me?

I am delighted to be in my place to be able to ask the Prime Minister a question. So, to the question—to business. Does the Prime Minister agree that, as part of the Government's attempt to expand capacity in the NHS, existing sites such as Ormskirk hospital in my constituency, where there is capacity to build an extra floor, should be prioritised for expansion ahead of simply building a new hospital at much greater cost, depriving the NHS of much needed investment which should go into patients and staffing?

The Prime Minister: First, may I say to the hon. Lady how very good it is to see her in her place in this House? [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] And I know from the response that that view is shared across the whole of this House.

The hon. Lady raised an issue to do with the NHS and Ormskirk hospital. As she will know, we are putting extra funding into the national health service: £20 billion a year in real terms by 2023-24. We will have funding available not just to build sites but, as she says, to improve current and existing facilities across the country. On Ormskirk hospital, I understand the Northern England Clinical Senate has issued a report making proposals around the provision of emergency services there. No decisions have been made—that is a matter, of course, for the NHS—but as we look to the long-term plan, I want NHS clinicians to come forward with the best proposals for patients and to take account of local interests such as those the hon. Lady has raised.

Q10. [906529] **Chris Philp** (Croydon South) (Con): Around the world Christians are facing a rising tide of persecution and violence. Does the Prime Minister share my concern at this trend and at particular cases such as those of Sunil Saleem, a Christian man who was beaten to death at a hospital in Lahore in Pakistan, or 33 women in Eritrea who were imprisoned simply for praying? In this country we rightly protect religious

freedoms; will my right hon. Friend step up efforts to get other countries to similarly respect religious freedoms?

The Prime Minister: As a Government we stand with persecuted Christians all over the world and will continue to support them. It is hard to comprehend that today we still see people being attacked and murdered because of their Christianity, but we must reaffirm our determination to stand up for the freedom of people of all religions and beliefs and for them to be able to practise their beliefs in peace and security. I am very pleased that I have been able to appoint the noble Lord Ahmad as the Government's special envoy on freedom of religion or belief, and he will certainly be doing what my hon. Friend suggests: working with other countries to encourage them to recognise the importance of allowing people to have the freedom to practise their religion and beliefs in peace and security.

Q3. [906522] **Dr David Drew** (Stroud) (Lab/Co-op): In view of the fact that schools in the Stroud constituency are telling me they are forced to use core funding to cover the additional requirements of special educational needs and that special schools in the constituency are having to meet considerable rising costs, will the Prime Minister look at the national funding formula with the aim of helping those schools, to make sure they are fully inclusive and that we help those who are most vulnerable because of their special needs?

The Prime Minister: I have long championed the need for children with special needs to be able to be provided for in the setting that is most appropriate for them. For some that will be a mainstream school; for some it will be a special needs school. We have of course changed the national funding formula to make it a fairer distribution across the country, but, as I have said, I recognise the need to ensure that children with special needs are provided for in the most appropriate setting.

Q11. [906530] **Luke Graham** (Ochil and South Perthshire) (Con): The establishment of a spaceport in Scotland will give the UK the capability to launch satellites from British soil for the first time ever. Considering the opportunities presented by space and aerospace, will the Prime Minister meet me to discuss more investment for Scotland, in particular the Kinross aerospace centre in my constituency that is being proposed as part of the Tay cities deal?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend for raising this issue; it is absolutely right of him to highlight the opportunities that our announcement on spaceports give us. We have awarded grants worth £31.5 million to enable satellites to be launched from UK soil for the first time, and that is worth a potential £3.8 billion over the next decade to the UK economy. This is the start of a new space age in the UK; it is a huge boost to our world-leading space sector, making the UK a one-stop shop for new satellite services. My hon. Friend has put a bid in for his own constituency in this regard, and I am sure my right hon. Friend the Business Secretary will be happy to meet him and discuss that.

Q6. [906525] **Mrs Sharon Hodgson** (Washington and Sunderland West) (Lab): The Bunny Hill and Washington urgent care centres in my constituency, and the Houghton urgent care centre in my neighbouring constituency, are under threat of closure by the Sunderland clinical commissioning group. It is not good enough for the Prime Minister just to say that these are simply local decisions, because local people certainly do not want those closures. What will she say to my constituents who rely on those vital urgent care centres, and to the staff at Sunderland Royal A&E who are going to have to deal with the aftermath of the closures?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Lady complains to me that we want decisions to be taken at local level by the NHS, but I believe it is absolutely right that decisions are taken at local level. When the NHS takes those decisions, the important thing is that it puts the interests of patients, the safety of patients and the treatment of patients first. She has raised this particular issue, and I continue to believe that it is right not for politicians here to make a decision like that but for actual clinicians and others working in the national health service to do so.

Q14. [906533] **Mr Marcus Jones** (Nuneaton) (Con): I celebrated the 70th birthday of our NHS with patients and the fabulous staff at the Oakwood day mental health hospital in Nuneaton. Mental health has always been the Cinderella of the NHS. Will my right hon. Friend join me in thanking our doctors and nurses who work in mental health, and will she say what more we can do to improve mental health and what resources the Government will put into that?

The Prime Minister: I join my hon. Friend in commending the work that is done by all our dedicated staff in the national health service. They continue to do that wonderful work with considerable commitment and dedication. He is right to say that mental health is important. It has been overlooked for too long, and that is why this Government have been putting a focus on mental health. We have been doing more, but there is more to be done. We are putting more money in, and we have announced a new package of measures backed by £6 million in funding, which includes rapid access to mental health services and support for children and their whole families where there is a dependent drinker. Spending overall on mental health issues is at record levels and growing, with a planned record £11.86 billion for 2017-18, increasing by a further £1 billion by 2020-21. It is right that we put this important focus on mental health, and I thank my hon. Friend for raising this.

Q7. [906526] **John Woodcock** (Barrow and Furness) (Ind): My extraordinary constituents help to keep the nation's lights on, and they keep us safe by building the Royal Navy's submarines. They deserve a train service that is worthy of the name, so will the Prime Minister get a personal grip on this fiasco? Just this weekend, we saw 170 services cancelled across the Northern network because there was a World cup game on.

The Prime Minister: Like the hon. Gentleman, I believe that constituents deserve a rail service that provides for them and their needs. I recognise the problems that have been experienced on Northern, and of course on

Govia Thameslink as well. We have given unprecedented powers and funding to Transport for the North, but the issue that he raises in relation to the World cup was one that affected other train services as well, because of the way in which many services operate, and their requirements for drivers and their relying on volunteers to turn up at weekends. This experience may very well be one that the train operators will want to look at, to ensure that in future they can provide the services that constituents need.

Mr David Davis (Haltemprice and Howden) (Con): As the Prime Minister is aware, the Department for Exiting the European Union carried out a study of all the previous free trade deals that the European Union had done, in order to create a draft free trade deal that was based solely on European precedent. The Department was—until I left, at least—creating a legal text of such a draft treaty as a fall-back option for the current negotiations. Will she agree to publish that text when it is complete?

The Prime Minister: First, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my right hon. Friend for the work that he did as Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union. Secondly, as he knows, we have published the proposals that we have for the future trade relationship with the European Union. Of course, as we look through those negotiations, we will be looking to see where the European Union has entered into certain agreements with others in the past. Very often, the European Commission will say, "X can't be done," only for us to say, "X was done with another country and therefore it is possible for it to be done with us." But what I want to see is not just an amalgam of those free trade agreements but an ambitious plan—which is what I believe we have produced—that will protect jobs in this country, deliver on the referendum result and, crucially, ensure that we have no hard border between Northern Ireland and Ireland.

Q9. [906528] **Dr Alan Whitehead** (Southampton, Test) (Lab): The largest apprenticeship provider in Southampton recently reported to me that he has suffered a 70% drop in apprentices on his books since the introduction of the levy-based apprenticeship system. That accords with figures from other providers in my area and means that hundreds of young people will now not get the apprenticeships they need. What is the Prime Minister doing to get the disastrous roll-out of the levy-based apprenticeship system back on the road?

The Prime Minister: What we have seen since the apprenticeship levy was introduced is a change in the number of people doing apprenticeships, but we have also seen an increase in the quality of the apprenticeships that are being undertaken. The Government are now looking at how the levy is operating to ensure that we can do what I want to do, which is ensure that every young person has the opportunity to pursue the course, be it of education or training, that is right for them and that is going to give them the best start in life.

Mr Keith Simpson (Broadland) (Con): My right hon. Friend should be commended for her sangfroid a week ago in dealing with a giant ego—somebody who believes that truth is fake news and leaks continually. I am not

referring here to the right hon. Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Boris Johnson); I am of course referring to President Trump, who has acted in a very bizarre way over intelligence. I know that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has to work with him, but is she not alarmed at the way in which he refused to challenge President Putin over the Russian activity that recently resulted in the death of a woman here in Salisbury?

The Prime Minister: I understand that there have been some clarifications of some of the statements that President Trump made. I did raise with President Trump the incident in Salisbury and the fact that we have seen somebody die here in the UK as a result of contact with a nerve agent. Of course, we took immediate action at the time after the Salisbury attack when we had been able to attribute it to Russia. The United States stood alongside us, as did many other nations across the world, and took action against Russia, which showed a united international front that sent a clear message that we will not accept this behaviour, that this is not behaviour that Russia can conduct with impunity and that we will continue to act together.

Q12. [906531] **Dan Carden** (Liverpool, Walton) (Lab): Carillion forecast an £83 million loss on the Liverpool Royal Hospital, and physical cracks now exist in the structure's concrete beams. It is 16 months late, over budget and structurally unsound, but the answer to my question in the Prime Minister's absence last week offered no solutions. Will she now take responsibility for finishing and opening the new Royal and guarantee that the spiralling costs will not fall to the hospital trust, which would cut the budget for patient care in Liverpool for decades to come?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman raised this in my absence last week, so he will know that we are supporting the Royal Liverpool and Broadgreen University Hospitals NHS Trust in its work on this, and we want to see the new hospital built as quickly as possible while securing best value for money in doing so. The Government and the trust continue to be in active discussions with the existing private sector funders to see whether there is a way forward to complete the remaining work on the hospital. It has taken longer, and further issues were uncovered during the process, but the way that we are approaching the situation is the right way to ensure that we are clear about what we are dealing with. We want to make the right decisions, and it is right that those discussions continue.

Mr Steve Baker (Wycombe) (Con): It is in the national interest that we should have, and have implemented, contingency plans for the unwanted eventuality of exiting the European Union with nothing agreed. Now there is collective agreement to accelerate the delivery of our plans, will my right hon. Friend please give instructions that every communication related to no deal serves to bolster our negotiating position by reinforcing the credibility and feasibility of those contingency plans?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend also for the work he was doing in the Department for Exiting the European Union, and particularly for the work he was doing on this issue. He is absolutely right that we

need to make sure that we have those no-deal preparations in place while we negotiate with the European Union on a deal, because we need to ensure that we have made contingency arrangements for every eventuality. Also, the European Union needs to be in no doubt that we are making those preparations and are ensuring that, should that be the outcome, we are prepared.

Q13. [906532] **Alex Cunningham** (Stockton North) (Lab): My constituent Andy McLean arranged to sell his house to an online company, WeBuyAnyHouse-Quickly.com. He agreed a price and then saw it cut by more than 20% on the day contracts were to be exchanged and after he had incurred a fortune in deposit, legal and other costs associated with his new house purchase. Will the Prime Minister instruct Ministers to bring forward regulations so that people like my constituent can be protected from such rip-off companies and their cowboy tactics?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman raises a very specific issue, and I am happy to ensure that the responsible Ministers will look at that issue.

Sir Hugo Swire (East Devon) (Con): For a Minister to be able to do their job, they rely on getting impartial, sound and honest advice from their civil servants. When that sacrosanct relationship is broken, there needs to be a full and proper investigation. My right hon. Friend will be aware that the Select Committee on Home Affairs has called for the full, open and transparent publication of Sir Alex Allan's Windrush report. Will my right hon. Friend therefore use her stamp of authority as Prime Minister and insist that we get to the bottom of this and see who was told what and when in order that it does not look like another cover-up?

The Prime Minister: It is important, as Alex Allan himself has made clear, that proper consideration is given to the publication of information involving individuals' personal information, but I know my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is considering this matter very carefully.

Nigel Dodds (Belfast North) (DUP): I commend the work of the charities Shine and SBH Scotland for their work in assisting people affected by spina bifida and other such conditions. Those charities, public health authorities, scientists and others all agree on the need to reduce the number of pregnancies that have neural tube defects by the mandatory fortification of flour with folic acid—the USA and other countries do that already. Will the Prime Minister look at bringing the UK into line by introducing this very important public health preventive action?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman raises an important issue, and I join him in commending the excellent work of charities on this issue. We all want mums-to-be to have healthy pregnancies and, of course, there is NHS guidance on the supplements, such as folic acid, that women planning a pregnancy should take before conception and, indeed, until the twelfth week of pregnancy. Women are recommended to eat more folate-rich foods during pregnancy. We will continue to look at this issue to ensure that the advice and the action that is taken are absolutely right to ensure that mums-to-be have healthy pregnancies.

Anna Soubry (Broxtowe) (Con): I am sure the whole House will join me in congratulating Sir Cliff Richard on his successful action against the BBC, which behaved atrociously in its illegal invasion of his privacy. Will my right hon. Friend look again at changing the law so that a suspect is not named by the media, except in exceptional cases, until such time as they are charged? I know I am off her Christmas card list, but I have tabled a private Member's Bill that commands cross-party and, I think, widespread support—I am more than happy to call it Cliff's law. Will the Prime Minister please agree at least to look at the Bill, because Sir Cliff is not alone and this is not confined to sexual offences? Suspects should not be named by the media until such time as they are charged.

The Prime Minister: Obviously, my right hon. Friend has raised a very important issue. She has raised it in the specific case of Sir Cliff Richard, but, as she said, this does not just relate to somebody who is well known and in the public eye. This is a difficult issue, it has to be dealt with sensitively and I looked at it when I was Home Secretary. There may well be cases where the publication of a name enables other victims to come forward and therefore strengthen the case against an individual. So this is not somewhere where we either do all of one or all of another; it is an issue for careful judgment. But in exercising that careful judgment, the police have to recognise their responsibilities and the media need to recognise their responsibilities as well.

Mr Speaker: It is good to welcome the hon. Lady back to the House; I call Naz Shah.

Naz Shah (Bradford West) (Lab): Thank you, Mr Speaker. On Saturday, we had the international day of remembrance for victims of honour abuse. This Friday, it will be two years to the day since the rape and murder of my constituent Samia Shahid, who was lured to Pakistan. I thank colleagues in the House, and, in particular, the leader of my party, for showing solidarity with the #honourher campaign today. Will the Prime Minister once again reiterate our commitment to eradicating violence against women and girls? Will she also urge the Pakistani authorities to give justice to Samia Shahid—two years on we are still waiting for a trial?

The Prime Minister: The Foreign Office is aware of the particular case and the issue the hon. Lady has raised in relation to the Pakistani authorities, but I am happy to reconfirm our absolute commitment to work to eradicate violence against women. The term "honour violence" is such a misnomer; this is an appalling crime of violence against women. We should all be working to ensure that we eradicate it.

Huw Merriman (Bexhill and Battle) (Con): Neuroblastoma is an aggressive form of cancer that impacts 100 children each year, most of whom are

under five. Thanks to a campaign involving my constituents the Jeffreys family, and many hon. Members from across this House, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence has now approved a drug that may extend lives. Tragically for my five-year-old constituent Jack Jeffreys this has come too late, and he is now undergoing palliative care, with his family at his bedside. For his legacy, and for all of those other children who could lead longer lives, may I ask the Prime Minister to ensure that the NHS now commissions and uses this drug?

The Prime Minister: I am sure the whole House will join me in extending our thoughts and prayers to Jack's family at what must be a terribly, terribly difficult and tragic time for them. As my hon. Friend has indicated, NICE has recommended the drug that he refers to for use in children; that was in draft guidance it recently issued. I understand the drug is now available across the NHS, through the cancer drugs fund, and NICE will be publishing its final guidance in August. I am sure the drug will be rolled out swiftly to ensure that as many people as possible are able to benefit from it as swiftly as possible.

Mr Speaker: Three days after she became the proud grandmother of Holly, I call the Mother of the House, Harriet Harman.

Ms Harriet Harman (Camberwell and Peckham) (Lab): Last night's shambles over the vote of the hon. Member for East Dunbartonshire (Jo Swinson) should put it beyond doubt that pairing is not the answer for MPs having babies. We are elected as MPs to vote in this House, and MPs having babies should not lose that right. Will the Prime Minister give the House the opportunity to vote on the Procedure Committee draft motion on proxy voting for baby leave? With more parliamentary babies in the pipeline—there is one right next to me—and more crucial votes coming up, it is time to sort this out. This one is overdue.

The Prime Minister: First, may I say to the right hon. and learned Lady that the breaking of the pair was done in error? It was not good enough and it will not be repeated. My right hon. Friend the Member for Great Yarmouth (Brandon Lewis) and the Chief Whip have apologised directly to the hon. Member for East Dunbartonshire (Joe Swinson), because we take pairing very seriously and we recognise its value to Parliament. We will continue to guarantee a pair for MPs who are currently pregnant or who have a newborn baby. The issue the right hon. and learned Lady raises refers also to this question of proxy voting and the report the Procedure Committee has brought out. We are looking very carefully at that issue. We want to ensure that we can facilitate parental leave in this place, but, obviously, we also have to ensure that there is a proper consultation. We are looking at the interests of not only individuals, but the whole House.

Govia Thameslink Franchise

12.50 pm

Andy McDonald (Middlesbrough) (Lab) (*Urgent Question*): To ask the Secretary of State to update the House on the performance of the Govia Thameslink franchise.

The Minister of State, Department for Transport (Joseph Johnson): The shadow Transport Secretary has requested an update on the Govia Thameslink franchise. The Secretary of State and I have been clear that the way in which the timetable was implemented by GTR and Network Rail from 20 May provided an unacceptable level of service for passengers. The industry as a whole has apologised to passengers for the disruption suffered on Thameslink and Great Northern services.

I can inform the House that, on Sunday 15 July, GTR implemented an interim timetable, a planned step that aims to improve the reliability and performance of services for passengers. The Department is, of course, watching performance carefully. Some of the benefits that passengers are now seeing include: more trains—around 150 to 200 extra services each day; on-the-day cancellations, which are extremely frustrating for passengers, have been significantly reduced; passengers no longer need to check journey planners before they travel; and the public performance measure has improved on Thameslink, closing yesterday at 84% and at 86% on Great Northern. However, as I said, the Department is closely monitoring for sustained performance improvements by GTR, and we will be holding it and its new chief executive officer to account. At the same time, the Department has been working hard to make sure that passengers receive compensation and an explanation for the disruption that they have suffered.

The worst affected Thameslink and Great Northern season ticket passengers will be able to claim compensation equivalent to one month of their season ticket from GTR for the disruption that they have suffered. Compensation will cover the period from 20 May to 28 July 2018. GTR will contact registered qualifying passengers by the end of August before a claims portal is opened for other passengers. That is identical to the system used for the Southern industrial action disruption compensation. This is in addition to the standard Delay Repay compensation to which GTR passengers are entitled after any 15-minute delay. Full details of eligible stations and more information can be found on the Thameslink and Great Northern websites.

The Department has commissioned two reviews of what went wrong with the implementation of the May timetable. First, the independent Glaister review is under way and seeks to understand the factors that led to the disruption. Our aim is to make sure that we learn lessons so that this does not happen again. Within the Department, we have also started a hard review of this franchise to establish whether GTR has met and continues to meet its contractual obligations in the planning and delivery of the May timetable. As part of that process, we are looking at whether GTR has breached its contracts and we will not hesitate to take tough action against it if it is found to have been at fault.

We are still in the first days of the interim timetable on GTR and all timetables require time to bed in. My Department is watching GTR's progress carefully and we want to see a continued increase in performance for passengers.

Andy McDonald: It is disappointing that the Secretary of State has had to be summoned here to update the House on the ongoing calamity that is the GTR rail contract, and it just a shame that he has not turned up—yet again.

For four years, Govia's appalling service and performance have wreaked havoc and misery in the lives of millions of people. What have the Government done to hold the company to account? Precisely nothing. What does this disgraceful company have to do to be stripped of its contract?

GTR's new interim timetable introduced on Sunday—its third in two months—was supposed to provide more certainty for the public, yet the disruption, delays and disaster are worse than ever. We learned this morning from ITV News that GTR underestimated the scale of the disruption caused by the timetable change by a factor of 10. This failure is totally unacceptable. Labour says that enough is enough. The Government must stop pussyfooting around and strip Govia of its contract without delay. There is no need to wait for Stephen Glaister's review of the timetabling chaos, to which the Minister refers, as it will not tell us what we do not know today. The Government and the rail industry have failed passengers both on GTR and across the north of England.

The Government's threats to GTR mean nothing. Members of this House and the public are not reassured. Can the Minister tell the House whether GTR is in breach of its contractual obligations with the Department for Transport? If it is, will he remove the contract from the company?

The Government have already done a sweetheart deal with GTR over compensation. Can the Minister confirm who will pay for the compensation promised to passengers? Will it be the company or taxpayers?

Almost a year ago, the Government announced major rail investment cancellations on the last sitting day before recess thereby avoiding parliamentary scrutiny of the decisions. Perhaps the Minister could give the House some notice today of any cuts to transport investment that he plans to sneak out on the sly before or during this year's summer recess?

Joseph Johnson: The Secretary of State would have been here had he not been at the Farnborough air show, which is a long-standing commitment that has been in his diary for a considerable time. I understand that he was on an aeroplane at the time the request came in, and it was simply not practical for him to make arrangements to be back in the Chamber to answer this urgent question.

Let me turn to the points raised by the hon. Gentleman. We will establish during the hard review whether GTR has been in breach of its contractual obligations. That process is under way. It is important that the Department follows due process in all these matters. He asked who will pay compensation. The compensation that I described—a month's cash compensation for passengers on the most severely affected lines—will be predominantly funded by Govia Thameslink Railway. That is important, as it is the private sector operator of this train company and it will be providing the predominant amount of compensation.

Sir Nicholas Soames (Mid Sussex) (Con): Against the background of a truly deplorable few months for my constituents in East Grinstead, Haywards Heath and

[*Sir Nicholas Soames*]

Wivelsfield, the new timetable is beginning to bed down and provide a far more reliable and sustainable service, which is quite the opposite of what has been portrayed by the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Andy McDonald) and greatly welcomed by my constituents. Will the Minister please continue to impress on the operator that the short-formed trains are really unacceptable and that we need to get back to the full-length trains as soon as we possibly can?

Joseph Johnson: I thank my right hon. Friend for recognising that there has been some progress and that that has started to benefit his constituents. Obviously, we want that to continue and that improvement to accelerate. We recognise that ensuring that there are fewer short formations, indeed no short formations, will be a very important part of that process.

Alan Brown (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): Quite simply, the Secretary of State's handling of the rail franchise and the rail operations makes Brexit seem like an organised process. It really is a disgrace. What needs to happen before a company is stripped of a franchise? It is certainly not poor performance. Owing the taxpayer £2 billion and the Government cannot wait to step in and take it off the private operator's hands, but for poor performance, no; they just stand back and do nothing. What action has the Government actually been taking to sort out this mess with Govia Thameslink? As the shadow Secretary of State said, we are now on the third timetable. There have been 420-odd cancellations when it had anticipated 40, which shows what lack of a grip Govia has on this matter. Can the Minister confirm whether Govia is still in the running for the Southeastern franchise, and if so, why? How much compensation has been set aside by Network Rail, which is owned by taxpayers and is not a private company? I would like to ask when the Secretary of State will lead in these matters, but the true question is when will the Secretary of State resign because of these matters?

Joseph Johnson: The Department's top priority is to ensure that passenger services across GTR get back to the standard where they need to be. The hon. Gentleman asked about compensation; it is being predominantly funded by GTR, which will not receive payments that it would otherwise have received for delivering the timetable. Network Rail will make a contribution towards the cost of compensation, recognising that it too played a part in the disruption experienced by passengers. Our rail industry is in both public and private hands, so it is appropriate that both parts contribute to the important compensation that passengers will receive.

Sir Oliver Heald (North East Hertfordshire) (Con): My hon. Friend will recall the assurance given to me by the Prime Minister that

"nothing is off the table"—[*Official Report*, 4 July 2018; Vol. 644, c. 313]—

if the interim timetable fails. He is monitoring GTR's performance carefully, but so far this week it has been less good on the Cambridge line than in some other parts. Will he continue to put pressure on GTR for a proper service for my constituents, who have suffered so

badly over recent weeks? Will he also look into compensation for carnet holders as well as season-ticket holders?

Joseph Johnson: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for recognising that there has been improvement, even if it has not been consistent across all parts of the GTR network. We particularly want to see an even higher standard of service on Great Northern, which serves his constituency, than there has been. Performance overall has been improving: as I said, yesterday the PPMs on Thameslink were at 84% and at 86% on Great Northern. There have been some operational difficulties today due to a signalling failure, which is a Network Rail responsibility. As part of our work with GTR, we are ensuring that it pays particular attention to areas such as that of my right hon. and learned Friend where there has been poorer performance than that across the rest of the GTR franchise as a whole.

Lilian Greenwood (Nottingham South) (Lab): GTR's third attempt since May to implement a more robust and reliable timetable has been met with understandable incredulity by those passengers who are still experiencing more cancelled services, more confusion and dangerously overcrowded stations and platforms. How long is the DFT prepared to prolong the ridiculous situation in which the only available option to stabilise things is to cancel more trains, causing more pain for passengers who are paying handsomely for GTR's so-called service? If the Minister will not step in to take direct and effective action to put things right, is not the franchise in effect unfit for purpose? Does that not demonstrate the Department's total inability to act in the best interests of passengers?

Joseph Johnson: Things are improving, although they are not yet back at the level they need to be. More services are running today—150 to 200 each day—than before 15 July, as a result of the interim timetable that GTR has just implemented, and the number of on-the-day cancellations has been dramatically reduced, so the Chair of the Select Committee could give some credit to GTR for the kind of progress that we have seen since the introduction of the interim timetable on Sunday, while recognising that there is significant work still to be done.

Heidi Allen (South Cambridgeshire) (Con): I have to say to the Minister that on the lines in my area, which also run through Royston and St Neots stations in the constituencies of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for North East Hertfordshire (Sir Oliver Heald) and my hon. Friend the Member for Huntingdon (Mr Djanogly), the new timetable did not go live, to all intents and purposes—most certainly not on Sunday, and we still had lots of cancellations on our lines on Monday.

I have two specific questions. First, like a lot of people I remain deeply dissatisfied that compensation is only for season-ticket holders, with other people having to use Delay Repay. What about my constituents who are having to drive to main commuter stations that they would not normally use and sometimes having to pay £9 or £10 a day to park there? They would normally be able to walk to their own village station. We need to do better on compensation, and there are a lot of us who

will not let that drop. Secondly, how long is this hard review actually going to take? We are two months in and the service is still nowhere near acceptable.

Joseph Johnson: There are a number of elements to that. I recognise that services in my hon. Friend's constituency have not been running perfectly, by any means. Some technical operational difficulties that were Network Rail's responsibility have been at fault. There was a signal fault between Cambridge and Royston, which was a Network Rail issue, and there was a double track-circuit failure at Foxton, which was also a Network Rail issue and which has played a particular part in the difficulties that my hon. Friend's constituents have been experiencing today.

On her point about compensation, the package has been designed to compensate the worst-affected passengers who travel every day on season tickets bought in advance. As I said, it is similar to the compensation that was offered to Southern ticket holders following the industrial action last year. Passengers who travel less frequently can claim Delay Repay compensation for the disruption that they experience, and we encourage them to do so.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Lady's question, although comprehensive, was notably shorter than the delays about which she complained.

Clive Efford (Eltham) (Lab): I have said to the Minister in the House several times that Govia runs not only GTR but Southeastern. This morning, services were again delayed because of a broken-down train. That is not infrastructure; it is the rail operating company. Why do the Government turn a blind eye to Govia? It is not fit and proper and should have its franchises taken away.

Joseph Johnson: The Department's hard review, which is under way, is looking into GTR's preparedness for the timetable change and will leave the Secretary of State with the full range of options, should GTR be found not to have the managerial strength or capability to be a train operating company. All options will be available to the Secretary of State at the review's conclusion, which we hope will come by the end of this month.

Sir Michael Fallon (Sevenoaks) (Con): First, when it comes to compensation, does my hon. Friend agree that the priority should be to improve the compensation on offer and accelerate it, so that people actually get the repayment that is being talked about? Secondly, will he tell the House how many route train drivers we are short of on the Thameslink service and when we expect to have a full complement?

Joseph Johnson: GTR will be proactively contacting my right hon. Friend's constituents when they are in the group of severely affected passengers who hold season tickets. GTR will actively get in touch with them to ensure that they get the compensation to which they are entitled. GTR has been making significant progress with driver training, which is part of the underlying problems with the disruption, and we are pleased with that progress. That plays a part in ensuring that services are getting back to where they need to be.

Teresa Pearce (Erith and Thamesmead) (Lab): I listened to what the Minister said about reviewing the contract to see whether the terms had been adhered to; surely the

contract is to run a rail service and surely GTR has not done that. What other business would possibly stay in business if it had to compensate its customers on a daily basis? What will it take for this contract to be withdrawn?

Joseph Johnson: The important questions that the hon. Lady raises will be answered by the Glaister review and the departmental hard review. We need to establish what responsibility GTR had for the disruption that passengers have experienced, while recognising that other actors are involved that also have a share in what has happened, including Network Rail.

Crispin Blunt (Reigate) (Con): As the Opposition spokesman implied, Mr Speaker, you probably could have granted this urgent question on any day in the past four years, since the London Bridge investment work began and the timetable fell over after new year 2015. Will my hon. Friend the Minister warn the Opposition, who focus simply on the GTR franchise, that there is a complex set of overlapping responsibilities in this area that mean that a simple solution is almost certainly the wrong one? Will he and his team address the complexity of the structure that started with the privatisation of this service back in 1993? Will he do what is within his power and address the grotesque unfairnesses in some of the fare structures and significantly improve the compensation deal, so that people who access the Thameslink service get compensation as well as those who are lucky enough to go on to a Thameslink train straight away?

Joseph Johnson: My hon. Friend raised the issue of the fare structure. He has been a tireless campaigner on this question on behalf of his constituents in Reigate and Redhill, and we take his concerns extremely seriously. He also made the important point that we should not leap to simplistic solutions, as the Labour party has done by thinking that there is a quick-fix answer to this in nationalisation. We have to remember that there are many actors in what has gone wrong, including Network Rail, which is, of course, in the public sector.

Tom Brake (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD): Many commuters and campaign organisations, such as the St Albans commuter action group, will be watching this debate. They will want to know what role the Secretary of State had in choosing 15 July as the date for implementing the interim timetable. They will also want to know why, in response to a letter from the hon. Member for Croydon Central (Sarah Jones)—I thank her for writing that letter on behalf of MPs—the Secretary of State hid the fact that the DFT is on the industry readiness board, which has been responsible for the last two years for overseeing the introduction of the timetable. Is it not time for a performance monitoring system for Ministers, so that they can be sacked when they do not perform?

Joseph Johnson: The chair of the Office of Rail and Road, Professor Stephen Glaister, is looking into what went wrong with the introduction of the timetable so that we can learn lessons from it for December and subsequent changes. The terms of reference of the review allow him to examine DFT's role in all decisions leading up to the introduction of the May timetable. The right hon. Gentleman asked about the Secretary of State's

[Joseph Johnson]

role in choosing 15 July for the introduction of the interim timetable. That was a decision of the operator, as I have already explained to the right hon. Gentleman in answer to a written question.

Tim Loughton (East Worthing and Shoreham) (Con): As a direct consequence of the third emergency timetable, which came in on Sunday, schools in East Worthing have had to bring forward the closing of their day by an hour because there are no longer any trains for their pupils. The punctuality rate will indeed improve, because with 100% of those trains no longer running, they are 100% punctual. What exactly will it take from the Glaister review—in addition to what thousands of our constituents tell us every single day about this shambles—to get this franchise removed once and for all, and as soon as possible? What will it take to get a proper compensation scheme that properly reflects the daily agony that our constituents are going through?

Joseph Johnson: My hon. Friend makes a powerful case on behalf of his constituents, who have suffered unacceptably as a result of the disruption that they have experienced. It is right that the industry and the Government have apologised for everything that constituents have experienced. We are working hard to ensure that the disruption comes to an end as soon as possible, and we are ensuring that there is compensation and a proper explanation so that lessons can be learned for the future.

Marsha De Cordova (Battersea) (Lab): In May, GTR issued guidance to its staff instructing them to ignore the needs of disabled passengers if not doing so would cause a delay to trains. We know that that was discrimination against disabled passengers. Does the Minister agree that no rail operator should be discriminating against disabled passengers? In future, will all rail franchises ensure that all disabled passengers are treated equally?

Joseph Johnson: It is entirely right that the train operating company in question apologised for that incident. No disabled passenger should be treated in such a way. We must have a fully accessible transport system. The Department will shortly launch an inclusive transport strategy, which will ensure that that is the case.

Paul Scully (Sutton and Cheam) (Con): I welcome the hard review into GTR, which still has a tin ear when it comes to constituents who complain about their travel on the Sutton to Wimbledon loop. I also welcome the Glaister review, which is looking at the relationship between Network Rail, GTR and the train operating companies. What more can the Minister do to bring track and train back together in smooth operation?

Joseph Johnson: I refer my hon. Friend to the strategic vision for rail that the Secretary of State published in November last year. It builds on work to bring track and train closer together, so that we get the best out of the public and private sectors in a sense of partnership. That will address many of the dysfunctions in our present system, in which there is too much of a blame game between train operating companies and Network Rail. There is too much buck-passing, and we want to bring that to an end.

Daniel Zeichner (Cambridge) (Lab): “Not functioning properly” is a woeful understatement of the continuing misery that passengers from Cambridge are enduring. It started with the cancellation of peak-time services on Monday morning, when people who wanted to go to Kings Cross were told that they would be better off going to Liverpool Street. The previous evening I read in the *Cambridge News* that people who went to see Paul Simon found themselves left in London and had to pay £150 for a cab home. GTR will forever be remembered as the great train robbery. Has the Minister got a target for GTR to meet by next week? If it does not meet the target, will he finally strip it of the franchise?

Joseph Johnson: The hard review, which we have discussed this afternoon, is under way. It got going on 21 June, and it is looking carefully at the performance of the new timetable. This is early days—we are on day four of the new timetable—and it is important that we give it a bit of time to bed in before we leap to conclusions. We want to make sure that we get the processes right. Performance yesterday was significantly better than it had been prior to the introduction of the interim timetable, with public performance measures in the 80s. The PPM for Great Northern, which I believe is relevant to the hon. Gentleman's constituency, was 86%. Some issues this morning with Network Rail performance have affected services out of Cambridge, but they are not GTR's responsibility.

Maria Caulfield (Lewes) (Con): My constituency is a Southern-only constituency, and I have seven stations. Although they are not high-volume stations like nearby Haywards Heath or Brighton, they provide people's only public transport for getting to work and school, and visiting our coastal tourist regions. Although the PPM figures are improving, Southern passengers are still experiencing short formation, complete removal of trains from the timetable and station skipping. Why are they not getting the same compensation as Thameslink passengers?

Joseph Johnson: We have focused compensation, as we did with the Southern compensation that resulted from the industrial action 18 months or so ago, on passengers who have been most severely affected. Although Southern passengers have experienced certain knock-on effects, they have not been as affected by disruption as those on the main Thameslink services and Great Northern services following the introduction of the timetable on 20 May.

Tim Farron (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD): My constituents stand in strong solidarity with, and have great sympathy for, the passengers of Govia Thameslink. Will the Minister make a statement on Arriva Northern Rail's now tedious and predictable ongoing failure to serve Cumbria, in particular? Having cancelled every single train in June, four days ago Arriva Northern cancelled 33 trains on the Furness, lakes and coastal lines on one day. Given that the chaos predates the new timetable, the company cannot blame it. Will the Minister help us out by explaining precisely how dreadful Arriva Northern needs to be before he will get his act together, remove its franchise and give us back our trains? [Interruption.]

Mr Speaker: Order. Somebody says, “Irrelevant.” Well, I exercised latitude. I think that there may be a diversionary route. The link between Cumbria and

Thameslink—if it exists—is tangential, but the hon. Gentleman has deployed such intellectual dexterity as he possesses, which I am sure is very considerable, to render his question orderly, in a manner of speaking.

Joseph Johnson: One link that joins these issues is the Glaister review, which is now under way. It will examine what went wrong in the run-up to the introduction of the timetable, and how it affected the hon. Gentleman's constituency in Cumbria.

Mr Speaker: The professor has helped us, and that is very useful.

Nick Herbert (Arundel and South Downs) (Con): Some 2,400 trains have been cancelled at Hassocks, in my constituency, since the introduction of the new timetable. The interim timetable this week seems to have resulted in fewer cancellations, so it is an improvement, but trains are still being delayed. What it has not done is to restore the direct service from Hassocks to Clapham Junction, and Hassocks is unique among commuting stations in no longer having such a service. Will my hon. Friend undertake to look at the matter again and ask GTR to review that omission, with a view to putting it right in future timetable changes?

Joseph Johnson: I thank my right hon. Friend for recognising that there has been some improvement since the introduction of the interim timetable on Sunday. He has been a strong champion of his constituents and their rail services in Hassocks. He and I have discussed how we can restore the direct services that he has mentioned on several occasions, and we have had debates on them in the House. I assure him that I will continue to raise the matter with GTR.

Mohammad Yasin (Bedford) (Lab): The Minister is saying that there is no quick fix, but I suggest to him that there is a quick fix for Bedford rail users—reinstating the East Midlands Trains service for rail users. They are struggling with Govia Thameslink, which has breached its contract with the DFT twice since 2015 and has surely done so again. The major cause of the failure was insufficient and under-qualified drivers, and it is the same cause this time. Will the Government publish the

remedial plan from the second breach so that we can determine the extent of Thameslink's unprecedented and repeated failings?

Joseph Johnson: The hon. Gentleman has been a strong voice for his constituents. We have met on a number of occasions to discuss EMT's services and the withdrawal of services to Bedford in the peak. As he knows, we are working hard with EMT to see what can be done. There is no easy solution, given the constraints, and I would caution him against thinking that there is a quick fix. If there were, the amount of effort that the Department and the train operators have been putting into finding a solution would have produced one by now.

Bambos Charalambous (Enfield, Southgate) (Lab): Despite the interim timetable from Govia Thameslink, my constituents continue to get a woeful service, as they have done for years, on the Great Northern route in and out of Moorgate. Does the Minister agree that it is about time that Govia was stripped of this franchise and the line given to the Mayor of London to run?

Joseph Johnson: The Secretary of State has indicated that he is open to looking at the shape of the franchise in future. Discussions have been held with the Mayor of London about perhaps including some elements of the current franchise within the orbit of Transport for London's Overground service. We are totally open-minded to solutions that work in the passenger interest.

Diana Johnson (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): Following on from the final question asked by my hon. Friend the shadow Secretary of State, and in the light of speculation in the *Railway Gazette*, will the Minister give an undertaking that he will be coming before the House in the next few days, leading up to when we finish on 24 July, to announce that the electrification of the TransPennine route has been cancelled?

Joseph Johnson: I am here at the pleasure of Mr Speaker, and I cannot predict when I will be called. The TransPennine upgrade is a massive programme of investment. It is the flagship enhancement programme of the next control period for our railways. We will spend £2.9 billion on the TransPennine route in the course of the years 2019 to 2024. It is a phased programme that will include major civil engineering work, and it will also include electrification.

Northern Ireland: Recent Violence

1.22 pm

Tony Lloyd (Rochdale) (Lab) (*Urgent Question*): To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to make a statement regarding the recent violence in Northern Ireland and to outline what the Government are doing to assist the Police Service of Northern Ireland and local community organisations to ensure that violence does not return to the streets of Northern Ireland.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Karen Bradley): I start by paying tribute to the brave men and women of the Police Service of Northern Ireland and the emergency services. They have been working relentlessly over recent weeks to keep people safe and secure, and in some cases they have come under attack while doing so. I am sure the whole House will agree that we owe them a huge debt of gratitude. I, like the hon. Gentleman, was in Northern Ireland on 12 July to be briefed on the ground by the Chief Constable and the chair of the Northern Ireland Policing Board, when I stressed once again our admiration and support for the work that they do. This morning, I had further conversations with the Chief Constable and the head of the Northern Ireland civil service for an update on the latest situation.

Let me now set out the factual position. Last week, on 11 July, in Belfast and some surrounding areas of County Down, there were episodes of serious disorder following a court order to remove a bonfire that was considered to be unsafe. The public disorder took place throughout the evening and into the night, resulting in a number of hoax security alerts, pipe bombs, and a number of vehicle hijackings. A number of sporadic, isolated acts of violence have taken place in the days since 11 July, causing some damage to property—but thankfully there have been no injuries. I know from discussions with the Chief Constable that every effort is being made to bring to justice those responsible for this reprehensible activity. In addition, we witnessed unrelated but serious disorder in Londonderry last week. This included violent acts of provocation against the police and, in some cases, petrol bombs being thrown at residential properties. There was also a serious shooting attack against police officers that could easily have injured anyone in the area.

I have been absolutely clear in my condemnation of this activity, which is a matter of deep concern for everyone who wants to see a peaceful and prosperous Northern Ireland. I am also clear that this violence is not representative of the wider community in Derry/Londonderry. As the Chief Constable informed me this morning, there have so far been 15 arrests in connection with the violence in Londonderry, and 10 people have been charged. I know that the PSNI will continue to do all it can to bring those responsible before the courts. In many cases, it would appear that young people are being exploited and goaded into criminal activity by adults who have nothing to offer their communities.

For our part, the Government have invested significantly in the PSNI, with some £230 million of additional security funding in the 2010 Parliament and £160 million over the current spending review period. In addition, as a result of the 2015 Fresh Start agreement, we are providing £25 million to help tackle the scourge of

paramilitary violence. Let me be very clear: paramilitary activity was never justified in Northern Ireland in the past, and it cannot be justified today. It must stop, and I know that the Chief Constable is committed to using the full force of the law to that end. All of us need to work together, across the whole community, to see that the malign influence of paramilitary activity is ended for good.

Tony Lloyd: I thank the Secretary of State for her comments so far. I join her in recognising the work of the PSNI, but also the work of community groups, particularly in Derry/Londonderry, who came together last Friday and whose actions almost certainly had an impact on the ongoing levels of violence that had taken place in the city. I also want to mention the forbearance of the communities that felt themselves under attack during that period.

I would say to the House, and probably to people in Great Britain, that the situation that took place last week, with different causes and different motivations, was unacceptable. None of us should over-dramatise what took place, but none of us should be foolish enough to think that it does not matter. We saw burnt-out buses across east Belfast. We saw one bus, at least, in Newtownards, hijacked at gunpoint. We saw a return to political violence in Derry/Londonderry. We also saw, as the Secretary of State said, the use of live rounds, possibly with the intent to take life—the life of a PSNI officer. That means that we are talking about very serious levels of civil disorder. I pay tribute to those who are bringing to bear efforts to control this. Nevertheless, we have to take it seriously.

There is now an obligation of leadership on Arlene Foster and on Michelle O'Neill, the respective leaders of the Democratic Unionist party and Sinn Féin, but there is also a demand for leadership from the Secretary of State and from the United Kingdom Government. In particular, we must now ensure that the Good Friday institutions are made once again to work. They were put in place precisely because they brought an end to the troubles. Some of them have fallen seriously into disrepute, others almost casually into disrepute.

In that context, I welcome the Secretary of State's call to re-establish the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference. That is right and proper. However, we need to know what the agenda of its first meeting will be. Will it look, for example, at the recent political violence and at the need to get the Stormont Assembly back into operation? It is not just a question of east-west; the BIIGC also has a role to play in the situation in Northern Ireland. The meeting also cannot be allowed to be a one-off. The BIIGC now has to be brought on to the basis of being a standing conference, so that the Government in Dublin can work with the Government here to bring legitimate pressure. We must also see the restoration of the Stormont Assembly, which is perhaps the most important institution. There the Secretary of State must take action, bringing all parties together until there is a resolution. That really does matter.

Finally, we congratulate the PSNI on its work. It is one of the real achievements of the Good Friday agreement, in generating trust across different communities. However, it is under-resourced, even on the basis of the Patten recommendations; the Chief Constable has requested 300 extra officers. The Secretary of State must now

show real action. Northern Ireland has had 547 days without a Government, breaking the record held by Belgium for non-government. That is not a great record. She must give leadership and get people back round that table.

Karen Bradley: The hon. Gentleman made a number of points. I start by joining him in paying tribute to the community groups in both Derry/Londonderry and Belfast. In east Belfast, community groups worked hard to ensure that the issues around bonfires were managed so as to minimise the effects. I am not complacent—I recognise that we saw violence that is unacceptable—but the community groups really helped by working together. I pay tribute to those groups and those communities, who, as he said, are the ones in the firing line—literally, in this case.

The hon. Gentleman is right that what we saw is unacceptable. Like him, last Thursday I saw those burnt-out cars and the level of disorder. To suggest that that level of disorder is acceptable on the streets of the United Kingdom—anywhere in the United Kingdom—would be absolutely inaccurate. We all join together in this House in condemning the activities and in paying tribute again to the PSNI and the work that it does.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned the PSNI's resources. He will know that it has put in a specific bid around further resources and we are ensuring that that is looked at in government. Again, I pay tribute to the PSNI. As he said, we do have a British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference next week, the agenda for which will be available. We obviously want to ensure that we have an appropriate agenda that reflects the conference's strand 3 nature.

I now finally join the hon. Gentleman in agreeing that we need devolved government in Stormont. Devolved government and the institutions established under the Belfast agreement are key. The relative peace and security we see in Northern Ireland is as a result of that agreement. I, as Secretary of State, will not shy away from taking steps that need to be taken to ensure good governance in Northern Ireland, but I agree that the best, most appropriate and effective way for the people of Northern Ireland is to see those decisions taken in Stormont.

Mark Pritchard (The Wrekin) (Con): I do not think I have ever commended the comments of any Sinn Féin politician before in this House, but does the Secretary of State agree that the comments of Gerry Adams, the former Sinn Féin leader, were helpful rather than unhelpful, and correct in that it is dialogue, not violence, that Northern Ireland needs?

Karen Bradley: I agree with my hon. Friend on the comments made by Gerry Adams and those made by Mary Lou McDonald, the president of Sinn Féin. I also agree with comments made by political leaders across all parties in Northern Ireland condemning the violence. The fact that the people of Northern Ireland have heard their political leaders saying the same thing with the same voice is incredibly important. That message needs to be made to the very, very small number of people—it is a very small number now—who do not believe that the way to resolve the issues in Northern Ireland is through dialogue rather than violence.

Gavin Newlands (Paisley and Renfrewshire North) (SNP): We on the Scottish National party Benches of course condemn any acts of violence in Northern Ireland

and any attempts by any party to destabilise the Good Friday agreement. I also pay tribute to the PSNI for its response to the unrest and for keeping local communities safe. The fact that all parties have condemned the violence demonstrates an appetite to work together constructively, thereby creating a window of opportunity for further talks on restoring power sharing.

Simon Coveney has visited Derry and met the PSNI and residents, but the Secretary of State has not yet visited any areas affected by the violence. Will she tell the House why that is? Why has it taken an urgent question for her to address the House on this very important issue?

Does the Secretary of State believe that the vacuum in leadership, and instability, has led to this increased tension and unrest? There have been months and months of political drift. Will she tell us in detail what she is doing to restore power sharing at Stormont?

Karen Bradley: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his comments and for joining in the condemnation of the activity that we have seen. It is incredibly important to hear that united voice from this House, sending support and a message to those people in Northern Ireland who are standing up against violence.

I wish to correct the hon. Gentleman. He suggested that I had not visited any of the affected areas, but I was in east Belfast and Newtownards on Thursday, the site of some of the violence, and I intend to be in Derry/Londonderry in the near future. It is also worth saying that, as well as Simon Coveney, Arlene Foster visited the Fountain estate in Londonderry over the weekend, again to show her solidarity with the community. He is right that the answer is to have devolved government in Stormont and to have those politicians, who are speaking with one voice—I pay tribute to them for that—not just speaking with one voice but acting with one voice.

Maria Caulfield (Lewes) (Con): I join my right hon. Friend in expressing deep admiration for the PSNI. Given that there is no functioning Assembly in Northern Ireland, will she identify what resources and extra support are going in to help support the PSNI and community groups, so that they can deal with any escalation in violence?

Karen Bradley: My hon. Friend is right to reflect on the fact that great credit needs to be paid to the PSNI. She asks about additional resources. In my comments I mentioned that the 2015 Fresh Start agreement provided £25 million of additional funding from the UK Government to help to tackle the scourge of paramilitary violence, and we have also put in £230 million in the 2010 Parliament and £160 million over the current spending review period.

Mr Gregory Campbell (East Londonderry) (DUP): I join the Secretary of State and the shadow Secretary of State in defending and exhorting the security services and community representatives in the light of the ongoing violence. The most sustained campaign of violence was in the Fountain/Bogside area of Londonderry. She is right: I invited my party leader there to tour the area—hopefully, the shadow Secretary of State will be able to do the same with his party leader—to speak to the people who have suffered as a result of violence. First, will she confirm that she has received a written invitation

[Mr Gregory Campbell]

from me to come and visit the area very urgently? Secondly, will she review the security implications of the fencing there, so that the people who have lived under threat and under terror for many, many years can receive some comfort and assurance that action will be taken to help them?

Karen Bradley: The hon. Gentleman is an assiduous constituency MP, who regularly raises many constituency issues with me. I join him in his tributes to the community and the PSNI for the work they have done. I can confirm that not only did I receive a written invitation from him but he personally hand-delivered that written invitation, so I have definitely received it.

James Heappey (Wells) (Con): During my own service in Northern Ireland, I have seen at first hand the skill with which PSNI officers react proportionately but robustly to public disorder and paramilitary criminality in the Province. Will my right hon. Friend join me in expressing admiration for the bravery and restraint that the PSNI shows when policing these very challenging situations?

Karen Bradley: I join my hon. Friend in saying exactly that. I visited the gold command centre on Thursday morning to see the work that those very dedicated public servants do; that is something that I will take with me for a long time.

Owen Smith (Pontypridd) (Lab): I also commend the PSNI and the community for the work they have done and unreservedly condemn those people who have perpetrated violence in Northern Ireland. Will the Secretary of State acknowledge that the vacuum in our politics in Northern Ireland is, while not wholly responsible, at last partly responsible? I urge her to do more to fill that vacuum with political dialogue and restore the institutions.

Karen Bradley: I agree that we need political dialogue, but there is no excuse for the violence we have seen. There can be no excuse whatsoever. It is totally unacceptable behaviour.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I thank the Secretary of State for her response, and for coming to the House to make that clear. I put on record my condemnation of the violence that took place across the Province, but in particular in my constituency of Strangford. Compare that, Mr Speaker, with the next day, when the Secretary of State attended the 12 July celebrations: we had a smashing day. It was good to see her there, and she was obviously very welcome.

What we need, Secretary of State, is more police on the streets. The Patten recommendation talked of 7,500 officers, but we now have 6,715—a shortfall. What are we doing to address that? The PSNI wants to address the scourge of paramilitaries and their activities across the Province. It has a strategy for that, but it needs the officers and needs the resources.

Karen Bradley: I did very much enjoy my day in Newtownards. As the hon. Gentleman knows, we have received a request from the PSNI, and we are considering that matter.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr Speaker: I call Tom Pursglove.

Tom Pursglove (Corby) (Con): Thank you, Mr Speaker, but my question has already been covered.

Mr Speaker: That is an extraordinary and almost a novel development in the House of Commons—a Member who deliberately eschews repetition.

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): It is the second time this week.

Mr Speaker: Is it the second time this week? The hon. Member for Corby (Tom Pursglove) will be in “The Guinness Book of Records”. Of that I think we can rest assured.

Chris Bryant: For many things.

Mr Speaker: Possibly for many things, as the hon. Gentleman chunters from a sedentary position.

Nigel Dodds (Belfast North) (DUP): I hope I will not repeat what was said earlier. I thank the Secretary of State for what she has said. May I gently say to her that of course the experiences in my constituency over recent years reflect the fact that we have made considerable progress? There was worse violence at the time when the Executive was actually in place, ironically. I just make the point that these things are not necessarily linked. There are particular circumstances in Londonderry and east Belfast. The need for extra police resources is key. That is what the Chief Constable is asking for, and that is what the Secretary of State has heard today.

Karen Bradley: As the Chief Constable put it to me today, there has been slow but fragile progress. As the right hon. Gentleman knows, I have received the request from the Chief Constable, and I am considering it.

Gavin Robinson (Belfast East) (DUP): Thank you for calling me, Mr Speaker. I apologise for missing the start of the urgent question. I am grateful to you for your generosity. [Interruption.] I am very grateful, Mr Speaker—and we will move on from that.

The Secretary of State will be aware that, on the evening of 11 July, Assistant Chief Constable Todd made the quite extraordinary declaration that he expected widespread violence in the name of a paramilitary organisation, particularly in my constituency. As the Secretary of State knows, at least a dozen cars, caravans and so on were burnt out, which, to my mind, satisfies the conditions for a Chief Constable’s certificate and for compensation. Has the Secretary of State engaged with the PSNI, and will she confirm that steps are being taken to recognise the involvement of a proscribed organisation, and that compensation will be arranged quickly and efficiently?

Karen Bradley: I spoke to the hon. Gentleman, whose constituency was particularly affected, before the events of last week. I have spoken to the Chief Constable, but perhaps I can write to the hon. Gentleman with the specifics of our conversation.

Proxy Voting

1.42 pm

Mr Alistair Carmichael (Orkney and Shetland) (LD) (*Urgent Question*): To ask the Leader of the House if she will make a statement on arrangements for Members on maternity, paternity or adoption leave and proxy voting.

The Leader of the House of Commons (Andrea Leadsom): I am grateful for the opportunity to respond to this urgent question. As I have said on many occasions, it is right that Members of this House have the opportunity to spend time with their new babies.

I want to start by saying that the situation that arose yesterday, where the pair between the hon. Member for East Dunbartonshire (Jo Swinson) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Great Yarmouth (Brandon Lewis) was broken, was not good enough. I am very sorry that it happened. I am assured by the Chief Whip that the breaking of the pair yesterday was done entirely in error and will not be repeated. My right hon. Friend the Member for Great Yarmouth has apologised directly to the hon. Member for East Dunbartonshire for the mistake, as has my right hon. Friend the Chief Whip on behalf of the Whips Office. I have the utmost respect for the hon. Member for East Dunbartonshire. In particular, her work on the steering group establishing the independent complaints and grievance policy has been invaluable.

I believe all new parents should be entitled to spend uninterrupted time with their new baby. This is vital for both the physical and mental health of parents and babies. The Government Whips Office has undertaken always to pair Opposition MPs on maternity leave from the start to the end of their leave, without applying any conditions. Should an MP who is on baby leave wish to vote in any particular Division, the pair will be re-established immediately afterwards for all subsequent Divisions until their baby leave ends. I am really sorry that an error was made yesterday, but I have been reassured that there remains a guaranteed pair for MPs who are currently pregnant or who have a new baby.

Pairing is a matter for the usual channels. I can tell the House that since the general election the pairing system has worked well overall. Almost 2,000 pairs have been arranged between Government and Opposition MPs. We have investigated yesterday's result in the light of the broken pair to see whether the result should be changed. As it would not materially change the result of the Division, we will not look to take further action on this occasion. However, I sincerely hope that the House can accept the apologies that have been offered.

On the issue of proxy voting, I know this is a matter of great interest to many Members on both sides of the House. I am planning to ensure the House can have the debate in the September sitting, and I will update the House further about its scheduling in the usual way. No one was more disappointed than I was that the debate we scheduled was unable to take place due to the tragic events in Amesbury. I am sure all Members look forward to discussing the matter further at the earliest opportunity.

Mr Carmichael: I thank the Leader of the House for her statement. I very much welcome the tone of what she says about the importance of maternity, paternity and adoption leave, and I am sure that is a matter of common accord across the whole House.

As the Leader of the House has said, as my party's Chief Whip, I was given an undertaking yesterday by the Government pairing Whip that the right hon. Member for Great Yarmouth (Brandon Lewis) would be absent from the Lobbies in accordance with the normal terms. I was therefore very concerned to learn that, although the right hon. Gentleman had not voted in the earlier Divisions or, indeed, even at the 6 pm Division, he had taken part in the Divisions at 6.15 and 6.30 pm. Obviously, this is a very serious breach of the convention. Within the usual channels, we rely on these agreements being honoured. The Government Chief Whip has apologised to me directly, and I of course accept that apology. It remains less than clear to me exactly how this came to pass, but I can pursue that directly with the Government Chief Whip outside the Chamber.

Yesterday's events are symptomatic of a wider problem, which is the question of relying on pairing to provide maternity, paternity and adoption leave. It is using a 19th-century practice to provide for cover under 21st-century employment law, and that is no longer good enough. I can think of no other area of public or business life where this would be allowed to happen, and I have to say that I think the House should no longer allow it either. My question to the Leader of the House is: will she reconvene the talks between the parties with a view to devising a sensible and workable solution to this problem? It is clear from recent days that we are likely to have a lot more knife-edge votes in the months to come. The Leader of the House is absolutely right that the result was not affected by the breach of the pair last night, but that is not to say that, at some point in the future, if it occurred again, that would not happen.

Those who are absent from their duties as a result of baby leave should be able to go on leave without their cover being subject to this sort of convention and the uncertainty that comes with it. They should be allowed to enjoy those most important first months secure in the knowledge that their absence is properly covered. We now need a properly organised system of proxy voting, and it is apparent from last night's events that we can no longer allow the situation we have tolerated thus far to continue.

Mr Speaker, you know that I have been a Member since 2001. When I was first elected in June 2001, my younger son was 10 weeks old. I rejoice in the progress—much of it at your behest—that the House has made in relation to childcare since that time, but it was not always thus. When I was first elected, children were not to be seen and they were certainly not to be heard within the House. I fear I may suffer when I get home for recounting this, but I remember that I once had to change my younger son's nappy in the Members' Cloakroom—obviously, he should not have been there because he was not a Member—on a copy of the *Daily Record*, because there was no changing mat to be found. Whether it was novel for that sort of content to be found in the pages of the *Daily Record* I will leave others to judge.

We have come a long way, but anybody who thought that we had done it all and that there was no more left to be done was sadly disabused of that last night. Will the Leader of the House please take these concerns seriously? All my experience in this House tells me that when the House accepts the need for change at an early

[Mr Carmichael]

point we make sensible changes for ourselves. If we wait until change is forced on us, the law of unintended consequences will inevitably come into play.

Andrea Leadsom: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his remarks and I completely agree with him. I am personally committed and resolved to try to improve this issue for new parents. I think that I have demonstrated that commitment in my response to the urgent question. It was the tragic events at Amesbury that prevented the debate from taking place. The Procedure Committee has done a good job in providing thoughts about how proxy voting could work, but it has raised a number of questions on which it will be important for us to consult in this Chamber before we make a final decision. Let me remind colleagues of some of them: when should a proxy be used; should it be used for every type of vote, including those on going to war or a closure motion, when, as we know, colleagues should be present in the Chamber; and should it apply to all business, private as well as public, or only to Government business. There is also the contested question of whether it should apply only to baby leave or to other circumstances. That is why I am so keen to have a debate in this place before we come to conclusions, but I absolutely agree with the right hon. Gentleman's tone and his desire to see this resolved. I share that desire and, as I say, I will ensure that we get that debate during the September sitting.

On the right hon. Gentleman's point about my right hon. Friend the Chief Whip, he has already committed to engaging again with Opposition Whips to try to find a better process. For our part, the Government will be tightening the procedure by which individual paired Members are made aware that they absolutely must not vote and between which hours of the day. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will be reassured by that.

Bob Blackman (Harrow East) (Con): I thank my right hon. Friend for her contribution and her commitment to bringing the debate back to the Chamber. Clearly, the Procedure Committee carried out the review, as required by the House. Will she undertake to look at the aspects of the fundamental issue of Members being required to be present on the Estate or in the Chamber to register their votes? If we are going to change the system, will she consider allowing people who are hospitalised or have other complications to do so, too? They do not choose to be away, but are forced to be away because of medical conditions.

Andrea Leadsom: My hon. Friend clearly highlighted why we need further debate. I feel that there is something fundamentally different about baby leave over other sorts of leave, and I also feel that, were the House to undertake such a significant constitutional change to our conventions, we should start small because of the law of unintended consequences. That is a matter for further consultation with the House and I look forward to the debate in September.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Order. Before I call other Members—I do want to hear others—in thanking the Leader of the House for what she said, I want to make the point, as much for wider public knowledge as anything else, that

we know that the Procedure Committee looked at this matter and that many people gave evidence to the Committee, myself included, and I made it clear that I was personally perfectly happy with the idea of a proxy voting system in respect of baby leave in particular and that I would be happy to play my part in the operation of such a system.

For what it is worth, I think it is qualitatively in a different category from other requests for proxy voting, but that is a matter for the House to decide. The only other thing I would like to say, which is not directed at any one individual at all, is that I detect in the House and in representations made privately to me a very strong sense not merely that we should debate the issue again soon but that we should decide the issue and, if a change is agreed on, give effect to it. Obviously, if a change is not agreed on, that does not arise, but I think that there is concern about a potentially endless debate, which I feel absolutely sure the Leader of the House would not want and which I would not want. With good will, perhaps, and I think I speak for people on both sides of the argument, we can resolve the matter. I am sure that people would not want endless procrastination.

Valerie Vaz (Walsall South) (Lab): I thank the Leader of the House for her response and congratulate the right hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr Carmichael) on his urgent question about this important issue. I thank you, too, Mr Speaker, for granting it.

Last night's events do not reflect well on this House; I am sure the whole House agrees. It is time that we ensure that this is a modern workplace with modern employment practices. The Leader of the House and I had both decided on 5 July that we would not give closing speeches so that we could debate proxy voting, but she has said that she wants the debate in September. Could she arrange for the debate to take place next week, as we have just a general debate? There is time to discuss that.

Last night shows why the Government must urgently introduce proxy voting for those on baby leave. The Prime Minister's answer earlier to my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Camberwell and Peckham (Ms Harman) was simply not good enough. Consultation by this Government is always code for delay and obfuscation. Members of the Procedure Committee have taken evidence from you, Mr Speaker, and from all of us, and they have produced a report that we could debate immediately. I know that the Leader of the House wants urgently to find a way forward. Does she agree that proxy voting for those on baby leave could be introduced today without the need for debate through public agreement by all parties to nod through those on baby leave for every Division? We could ensure that those voting by such means were denoted by a "P", or, to make it really up to date—and I hope *Hansard* have this—a baby emoji, giving full transparency to the public. Will she agree to meet me today to discuss this?

It is vital that we are a modern workplace and that those on baby leave can have their vote recorded and take part in our proceedings as they want to and as they are elected to.

Andrea Leadsom: As I have just said, my right hon. Friend the Chief Whip has already started discussions with Opposition Whips on exactly those lines and others.

This House needs to decide how it wants to accommodate baby leave and I do not agree with the hon. Lady that we can just do that today. There are unintended consequences and implications of any solution we choose, and it is important that the House has the opportunity to debate the issue. It could be possible to have an earlier debate, but, of course, if I were to say that we would have a debate on Monday, the hon. Lady would ask why we were giving no notice. I felt it very important to ensure that suitable notice is given to enable Members to contribute to the debate in September.

Heidi Allen (South Cambridgeshire) (Con): We have to modernise. I come from a business background, I have worked in the public sector, and I have never experienced archaic practices like some of those that we have here. We have to change. We have to find an alternative, new way of voting. Dragging in sick and heavily pregnant Members does not send a good message to the public. It is not good enough for us to be okay in this place; we have to be better than okay. In everything we do, we have to display the very highest standards for the country to follow. I welcome what the Leader of the House has said. We need to debate this, and we need to do so fully. I accept that, but we must do so as a matter of urgency, and I worry that if the debate is in September we will have only a short window before we break again for the conference recess, and I want to have some sense that there is time for a vote and a decision. We need to do this with open minds, to decide it, as you say, Mr Speaker, and to embrace it and not be afraid of change.

Andrea Leadsom: I agree with my hon. Friend. I will table a debate, and we need to bring forward a solution with which the House is happy as soon as possible.

Pete Wishart (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): What happened last night was nothing short of appalling and underlines why the Scottish National party will have nothing whatsoever to do with these antiquated pairing arrangements. Pairing relies on trust and I am sorry, but we are absolutely right not to place our trust in Government Members. We have to ask how it was right that the right hon. Member for Great Yarmouth (Brandon Lewis) voted in some of these votes last night and not in others, and why was it that the most important votes were the votes that he voted in.

We have to change the voting arrangements of this House. We see that every day in the absurd waste of time of a headcount in cramped voting Lobbies, but to be disenfranchised for having a baby in 2018 demonstrates just how out of touch this archaic place is and how these arrangements should embarrass and shame this House. No more of these ridiculous pairing arrangements—we need reform now that recognises the realities of the communities we represent. We have a perfectly good Procedure Committee report and I gave evidence to that Committee, chaired by the hon. Member for Broxbourne (Mr Walker). All we have to do is agree and accept it. Surely now the Leader of the House can bring this forward at the earliest opportunity. Let us end this nonsense now.

Andrea Leadsom: As I have said, I will bring forward this debate at the earliest opportunity. I absolutely agree that we need to resolve this issue, but I gently say to the hon. Gentleman again, as I often do, that he has a

perfect opportunity in the Lobby to come and talk to Government Ministers and to promote how he wants to improve the plight of Scotland. All he has to do is join us in our Lobby to be able to do that.

Mr Speaker: I think I can say in a non-partisan spirit that the Leader of the House is an optimist.

Will Quince (Colchester) (Con): Mr Speaker, I sat on your diversity and inclusion panel, and we discussed this issue at some length. We identified that it is far more complex an issue than just baby leave, as important as that is. For example, as we speak, I understand that the Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Bill is being concluded. That would give two weeks paid leave for those who lose a child. This is a complex issue, so I very much welcome that my right hon. Friend is bringing forward the debate, but does she agree that such a complex issue needs to be debated in full by all Members of the House?

Andrea Leadsom: My hon. Friend is exactly right: we do need to debate this. I have already given some examples of where as yet un-agreed factors are involved. I think that consulting the House in the September sitting will give us the answers we want and we will be able to progress very quickly after that.

Liz Kendall (Leicester West) (Lab): I am afraid that it stretches credibility to think that the right hon. Member for Great Yarmouth (Brandon Lewis) could remember that he was on a pair for all the votes in the afternoon and then happened to forget at 6 o'clock, when everybody knew from the start of the day that they were the most important votes. That aside, I support what my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall South (Valerie Vaz) said. We have to get a wriggle on with this. We have massively important votes in October about the future of the country. If the debate is in September, will the Leader of the House guarantee that changes will be made before those big Brexit votes?

Andrea Leadsom: I will absolutely get a wriggle on. I point out to the hon. Lady that the issue of pairing is a matter for the usual channels, but as she will know, pairing can be per vote, and not necessarily for a whole day. I think that is where the error was caused. I understand the scepticism, but this apology is very genuine, and the mistake was very genuine. I ask hon. Members to accept that the pairing system does not quite work as the hon. Lady suggests it does.

Vicky Ford (Chelmsford) (Con): I have recently been elected as the chair of the all-party group on women in Parliament, which is a great honour. I was paired last night to help an Opposition Member who wanted to make sure that his vote was not missed. I also spent a number of years in the European Parliament, which a lot of people say is very modern in its voting practice, but it does not have a pairing system. I often saw women with very tiny babies travelling all across Europe to Strasbourg to vote, so the pairing system that I have witnessed here appears to me to be quite modern and far from archaic. However, it must be robust and respected. As a mother of three who once had to spend quite a lot of time with her baby when he was very unwell, I say that maternity leave is important but so is compassionate

[Vicky Ford]

leave, as is sick leave for one's own reasons. I would like to see a proper debate so that all these types of leave can be properly respected, and not just baby leave.

Andrea Leadsom: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving us something of her experiences, both in the European Parliament and here. She is exactly right: there are some complicated factors to discuss and I look forward to having that discussion as soon as possible.

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): Whips do get a bit of a bad rap sometimes. I must confess that quite a lot of Whips are among my best friends, including on the Government side of the House, and often they enable Members do their jobs effectively, efficiently and well. However, when we are at a moment such as this, when frankly, a kind of total war is going on on key issues that affect the nation, it is going to be terribly difficult to make these conventions last. We have already had nodding through abandoned. We used to have a tradition that Whips, and Government Whips in particular, never patrolled the Benches inside the Chamber to try to prevent people from moving motions and things like that, but we now see that as standard in all the debates. We have to move forward with a vote on this issue as soon as we possibly can, so that we just take the temperature down a bit.

Andrea Leadsom: The hon. Gentleman is often in this place when I am, and I completely agree with him that we need to continue to listen to people. We need to show people the utmost respect, which I certainly always try to do, and I know that he does, too. My colleagues on the Whips' Bench are delighted to hear that he considers them to be his friends. I am always very grateful to hear his thoughts on these issues.

Mr Speaker: Well, they will be pleased to know they have some.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch (Saffron Walden) (Con): I thank my right hon. Friend for her very gracious statement and I am pleased that the apology given by my right hon. Friend the Member for Great Yarmouth (Brandon Lewis) has been accepted by Liberal Democrat Members. As someone who was on maternity leave when the general election was called last year, this issue is very close to my heart. It did make me seriously consider whether this is something that I could do with a six-month-old baby. However, given the over 2,000 successful pairs that we have had in this Parliament, does the Leader of the House agree that we should not dismiss the entire pairing system because of one mistake?

Andrea Leadsom: Yes, my hon. Friend is exactly right. Without wishing to be hostile to anyone, there have been a number of broken pairs, which are always carefully looked at on both sides of the House. It is very difficult. As I say, a pair is not usually for a lengthy period of time. It can be for one vote because a Member has to go somewhere or is not back from somewhere. It is actually a very complex system. Errors do happen. Yesterday was an error and my hon. Friend is exactly right to say that we should not ditch the whole system because of the odd few errors here and there.

Luciana Berger (Liverpool, Wavertree) (Lab/Co-op): The Leader of the House should not underestimate the damage done by what happened yesterday. I urge her to look very closely, if she has not already, at the comments on social media. I have certainly received representations from my constituents today who are appalled by what happened in this House. We should be setting the example, not falling short of it. The public will have heard the apology from the Leader of the House, but why are the Chief Whip and her right hon. Friend the Member for Great Yarmouth (Brandon Lewis) not here to listen to this urgent question—[HON. MEMBERS: "He is here!"] My apologies, but equally, the sentiment of that apology will be diminished by the Chief Whip's absence.

Andrea Leadsom: My right hon. Friend the Member for Great Yarmouth is indeed here. When he and I spoke last night about this subject, he was very upset to hear about this problem. He was unaware. He was absolutely blameless in this, and he has apologised to the hon. Member for East Dunbartonshire. He is here, so I hope that the hon. Lady recognises that. As for my right hon. Friend the Chief Whip, his deputy is here and he has apologised on behalf of the Whips Office, where the administrative error took place.

Jeremy Quin (Horsham) (Con): Clearly, there was a mistake last night. Happily, it did not affect the result of any Division. It is a mistake that cannot be repeated. Will my right hon. Friend reiterate to the House that anyone who is on maternity leave and requires a pair will get one?

Andrea Leadsom: Yes, I absolutely confirm that to the House. It was an undertaking given by the Government Whips Office and it remains in place. As I mentioned in my answer to the urgent question, if a Member wishes to come in for a particular vote, they can do so and then the pairing can be resumed straight after that vote.

Christine Jardine (Edinburgh West) (LD): As the Leader of the House will no doubt be aware, we had a lengthy debate on proxy voting, supported by all parties in the House, in which there was near unanimous support for it going ahead. In those circumstances, can we not have the debate on Monday and then refine the process, for which there is already support, over the summer, after which it could be agreed?

Andrea Leadsom: I was delighted to take part in the debate to which the hon. Lady refers. It was a very good debate. As I recall, there were about 10 or 11 contributors, but those contributions did not necessarily look at some of the broader issues around, for example, the unintended consequences of one person on parental leave deciding to take a pair and another to proxy vote, thereby potentially leading to misunderstanding among constituents. Such issues would be very personal to the individual. It is important that the House discusses these matters and draws a conclusion with the benefit of a proper debate.

Gareth Johnson (Dartford) (Con): My understanding is that a number of agreed pairings in place for yesterday's Divisions were adhered to completely. Would the Leader of the House agree that, regardless of whether we end up with a form of proxy voting, we should not allow

one error to cloud our judgment of the effectiveness of the pairing system, no matter how regrettable that error may have been?

Andrea Leadsom: My hon. Friend is quite right. We have had about 2,000 pairs in this Parliament. Some have been broken, owing to administrative errors, but nevertheless it remains a good means by which Members can take either urgent or unexpected absences and not have their votes just omitted from the overall Division result.

Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP): As a Whip, I like to think I have friends on both sides of the House. I suspect that a lot of people watching are finding out for the first time what the pairing system is. The lack of transparency is important. A proxy system, whether by a smile emoji or whatever, would allow for much greater transparency, scrutiny and understanding, and it would not just benefit Members who are new parents. Not only proxy voting but fixed decision times and electronic voting would help to end this farce of taking so much time walking through the Lobbies.

Andrea Leadsom: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the issues of how we vote are looked at periodically, and I am always keen to consider the well-known views of him and his colleagues on electronic voting. Generally speaking, the House tends not to agree; its view tends to be that the way we vote currently is the right way. It also tends to consider that the pairing system is effective and useful, and offers the flexibility that all Members want.

Tom Pursglove (Corby) (Con): Is my right hon. Friend aware of any systems in place in Parliaments around the world from which lessons could be learned? I tend to agree that there are intricacies involved in all this. For example, we are very conscious that we have independent Members. How would this work for them?

Andrea Leadsom: My hon. Friend raises important questions that would be part of the debate. Professor Sarah Childs, in “The Good Parliament” report, looked at other legislatures, as I am sure you are aware, Mr Speaker, and found that most—six in total—of the surveyed Parliaments had formal House leave arrangements, those being either general leave provisions or more specific maternity, paternity and parental leave provisions. Three did not but relied on informal party arrangements—Canada, Scotland and Wales. A single Parliament—Sweden—matched the country-level provision for all employees. So they do differ, but he is absolutely right to raise the importance of considering how other legislatures handle this situation.

Emma Reynolds (Wolverhampton North East) (Lab): Let’s be as good as Sweden, shall we? Depriving the hon. Member for East Dunbartonshire (Jo Swinson), who was at home taking care of her three-week-old baby, of a pair last night was disgraceful, but depriving her of the opportunity to represent her constituents was unacceptable. I was on so-called maternity leave last year, and was hauled in several times, sometimes late at night, when my baby was only five months old, so pairing is not enough. I was not able to represent my constituents in that time. This is not complicated; it is simple. Will the Leader of the House commit that in September, when we have this debate, it will be on a votable motion and that if it is passed we will proceed to introduce the proxy voting arrangement as soon as possible?

Andrea Leadsom: I am told by the deputy Chief Whip that in fact the hon. Lady’s pair was not broken by the Government at any time, so if she came into the House, that was her choice. It is important to make that point, given the accusations around. The Government have been very clear that we will honour pairs for baby leave. On the hon. Lady’s other point, as I said it is important that we debate some of these issues by way of a consultation in this place. As she will have heard, having sat through this urgent question, there are different, important and opposing views, so it is important that we have a proper debate.

Kevin Foster (Torbay) (Con): Obviously, none of us would see dragging someone who is terminally ill or heavily pregnant through the building as the best way for a modern Parliament to operate, but neither would any of us want to see Divisions like those in the New Zealand House of Representatives, which basically involve the Chief Whip of the relevant party holding up a hand and exercising a block vote on behalf of all their Members. Does the Leader of the House agree that it will never be possible to offer an exhaustive list of each situation in which a pair could be considered, and that even if a proxy system came in, the pairing system would still need to exist?

Andrea Leadsom: My hon. Friend is quite right. The Procedure Committee report proposed that hon. Members taking baby leave should be able to choose between proxy voting and a pair, even from vote to vote, so the complexity would obviously increase; nevertheless it is important that we have choice and flexibility.

Helen Goodman (Bishop Auckland) (Lab): The Chair of the Procedure Committee will attest to the fact that I have been a proxy voting sceptic—until yesterday. Does the Leader of the House agree that the right hon. Member for Great Yarmouth (Brandon Lewis) has done for proxy voting what the hon. Member for Christchurch (Sir Christopher Chope) did for the private Members’ Bills process?

Andrea Leadsom: The hon. Lady is being extremely unfair to my right hon. Friend the Member for Great Yarmouth. It is absolutely clear that he was unaware that he was breaking a pair. It was an administrative error.

Nigel Huddleston (Mid Worcestershire) (Con): Does the Leader of the House share my disappointment, from talking to potential parliamentary candidates, at just how many of them are put off standing for Parliament altogether because of the widely held perception that this place is inconsistent with family life or even the aspiration to a family life? How many potential fantastic MPs have we lost on both sides of the Chamber because of that reputation? Can she assure me that she will do everything she can to make sure that this place becomes friendly for anybody who wants to stand for Parliament, no matter what their stage in life?

Andrea Leadsom: My hon. Friend raises a really important point. We need many more people to come forward, particularly women, and to be compatible with good, solid family life, it is vital that we look at how we manage things in this House and improve on it.

Melanie Onn (Great Grimsby) (Lab): In her statement, the Leader of the House told us that 2,000 pairs had been arranged without error until last night, but I note that since then, in her responses, she has backtracked slightly to ease herself through this discussion. People will take from that what they will, but given the closeness of the votes on Brexit this week, which I think has driven this so-called administrative error, the simplest way forward would be for her to adopt the good and thorough work of the Procedure Committee and put its recommendations to a vote. She says that she is supportive, so why is she trying to wriggle out of this?

Andrea Leadsom: The hon. Lady is wrong on two counts. I said that the pairing system had worked well overall. As I have made clear, there have been more than 2,000 pairs in this Parliament and several have been broken because of errors. The vast majority were broken by Opposition Members, although I do not want to be at all partisan over this. It is a complex administrative system and errors have occurred. She makes a good point about the importance of bringing in new processes, but the Procedure Committee did not set out a prescription; it raised a number of issues that the House would need to decide on, such as, for example, what business should be proxy votable—all business, just Government business, business Monday to Thursday, closure motions of the House, private Members' Bills on Fridays? These are the questions that the Procedure Committee rightly raised and the reasons why the House needs to debate this further.

James Heapey (Wells) (Con): I echo the enthusiasm expressed by colleagues across the House for a look at our voting processes and how we might make them more family-friendly. In the meantime, does my right hon. Friend agree that the pairing system can be transparent? Those who are paired can say that they are paired and with whom they are paired, as, indeed, the hon. Member for East Dunbartonshire (Jo Swinson) did yesterday on social media.

Andrea Leadsom: My hon. Friend is right. Let me reiterate the undertaking by the Government Whips Office to provide even greater process, so that individuals who are paired will be specifically told the duration of the pair and with whom they are paired. I think that that will also reduce the number of errors. I can only say again that what has happened is extremely regrettable, and that the Whips are very apologetic about the error.

Ellie Reeves (Lewisham West and Penge) (Lab): As a former employment rights lawyer specialising in maternity discrimination and flexible working, I have been shocked by some of the outdated practices in this place. While I am grateful to you, Mr Speaker, for relaxing the rules to allow my son to go through the voting Lobby with me, it really is time that we became a modern 21st-century workplace. Given that many Members have recently given birth or are currently pregnant, I echo the calls for an urgent vote on proxy voting before the summer recess, before it is too late.

Andrea Leadsom: The hon. Lady says that she is an employment lawyer, in which case she will know very well that Members of Parliament are not employees but office holders. It would be a very fundamental review

that would say that MPs should become employees. The hon. Lady would have to consider by whom they would be employed, and the subsequent taking on of modern employment regulations. She has not been clear about what she is after, but I am absolutely clear about the fact that we will be debating this issue. We want to provide proper baby leave for new parents, but the hon. Lady cannot possibly suggest that we should become employees in order to do so.

Jess Phillips (Birmingham, Yardley) (Lab): I have a quick question for the Leader of the House. I wonder how many times Members, mainly on her own side, raised with her, prior to the proposal for baby leave, the need for a new system for sick Members of Parliament. It seems to me that they have all become incredibly committed to such a system, in what I would call "whataboutery", since the suggestion about parental leave. Did anyone ever raise the issue with her before?

Andrea Leadsom: Yes, a good number of people. For example, my hon. Friend the Member for Dudley South (Mike Wood), the Parliamentary Private Secretary, was absent for a considerable length of time with a very serious life-threatening illness. For as long as this Parliament has sat, there has been the need to provide pairing for people who are extremely ill suddenly, and the issue of how best to manage those processes has always been raised. The suggestion that baby leave is a unique problem for the House is simply not true: there are clearly other issues that Members want to raise in the debate.

Alison Thewliss (Glasgow Central) (SNP): Mary Beard has said:

"You can't easily fit women into a structure that is already coded as male; you have to change the structure."

Pairing is such a structure. It is not transparent, and, in fact, it seeks to disenfranchise two MPs rather than enfranchising one. Will the Leader of the House bring the Procedure Committee's report to the House before the recess, so that we can vote on it and stop pregnant women being disenfranchised?

Andrea Leadsom: Let me say again that I am absolutely committed to ensuring that women will be able to spend time with their new babies, and the fathers, including in cases of adoption. It is vital that they are able to do so. I have made it extremely clear that I will arrange for a debate during the September sitting, and we can then make fast progress.

Tulip Siddiq (Hampstead and Kilburn) (Lab): This morning, as chair of the all-party parliamentary group on child care and early education, I hosted a lobby consisting of more than 100 nursery and childcare providers. They spoke to me at great length about the challenges that new parents face when they go back to their workplaces, and about maternity discrimination. Does the Leader of the House think that we, here in the House, have the moral legitimacy to lecture those in other workplaces about maternity discrimination and unfair practices when our Government have cheated a pregnant woman out of her vote in the most underhand manner?

Andrea Leadsom: I fundamentally disagree with the hon. Lady's assessment, but I absolutely agree with the nursery workers whom she mentioned about the vital

importance of women being treated fairly. What she is seeking to do is simply to politicise this issue, at a time when the Government have made it absolutely clear that there are guaranteed pairs for anyone on baby leave and that what happened yesterday was an error.

Thelma Walker (Colne Valley) (Lab): The Conservative party appears to have an issue with women. That has been made clear by the sexting scandal and the fact that only a third of the Cabinet are women, and now the chairman of the party has broken with parliamentary protocol and betrayed a new mum. The Leader of the House promised that pairing would take place when she withdrew the previous debate. How can we be sure that the Government will keep their word on anything now?

Andrea Leadsom: We are on our second female Prime Minister. In case the hon. Lady had not noticed, the Leader of the House of Commons is female. In case the hon. Lady had not noticed, the Leader of the House of Lords is female. What is very clear to those on this side of the House is that it is her party that has a problem with women.

Space Policy

2.26 pm

The Minister for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation (Mr Sam Gyimah): With permission, Mr Speaker, I will make a statement on a key development in UK space policy.

As a result of announcements made this week, the United Kingdom will, for the first time ever, be able to launch satellites from its own soil. This is a development that the whole House should welcome and celebrate. The space sector is changing globally, and at a pace never seen since the race to the moon. It is allowing us to answer questions about ourselves and the universe that curious minds have debated for centuries, but it has also seen the development of technologies that are transforming our day-to-day life here on Earth. For example, the technology that was developed to provide clean air on the International Space Station is now being used to control the spread of superbugs in hospitals across the world.

The UK is well placed to be at the forefront of developments in space, and the Government are determined that we will take advantage of the vast opportunities that are available to us as a country. That is why I met the new NASA administrator, Jim Bridenstine, today to discuss UK-US collaboration. As we all know, NASA is the biggest space agency in the world, with budgets in excess of \$10 billion a year. We discussed how to extend and deepen the opportunities for our two countries to collaborate, especially in relation to the hugely ambitious vision for exploration set out by President Trump.

It is nearly 50 years since man landed on the moon, and since then we have been no further. Questions remain about whether or not we are alone in the universe. The UK has been at the forefront of robotic exploration to address that question. Indeed, our space industry built the Mars Rover, which will be launched in 2020, and I am very excited that later this week I shall be able to announce a competition related to that mission. We want to continue to be at the forefront of the next human exploration missions, working alongside NASA and the European Space Agency, but space is also a fundamental part of our economic future. The UK space sector is growing. It is worth about £13.7 billion to the economy according to current estimates, and it employs more than 38,000 people across the country.

As is set out in the Government's industrial strategy, we are working with industry to increase the UK's share of the global space market from 6.5% to 10% by 2030. The sector has grown at an average of more than 8% every year over the last decade, and three times faster than the average sector over the last five years. Space is a growth sector not only in its own right but as part of our "critical national infrastructure", underpinning all other key industrial sectors including agritech, automotive, aerospace, maritime and energy. Our space sector is one of the most innovative in the world. It is a world leader in small satellite technology, telecommunications, robotics and Earth observation. For example, we build 25% of the world's telecommunication satellites and our universities are some of the best in the world for space science.

This week the UK has seized an opportunity to capture a share of the emerging global market for small satellite launch. The Government are working to create

[Mr Sam Gyimah]

the capability and conditions for commercial spaceflight to thrive in the UK. The Government's industrial strategy includes support for a £50 million programme to kick-start small satellite launch and sub-orbital flight from UK spaceports. Funding will be used to support the first launches from the UK and to deliver a programme of work to realise benefits across the country.

The Government have made announcements this week which underpin our commitment to the sector. A £2.5 million grant has been announced for a vertical spaceport site in Sutherland, on the north coast of Scotland. That the first ever satellite launch from the UK could be from Scottish soil highlights our commitment to the Union. With the support of £29 million of industrial strategy funding, Lockheed Martin and Orbex will be the first companies to set up operations in Sutherland, delivering capable commercial and globally competitive small satellite launch services. Not only does the UK have the technical skills and capability, we have the geography. We are seeing the biggest growth in the sector in small satellites, which are typically launched into polar orbits. This makes the position of the UK a very favourable launch site.

But it is not just about vertical launch capability. The Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy also announced a £2 million fund to help horizontal spaceports to progress their plans from our £50 million industrial strategy fund for the UK spaceflight programme. Separately, Newquay airport, Cornwall and Virgin Orbit have signed a memorandum of understanding this week, which is an important and positive milestone towards establishing a leading horizontal commercial launch provider at a UK spaceport. We cannot underestimate the scale of the opportunity here, from entering new markets such as space tourism to transforming our intercontinental travel. The Government are providing support not only through funding, but by putting in place the right regulatory framework to enable commercial success.

I am pleased that the Government are not alone in recognising this opportunity. Up and down the country, ambitious local authorities and private investors are coming together to help build our space capability. The rapid growth at the Goonhilly site in Cornwall is further evidence of the excitement in the sector. As technology evolves and reduces the cost of access to space, there is an exciting opportunity for the UK to thrive in the commercial space age. A sector deal for space aims to build on our global leadership in satellites and applications using space data to create a hub in the UK for new commercial space services. Following the sector's publication of its "Prosperity from Space" proposal in May, we intend to work with it to explore how a sector deal can drive forward the Government's industrial strategy. We are also developing world class facilities, including the National Space Propulsion Facility in Westcott and the National Satellite Test Facility in Harwell, as well as business incubators in more than 20 locations to support British start-ups hoping to grow into successful space companies.

The whole of the Government recognise the strategic importance of space and the immense economic opportunities it can bring. In a week where the focus of this House has been on the process of withdrawal from the EU, it is important to recognise that space is an area where we are leading new international partnerships. This is nowhere

better evidenced than our international partnerships programme delivering tele-education and tele-medicine, which provides the backbone of future economic growth. One programme alone reached 17,000 students in Kenya with a 95% improvement in learning outcomes.

The Government are determined that UK companies are at the forefront of this space revolution, and our economy and the people of this country all benefit. I commend the statement to the House.

2.34 pm

Chi Onwurah (Newcastle upon Tyne Central) (Lab): I thank the Minister for advance sight of the statement.

We welcome this investment in the UK space sector. The global space economy, currently valued at about £160 billion, is estimated to be worth £400 billion by 2030. The UK should be leading the way. But why has it taken the Minister so long to come to the House with an announcement that was briefed to the papers three days ago? I hope he does not see the sector as merely a means to positive headlines for a beleaguered Government.

I have characterised Government policy in this area as "lost in space". While this announcement is a step forward, it certainly does not mean it's coming home. The Minister is right to talk about the inspirational nature of space and its down to earth economic benefits. At this morning's Foundation for Science and Technology roundtable, which I attended, NASA's chief technologist was able to set out the spin-offs from its programme. I look forward to a UK Minister being able to do the same. However, while the Government's industrial strategy promised £1 billion in space technology investment over four years, this week's announcement amounts to much less than that. So I ask the Minister: when will the Government announce the release of further funds for space? Will that be impacted by the £5 billion cost of his Galileo replacement? When will the space sector deal be published?

The thriving industry that we all want to see requires a strong regulatory framework and engagement with industry, yet the Space Industry Act 2018, passed earlier this year, is but a skeleton. When will the secondary legislation be in place to provide the regulatory certainty the industry needs? In addition, drones can affect the launch of spacecraft, but they are not covered under the Act. When will the Government bring forward the promised legislation to deal with them?

As Lord Heseltine made clear in his response to the Government's industrial strategy, the European Space Agency is a great example of proactive industrial intervention by British Government at European level. This Government could learn a lot. Four fifths of Government investment in space is made through the agency, but the Government's chaotic Brexit is endangering public and private investment, with Airbus announcing in April that it would relocate work on a €200 million ESA contract from Portsmouth to the continent. What steps is the Minister taking to ensure the UK continues to play a leading role in the ESA post Brexit? How will we maintain space sector supply chains, and the exchange of space scientists and engineers on which they depend?

The proposed Sutherland spaceport will be the northernmost operational spaceport in the world. As a Newcastle MP, I am all for going north. However, spaceports are overwhelmingly sited near the equator

where the Earth's rotational speed is highest, allowing rockets to harness an additional natural boost. Does funding take into account the potential extra costs associated, and what factors were taken into consideration when choosing the location far from the equator, although close to Tory marginals?

As the Minister said, the entire country should benefit from the amazing opportunities posed by space. What steps are the Government taking to ensure the fair regional distribution of space sector supply chains, creating good jobs across the country and ensuring that those jobs should be open to all in a diverse and inclusive space sector?

Mr Gyimah: I thank the Opposition spokesperson for recognising and welcoming the good news this week.

The announcement was made at Farnborough, but my statement demonstrates that there is far more going on in the Government's space policy than that specific announcement: deeper collaboration with NASA in the US; collaboration with the European Space Agency; investment in our capacity at Harwell; and a space sector deal. So this statement goes far beyond what was announced at Farnborough earlier this week, and it is all good news that I think the House will welcome and, hopefully, celebrate.

On the European Space Agency and our role in Europe, the hon. Lady will know that the ESA is not an EU institution; it is independent of the EU and we are, and will continue to be, a leading member. We see the ESA as key to our strategy for international collaboration—and it is worth recognising that the fact it has “European” in its name does not make it an EU institution, as was suggested.

All the announcements made today are in addition to what we will do with regard to Galileo. We have made it clear in our EU negotiations that our first preference would be to continue to participate in all elements of the Galileo system; that would include the security and sensitive parts of the system, but it should also include UK industry's being able to participate in it. Were that not forthcoming, we have the option of building our own satellite system. The UK is a proud and independent country, and as a lot of the know-how and skills for the Galileo system is from UK-based companies, I am confident that we could build our own. To that end, the Prime Minister has set up a taskforce to look at the feasibility of doing so, and once that information is available it will be made public to the House and more widely.

On why the first space launch in the UK will be in Scotland and not near the equator, I can reassure Members that equator launches tend to be large satellites to geostationary orbit, but the growth we are talking about here is in small satellites and these tend to be polar. That is why we are ideally located as a country to take advantage of that emerging technology.

This is a huge opportunity for this country, and we are determined that all of the UK should benefit. Not only Scotland, but Cornwall and Snowdonia have the potential to benefit, and the announcements this week will allow market development in all of these areas. The private sector will of course ultimately carry this forward, and there is nothing to stop local authorities working with the private sector to capture the benefits of this huge development for our economy.

Crispin Blunt (Reigate) (Con): I congratulate my hon. Friend on this extremely welcome statement. As a fellow Surrey MP, he will be only too aware of the importance of the space industry to our county and of the astonishing success of the work in our county for the country. Will he confirm that if the EU remains determined on this astonishing act of self-harm as regards the development of the Galileo project, it will have to bear the long-term costs of the loss of all the British enterprise and expertise in this area, and that we will be free of the immensely bureaucratic allocation of jobs under this European programme, as is reflected in European defence and other space programmes as well? Once we are free to put our expertise within the international alliances where we can get the best possible return on our scientific expertise, so much the better, and in the long term it will be our 27 partners who bear the cost of this astonishing decision.

Mr Gyimah: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Were the UK not to continue to participate in the Galileo programme, not only would the programme be delayed but it would cost EU member states a lot more. Surrey Satellite Technology has been responsible for the cryptography and encryption of the Galileo system, and CGI UK, which has a presence in Surrey, has been responsible for building a number of the satellites. So the expertise and skills necessary to deliver the Galileo system reside in the UK, and were the EU to adopt what I consider to be an irrational position and not allow the UK to fully participate, we would not only take the action we need to take to protect critical national infrastructure, but we would also be at liberty to partner with other countries around the world, not only to develop our own global navigation and satellite system but to develop our space sector.¹

Carol Monaghan (Glasgow North West) (SNP): As I am a physics teacher, this news is extremely welcome to me. When the Scottish schools go back in approximately three weeks, no doubt the teachers will be telling the pupils all about the spaceport that will be in Scotland.

As a teacher I never imagined we would have such a facility in Scotland, but I never wrote it off as “science fiction” as a certain Tory MSP did last summer. I have had the privilege of visiting Kennedy space centre and the economic and educational opportunities are immense; I hope we will see similar at the A' Mhòine site.

But space also drives innovation that is critical for other sectors. At present Scotland is home to 18% of the UK's space sector jobs. It has a thriving satellite industry, Glasgow and Strathclyde universities are training the future space physicists and engineers, and the Scottish physics curriculum has been tailored towards space. So I say to the Minister that this is not about the ambition of a certain US President or commitment to the Union; it is about the fact that the A' Mhòine peninsula in Sutherland is perfectly placed both in terms of its geographical position for vertical launches, because very few places allow that to take place, and in terms of the educational and manufacturing environment I have described.

There are, however, other spaceports around the UK that could support horizontal launch. What specific steps is the Minister taking with these sites to ensure that the ambition is not isolated, and that many can benefit? What recent conversations has the Minister

1. [Official Report, 23 July 2018, Vol. 645, c. 6MC.]

[Carol Monaghan]

had with the ESA regarding the exclusion of UK companies from Galileo? They need the answers to that now. Finally, may I ask the Minister for an update on the liability cap? Unless that cap is in place, Clyde-built satellites will still be launched elsewhere.

Mr Gyimah: It is highly unusual to get welcoming remarks from the Scottish National party, and I am tempted to just bank them and sit down.

We are very aware that Prestwick is home to innovative launch companies like Orbital Access and is close to Glasgow's world-leading small satellite industry, and that Snowdonia is a leading site for remotely piloted vehicles and autonomous testing. We want all of the UK to benefit from this huge technological development. That is why we announced additional grants this week, so that they can bid for them to develop the market in their area and make a success of space.

Mark Pritchard (The Wrekin) (Con): On Galileo and a possible replacement satellite system, is it not in the EU's security interests as well as our own national security interests for the EU to continue to work together collaboratively with UK industry, and in particular the space sector?

Mr Gyimah: My hon. Friend puts his finger on why the situation with Galileo is so hugely frustrating. Only about two months ago we worked very closely with the French Government on military strikes in Syria, so the idea that the UK somehow cannot be trusted on sensitive security matters is totally for the birds. Our future participation, if we were to participate, is dependent on our ability to independently ensure the integrity of the system, so that we can rely on it for strategic defence and security uses. That is why the UK has put forward its red lines, but I agree that there is huge benefit in mutual co-operation and the Commission would do well to take the rational position that that is in our mutual security interests.

Liz Kendall (Leicester West) (Lab): Leicester is a world leader in space research and engineering, working with NASA and partners across the world. Our new space park will create 3,000 jobs—I hope the Minister will visit us one day. He says he is frustrated with the EU's reaction on Galileo, but I have heard nothing practical from him about what he will do to protect the Airbus jobs directly related to Galileo in Leicester and to ensure the free movement of EU scientists and researchers, who are so vital to this critical industry of the future.

Mr Gyimah: I am very aware of Leicester's leading position in space research and science research, and I am looking forward to visiting the university shortly to discuss some of these matters. In terms of what the Government are doing specifically with Galileo, I am in close contact with all the UK companies involved in the programme, and a taskforce is looking at the feasibility of building our own satellite system. That would obviously deliver contracts for UK-based companies. There is also the space sector deal that we are bringing forward shortly, alongside huge investment in research and development, all of which could benefit the UK companies that have huge expertise in this area. So I hope I can reassure the hon. Lady that we are not sitting down and taking this lightly.

Vicky Ford (Chelmsford) (Con): A lot of the UK has a hosepipe ban at the moment, but in Chelmsford, Teledyne e2v is inventing a gravity sensor that will go on a small satellite and be able to look at water reserves underneath the earth. This is the future. When will we be able to launch small satellites from the UK?

Mr Gyimah: I expect that to be possible from the early 2020s, given the huge and historic announcement today.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Order. I am not knowledgeable about these important matters, but if my memory serves me, the hon. Member for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross (Jamie Stone) is concerned principally with the vertical, rather than the horizontal.

Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): Indeed I am, Mr Speaker. I welcome the announcement that the spaceport will be in my constituency. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear!"] I am gratified that so many Members have come into the Chamber to hear me ask this question. [*Laughter.*] On behalf of my constituents, I thank the UK Government for making this decision. Jobs do not exactly grow on trees in my constituency, and this will be, to coin a phrase, a boost to the local economy. It means that quality jobs will take off.

I have three questions. First, will Orbex and Lockheed Martin be encouraged to start employing local people, and perhaps apprentices, as soon as possible? Secondly, there is great potential for putting satellites into orbit on behalf of other countries that do not have such facilities. The UK could make a lot of money out of that. Will the Minister assure me that Her Majesty's Government will flex every sinew to get this business? Finally, Viscount Thurso chairs VisitScotland, and there is enormous on-land tourism potential involved in this project. Will Her Majesty's Government please work closely with VisitScotland to ensure that visitors come to my constituency to see the first rocket taking off?

Mr Gyimah: I am very pleased that Sutherland is getting a big blast from this announcement. Apprentices are already employed by the companies involved in this, and we will do everything we can to work with the local authority to make this a commercial success.

Chris Skidmore (Kingswood) (Con): I welcome my hon. Friend's statement on this matter. As part of the new space sector deal, will he recognise the importance of research and development, particularly in materials technology? With that in mind, may I extend an invitation to him as Science Minister to come to the National Composites Centre and the Bristol and Bath Science Park to see the excellent work that is being done there in this regard?

Mr Gyimah: I would be delighted to accept that invitation. I agree with my hon. Friend that wider research and development is critical to success in space. That is why this Government have increased R&D spending more than any previous Government have done.

Stephen Morgan (Portsmouth South) (Lab): We have heard reports that the space industry has developed proposals for a sector deal, but may I press the Minister to confirm when that sector deal will be agreed and published?

Mr Gyimah: Very shortly.

Michelle Donelan (Chippenham) (Con): I welcome today's statement. This really is an exciting time for the UK's space sector. Will my hon. Friend tell me what else the Government are doing to benefit the space industry, as this will be of particular interest to my constituents who work at the Corsham Airbus site?

Mr Gyimah: There is a huge amount of investment. I have mentioned the space sector deal and other investment in R&D that companies across the country with the expertise to benefit our space sector could do well out of.

Alex Sobel (Leeds North West) (Lab/Co-op): More than 50% of UK satellite exports go into the European single market. How will the Taxation (Cross-border Trade) Bill and the Trade Bill, both of which we discussed this week, affect the free-flowing movement of components into and out of the single market?

Mr Gyimah: I have been speaking to lots of companies in the UK that deal in the satellite market. It is a global market, and there are huge global opportunities, including in the EU. The sector will continue to succeed, even when we leave the EU.

Tom Pursglove (Corby) (Con): What benefit does my hon. Friend believe this sector will bring to the UK economy in the decades ahead? Does he believe that there will be direct benefits for our existing industrial supply chains, such as the steel industry?

Mr Gyimah: The space sector, in addition to being part of our critical national infrastructure, underpins our value in the economy to the tune of £250 billion. This is not just about pushing the frontiers of human knowledge; it is also about creating jobs and helping to power our economy forward. That is why this investment announcement is so important.

Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP): I have a feeling that we are about to witness some rocket launches long before anything takes off from a site in Sutherland. Given the contribution that Glasgow makes to the space industry—more satellites are manufactured there than anywhere else in Europe, and pioneering research takes place in the space institute at the University of Glasgow in my constituency—what discussions will the Minister be having with university space institutes to ensure that they can access funding as a result of today's announcement and that they are fully involved as this project moves forward?

Mr Gyimah: I am planning a trip to Scotland before the end of this month, and I will be discussing exactly those sorts of things with the universities.

Personal Statement

2.56 pm

Boris Johnson (Uxbridge and South Ruislip) (Con): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for granting me this opportunity, first to pay tribute to the men and women of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, who have done an outstanding job over the last two years. I am very proud that we have rallied the world against Russia's barbaric use of chemical weapons, with an unprecedented 28 countries joining together to expel 153 spies in protest at what happened in Salisbury. We have rejuvenated the Commonwealth with a superb summit that saw Zimbabwe back on the path to membership and Angola now wanting to join. As I leave, we are leading global campaigns against the illegal wildlife trade in favour of 12 years of quality education for every girl, and we have the Union flag going up in nine new missions in the Pacific, the Caribbean and Africa, with more to come. We have overtaken France to boast the biggest diplomatic network of any European country.

None of this would have been possible without the support of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. Everyone who has worked with her will recognise her courage and resilience, and it was my privilege to collaborate with her in promoting global Britain, a vision for this country that she set out with great clarity at Lancaster House on 17 January last year: a country eager, as she said, not just to do a bold, ambitious and comprehensive free trade agreement with the EU, out of the customs union and out of the single market, but to do new free trade deals around the world. I thought that was the right vision then; I think so today.

But in the 18 months that have followed, it is as though a fog of self-doubt has descended. Even though our friends and partners liked the Lancaster House vision—it was what they were expecting from an ambitious partner, what they understood—and even though the commentators and the markets liked it—the pound soared, as my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will have observed—we never actually turned that vision into a negotiating position in Brussels. We never made it into a negotiating offer. Instead, we dithered. We burned through our negotiating capital. We agreed to hand over a £40 billion exit fee with no discussion of our future economic relationship, we accepted the jurisdiction of the European Court over key aspects of the withdrawal agreement and, worst of all, we allowed the question of the Northern Irish border, which had hitherto been assumed on all sides to be readily soluble, to become so politically charged as to dominate the debate—*[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. The statement by the right hon. Gentleman must be heard, and by long-standing convention, it is heard with courtesy and without heckling.

Boris Johnson: I am grateful, Mr Speaker.

No one on either side of this House or anywhere wants a hard border. We could not construct one if we tried. However, there certainly can be different rules north and south of the border to reflect the fact that there are two different jurisdictions. In fact, there already are. There can be checks away from the border and technical solutions, as the Prime Minister rightly described

[*Boris Johnson*]

at Mansion House, and, in fact, there already are. However, when I and other colleagues—I single out my right hon. Friend the Member for Haltemprice and Howden (Mr Davis)—proposed further technical solutions to make customs and regulatory checks remotely, those proposals were never even properly examined, as if such solutions had become intellectually undesirable in the context of the argument. After the December joint report, whose backstop arrangement we were all told was entirely provisional and never to be invoked, it somehow became taboo even to discuss technical fixes.

After 18 months of stealthy retreat, we have come from the bright certainties of Lancaster House to the Chequers agreement. We can compare them side by side. Lancaster House said that laws will once again be made in Westminster. Chequers says that there will be “ongoing harmonisation” with the common EU rulebook. Lancaster House said that it would be wrong to comply with EU rules and regulations

“without having a vote on what those rules and regulations are.”

Chequers now makes us rules takers. Lancaster House said that we do not want

“anything that leaves us half-in, half-out... We do not seek to hold on to bits of membership as we leave.”

Chequers says that we will remain in lockstep on goods and agri-foods and much more besides, with disputes ultimately adjudicated by the European Court of Justice.

Far from making laws in Westminster, there are large sectors in which Ministers will have no power to initiate, innovate or even deviate. After decades in which UK Ministers have gone to Brussels and expostulated against costly EU regulation, we are now claiming that we must accept every jot and tittle for our economic health—with no say of our own and no way of protecting our businesses and entrepreneurs from rules that may be not in their interests. My right hon. Friend Chancellor was asked to identify the biggest single opportunity from Brexit. After some thought, he said “regulatory innovation.” Well, there may be some regulatory innovation post Brexit but, alas, it will not be coming from the UK, and certainly not in those areas. We are volunteering for economic vassalage, not just in goods and agri-foods, but we will be forced to match EU arrangements on the environment, social affairs and much else besides. Of course, we all want high standards, but I say to my hon. Friends that it is hard to see how the Conservative Government of the 1980s could have done their vital supply-side reforms with those freedoms taken away.

The result of accepting the EU’s rulebook, and of our proposal for a fantastical Heath Robinson customs arrangement, is that we have much less scope to do free

trade deals, which the Chequers paper actually acknowledges and which we should all acknowledge. If we pretend otherwise, we continue to make the fatal mistake of underestimating the intelligence of the public, saying one thing to the EU about what we are really doing and saying another thing to the electorate. Given that in important ways this is BINO or Brino or “Brexit in name only”, I am of course unable to support it, as I said in the Cabinet session at Chequers, and I am happy to be able to speak out against it now.

It is not too late to save Brexit. We have time in the negotiations. We have changed tack once, and we can change again. The problem is not that we failed to make the case for a free trade agreement of the kind spelt out at Lancaster House—we have not even tried. We must try now, because we will not get another chance to get this right. It is absolute nonsense to imagine, as I fear some of my colleagues do, that we can somehow afford to make a botched treaty now, and then break and reset the bone later on. We have seen even in these talks how the supposedly provisional becomes eternal.

We have the time, I believe the PM has the support of Parliament—remember the enthusiasm for Lancaster House and for Mansion House—and it was clear last night that there is no majority for going back to the customs union. With good will and common sense, we can address concerns about the Northern Irish border and all other borders. We have fully two and a half years to make the technical preparations, along with the preparations for a World Trade Organisation outcome, which we should now accelerate. We should not and need not be stampeded by anyone, but let us explicitly aim once again for the glorious vision of Lancaster House: a strong, independent, self-governing Britain that is genuinely open to the world, not the miserable permanent limbo of Chequers and not the democratic disaster of “ongoing harmonisation” with no way out and no say for the UK.

We need to take one decision now before all others, and that is to believe in this country and in what it can do, because the UK’s admirers—there are millions if not billions of them across the world—are fully expecting us to do what we said, to take back control, to be able to set new standards for technologies in which we excel, to behave not as rules takers but as great independent actors on the world stage, and to do proper free trade deals for the benefit and prosperity of the British people. That was the vision of Brexit that we fought for, that was the vision that the Prime Minister rightly described last year and that is the prize that is still attainable. There is time, and if the Prime Minister can fix that vision before us once again, I believe that she can deliver a great Brexit for Britain with a positive, self-confident approach that will unite this party, unite this House and unite the country as well.

Points of Order

3.8 pm

Tom Brake (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I am seeking your advice and help in getting a clear understanding of the circumstances in which a Member can seek parliamentary time to make a statement and the circumstances in which that would be granted. You will agree that it is rare for a Member to make a personal statement explaining their resignation, just as it is rare for a Member securing the services of a photographer to record for posterity the signing of their resignation letter at a remarkably empty desk. Would it have been in order, for instance, for a Member or Minister to have sought to make a personal statement to apologise for endangering a British citizen detained abroad, to apologise for repeating financial claims about NHS funding that had been comprehensively demolished by an independent, respected, authoritative body, or to explain what involvement they had in a campaign that has been heavily fined for breaking electoral rules—

Mr Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman will resume his seat. I indulged him and allowed him to develop his thinking.

Andrew Bridgen (North West Leicestershire) (Con): Too much.

Mr Speaker: Well, maybe I erred on the side of generosity. I will treat of the point in more detail, because it is of importance to the House, but let me say two things to the right hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Tom Brake).

The right hon. Gentleman, the former Foreign Secretary, was absolutely in order to request that he be allowed to make a personal statement, and utterly in order also in its delivery. Secondly—forgive me, colleagues, but it is important for the authority of the House that this point be made—I, too, was absolutely right to allow him to make that personal statement, and it would have been quite wrong for me to seek to stand in his way.

Good order has applied but, in so far as the right hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington is interested not in point scoring, as I am sure he is not, but in asking a genuine question of the Chair, let me say to him on the point of procedure that it is the long-standing practice of the House that Members may make a personal statement with the leave of the Speaker. It is not especially common in recent times for such requests to be made, but when they are made, it is right that they should be acceded to by the Chair.

Moreover, I note that the former Foreign Secretary, former Leader of the House and former Deputy Prime Minister, the late Sir Geoffrey Howe, resigned on 1 November 1990—I remember it well—and delivered a personal statement on 13 November 1990, so nothing disorderly, nothing irregular and, in procedural terms, nothing objectionable has occurred. I thank the right hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington, and it was perfectly legitimate for him to raise the point of order, but I think it right that I leave it there.

Mark Pritchard (The Wrekin) (Con): Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: I will be generous to the hon. Gentleman, because to stray would be to misbehave, and I do not think he would misbehave. I cannot believe he would.

Mark Pritchard: Mr Speaker, you are always generous. You will know there are very clear rules in this House on the issue of sub judice. I seek your guidance on whether that applies to British citizens abroad who are currently going through what I think is a bogus judicial system in Iran. I mention that because the right hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Tom Brake) suggested the former Foreign Secretary had endangered the life of a British citizen, and you will know that the family of that person are rightly very worried about her fate. It is not the right hon. Gentleman's place to make party political capital when somebody is facing a bogus judicial system in Iran.

Mr Speaker: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his point of order, and I respect the sincerity with which he speaks and the extensive interest he takes in international affairs. What I would say to him, in all seriousness, is that the responsibility of the Chair for oversight of the sub judice rule applies in the context of cases in the British courts. I am satisfied that nothing disorderly or threatening to a British judicial process has transpired.

In so far as the hon. Gentleman wanted to make a wider point, I think he knows that he has succeeded in doing so.

Fiona Onasanya (Peterborough) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: I think it is on an unrelated matter, and I will take a point of order on an unrelated matter.

Fiona Onasanya: Mr Speaker, I would be grateful for your guidance. I have written to the Prime Minister regarding a constituent of mine who fell afoul of the undercover policing inquiry. I wrote to her on 20 March setting out that, on 12 March 2016, when she was Home Secretary, she established an inquiry into undercover policing. I have not had the courtesy of a reply, and I do not know whether there is anything you can do or any way you can direct me on how to get a response to my letter.

Mr Speaker: Historically, it has often been effective for Members who have not received a reply, either to a written question or to a letter, to complain about that fact on the Floor of the House. On many such occasions, a reply has then winged its way to the complaining hon. Member with remarkable rapidity.

That was the experience of the late Member of Parliament for Manchester, Gorton. Sir Gerald Kaufman was much given to raising on a point of order the fact that he had not received a reply to a question or a letter, and he would sometimes table a written question asking a Minister when they intended to get round to responding to his question. I was advised by Sir Gerald that that practice was, more often than not, successful. There is a notable lineage here, and the hon. Lady is following in the footsteps of one of her illustrious parliamentary predecessors. If she is still unsuccessful, I have a feeling, knowing her—she is not shy—that she will beat a path to my door to seek counsel on how further to proceed.

BILL PRESENTED**COUNSELLORS AND PSYCHOTHERAPISTS (REGULATION)
AND CONVERSION THERAPY BILL***Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)*

Geraint Davies, supported by Mr Nigel Evans, Caroline Lucas, Norman Lamb, Mr Ben Bradshaw, Catherine West, Ged Killen, Jo Stevens, Tonia Antoniazzi, Dr Paul Williams, Daniel Zeichner and Thelma Walker, presented a Bill to provide that the Health and Care Professions Council be the regulatory body for counsellors and psychotherapists; to prohibit conversion therapy; to make related provision for the protection of children and adults; and for connected purposes.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 26 October, and to be printed (Bill 252).

**Access to Welfare
(Terminal Illness Definition)***Motion for leave to bring in a Bill (Standing Order No. 23)*

3.16 pm

Mrs Madeleine Moon (Bridgend) (Lab): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to amend the definition of terminal illness in the Welfare Reform Act 2012; and for connected purposes.

I declare an interest as the chair of the all-party parliamentary group on motor neurone disease. My husband, my brother-in-law and my mother-in-law all died from motor neurone disease.

Today I am placing an emphasis on motor neurone disease, but there are other conditions that equally apply, and those conditions will be explored on Second Reading. The current definition of “terminally ill” is:

“the person suffers from a progressive disease and the person’s death in consequence of that disease can reasonably be expected within 6 months”.

A prognosis of six months or less to live is needed for a clinician to issue a DS1500, which allows claimants to apply for benefits under the special rules for terminal illness. The special rules enable access to disability benefits quickly by fast-tracking applications to the highest level of benefits payments, which is an issue of paramount importance for people with limited time to live. Some 3,618,000 people claim the personal independence payment, with only 3%, or 109,000, claiming under the special rules process.

My Bill recognises that the six-month eligibility criteria to access the DS1500 are far too restrictive. Department for Work and Pensions figures show that, as of April 2018, there were 1,565 PIP claims from people with motor neurone disease, and only 650, or around 42% of them, had claimed via the special rules.

As parliamentarians, we have all met terminally ill people who have failed to access benefits via the standard process: people under immense emotional and physical stress; people coming to terms with their terminal illness diagnosis; people having to navigate their way through the burdensome and time-consuming benefits process, facing distress, anxiety and fear, which will increase with the roll-out of universal credit. A person who does not qualify under the six-month special rules faces the prospect of having to attend an interview with a work coach to discuss their aspirations for work, and having to sign up to a claimant commitment, which is highly inappropriate for an individual who will never return to work.

Our current assessment process is capability driven: “Can you walk? Make a cup of tea? Put your socks on?” This results in high scores for those with physically identifiable limitations such as a spinal injury, but it does not recognise an unpredictable, progressive, degenerative condition for which no treatment is available to mitigate the progression of the disease. The change I propose will, only for the terminally ill, provide access to benefits driven by a clinical diagnosis.

The current six-month definition of terminal illness is problematic for unpredictable conditions such as MND. A third of people with MND die within a year of diagnosis and half will die within two years. Identifying

those who are likely to die quickly and those who will live longer is very difficult—indeed, it is impossible. Allowing medical professionals to determine whether an illness is terminal would give terminally ill people the chance to access the benefits they need quickly and with dignity.

Earlier this year, the all-party group took evidence from James Douglas, who was diagnosed with MND just before his 30th birthday. He had recently moved into a new home with his partner and very young son, but he was then told he would not see his 32nd birthday. James was struggling at work and was forced to reduce his hours, and the financial implications for his family were crushing. He went through the arduous process of claiming PIP and was awarded zero points in every category of his claim—weeks later he was given a DS1500 by his consultant.

Martin Burnell also has MND. He described to MPs how he received zero points in his universal credit assessment and was told to seek work, despite struggling to walk, breathe and talk. A DS1500 came from his consultant, despite his GP telling him it could be accessed only by people with cancer—that is an all too common belief. The Department for Work and Pensions recently wrote to Martin asking whether he wanted to retrain and learn a new skill.

Those are not isolated cases, and far too many people with terminal conditions have had to endure an incredibly stressful time accessing benefits. People with terminal conditions should not suffer the anxiety of completing lengthy details about capability or attend face-to-face assessments when a clinical judgment can show they are terminally ill. The current definition of “terminal illness” has created variation in how it is interpreted and discrepancies in doctors’ willingness to submit a DS1500 for people with terminal conditions. Some interpret the definition broadly, whereas others feel that the current criteria restrict their ability to support special rules applications. The change proposed is modest, but it has the potential to help many. It is shocking that terminally ill people and their doctors have at times been challenged by assessors on whether a claimant has six months to live or not. Astonishingly, 13 out of 21 health care professionals who gave evidence to the all-party group said that assessors had contacted them to question the validity of the DS1500.

This Bill seeks to reflect the changes to the definition of “terminal illness” recently announced in Scotland; there has been agreement on removing the time limit of having a life expectancy of six months or less in order for someone to be considered “terminal”. Instead, the clinical judgment of a registered medical practitioner will determine whether a person is terminally ill. When there are no effective disease-mitigating treatments, and disease is progressing rapidly, death becomes inevitable. Doctors know they cannot certify with accuracy “death within six months”, and such a time statement is cruel to the patient and their family, who are struggling to come to terms with the illness and with dying.

By allowing a clinical judgment to determine whether an individual has a terminal illness, we will create a much fairer and more compassionate system. To support clinicians when determining a terminal diagnosis, the proposals in Scotland allow the chief medical officer, in consultation with registered medical practitioners, to set definitions in regulations. They define when an

individual has a diagnosed condition that has no further treatment available and will lead to death. Both the chief medical officer and the chief nursing officer in Scotland have reviewed and fully support the amendment in Scotland as the best way to achieve timely support for those with a terminal illness.

This Bill will create parity with Scotland, generate consistency across the UK and reflect society’s recognition that our benefits system should support, not challenge or interrogate, the terminally ill. The Bill will reflect the recommendations of the independent review of PIP in Northern Ireland, which supported the changes to how terminal illness should be defined. There is support for this from the medical community; 30 leading neurologists have called on the Government to emulate the changes in Scotland. Dr Nik Sharma, a consultant neurologist at the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery, told the all-party group that despite his years as a specialist treating people with MND, he cannot predict its progression or the life expectancy of people with the disease. Other specialists have told me that it is difficult to predict when someone has six months left to live with cancer, and it is close to impossible with unpredictable conditions such as heart disease and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

We have consulted widely. I have worked closely with the Motor Neurone Disease Association, Marie Curie and the Royal College of General Practitioners. I have sought the views of the chief medical officer and the chief nursing officer for England. Palliative care specialists have agreed to liaise in helping to produce guidance on a definition ahead of Second Reading. In Scotland, these changes received cross-party support, and we have that same support here.

Before coming into this House, I spent many years helping terminally ill people claim benefits. I cared for my husband Steve, and can attest to the mental and emotional chaos of dealing with a terminal illness. The unknown time you have must not be spent worrying about accessing benefits or keeping a roof over your head; it must be spent in love, laughter, and taking the painful journey together with dignity and compassion. It is time for this Government and this Parliament to support and ease this journey.

Question put and agreed to.

Ordered,

That Mrs Madeleine Moon, Dr Sarah Wollaston, Frank Field, Norman Lamb, Dr Philippa Whitford, Ian Paisley, Mark Tami, Peter Aldous, Stephen Twigg, Chris Evans, Hywel Williams and Lady Hermon present the Bill.

Mrs Madeleine Moon accordingly presented the Bill.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 23 November, and to be printed (Bill 253).

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Lindsay Hoyle): I now have to announce the results of today’s seven deferred Divisions. The first six relate to draft European Union (Definition of Treaties) orders. In respect of the first Question relating to Armenia, the Ayes were 535 and the Noes were 3, so the Ayes have it. In respect of the second Question, relating to Central America, the Ayes were 534 and the Noes were 3, so the Ayes have it. In respect of the third Question relating to Cuba, the Ayes were 534 and the Noes were 3, so the Ayes have it. In respect

[Mr Deputy Speaker]

of the fourth Question relating to Canada, the Ayes were 534 and the Noes were 3, so the Ayes have it. In respect of the fifth Question relating to Australia, the Ayes were 534 and the Noes were 3, so the Ayes have it. In respect of the sixth Question relating to New Zealand, the Ayes were 536 and the Noes were 3, so the Ayes have it. Finally, in respect of the Question relating to Immigration (Provision of Physical Data) the Ayes were 311 and the Noes were 262, so the Ayes have it.

[The Division lists are published at the end of today's debates.]

DOMESTIC GAS AND ELECTRICITY (TARIFF CAP) BILL (PROGRAMME) (NO.3)

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 83A(7))

That the following provisions shall apply to the Domestic Gas and Electricity (Tariff Cap) Bill for the purpose of supplementing the Orders of 6 March 2018 (Domestic Gas and Electricity (Tariff Cap) Bill: Programme) and 30 April 2018 (Domestic Gas and Electricity (Tariff Cap) Bill: Programme (No. 2)):

Consideration of Lords Amendment

1. Proceedings on consideration of Lords Amendment shall (so far as not previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion one hour after their commencement at today's sitting.

Subsequent stages

2. Any further Message from the Lords may be considered forthwith without any Question being put.

3. The proceedings on any further Message from the Lords shall (so far as not previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion one hour after their commencement.—(Claire Perry.)

Question agreed to.

Domestic Gas and Electricity (Tariff Cap) Bill

Consideration of Lords amendment.

After Clause 8

ONGOING RELATIVE TARIFF DIFFERENTIAL

3.30 pm

The Minister for Energy and Clean Growth (Claire Perry): I beg to move, That this House disagrees with Lords amendment 1.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Lindsay Hoyle): With this it will be convenient to take Government amendment (a) in lieu of Lords amendment 1.

Claire Perry: As Members will know, the Bill has received very broad and strong cross-party support during its passage through this House. I thank all of those who have spoken, who have worked behind the scenes, who have lobbied and who have voted for a very important piece of legislation. I repeat my thanks to the hon. Member for Leeds West (Rachel Reeves), who is not in her place, for her excellent stewardship of the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee, which contains Members from all parties, and for her continued support on the Bill. The Committee did some excellent work during the Bill's pre-legislative scrutiny.

I also extend my thanks to the hon. Member for Southampton, Test (Dr Whitehead) and the Labour Front-Bench team for their extremely constructive approach to this Bill and for helping us to develop an amendment that we will come on to debate in a moment.

First, we must consider the amendment that was made in the other place about what will be done to protect consumers when the price cap comes to an end. That is an extremely important question. As the Government have made clear, the price cap is a temporary intervention to protect consumers on standard variable and default tariffs while other reforms continue apace to bring about the conditions for effective competition in the retail market. I understand the concerns, which have been raised by Members from all parts of the House and by Members in the other place, that there is a risk that some features of the market may remain that will need to be addressed. For instance, as the energy market is reformed, it is absolutely vital that the protection of vulnerable customers in this market is kept under review, and action taken if necessary to afford those customers the protections they need.

There are also concerns about the possible return of practices such as tease and squeeze, which is essentially enticing people onto cheap fixed tariff deals only to move them on to higher tariff deals when the fixed period ends. I agree wholeheartedly that we must seek to end those practices. However, introducing a requirement such as the Lords amendment seeks to do, which essentially commits us to an indefinite price cap, is not the appropriate solution. Instead, the Government propose amendment (a) in lieu of the Lords amendment, which will ensure that Ofgem must conduct a review before the end of the price-cap period into the pricing practices of suppliers and, in particular, identify whether there are categories

of customers who are currently paying, or who may in future be at risk of paying, excessive charges for standard variable and default tariffs.

In reviewing the practices of suppliers and identifying whether consumers are paying excessive charges, the regulator must consider whether there are consumers who will be excessively negatively affected when they move from fixed rates to standard variable tariffs—the tease and squeeze problem—and also whether vulnerable customers continue to require protection. If it is the regulator’s view that protections are indeed required, the amendment says that necessary steps must be taken to provide those protections, using a broad set of existing powers under the Gas Act 1986 and the Electricity Act 1989.

It is the Government’s view that amendment (a) therefore futureproofs something that we all care so strongly about in this place—the protection of consumers from excessive charges, particularly on SVT and default rate tariffs—and rightly provides in the Bill the necessary impetus and discretion to the regulator to consider the most appropriate response to those excessive tariffs under its existing powers.

Stephen Kerr (Stirling) (Con): Let me speak in relation to the amendment in lieu, which says:

“customers who appear to the Authority”—

that is Ofgem—

“to be vulnerable by reason of their financial or other circumstances are in need of protection.”

How will the data be made available for anyone to be able to make that assessment, because, currently, there is a restriction in the availability of that data to pinpoint the help that is necessary?

Claire Perry: I pay tribute to my hon. Friend’s work as a member of the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee and his doughty championing of consumers. He will be aware that the Government have taken through another piece of legislation, which was required to ensure that the regulator can work with Government datasets in order accurately to pinpoint vulnerable customers. I am sure that the whole House will be pleased to know that if that legislation has not yet received Royal Assent, it will do imminently. I look to my officials to ensure that that is the case.

Mr Jim Cunningham (Coventry South) (Lab): Perhaps I misunderstood the Minister, but will Ofgem carry out a review constantly, or will it be a one-off review with a time limit?

Claire Perry: I can reassure the hon. Gentleman that the original provisions in the Bill give Ofgem very broad powers, from the date on which the Bill receives Royal Assent, to implement the cap and then to review it as often as Ofgem feels is necessary. When the cap is operating, it can be reviewed many times. We have instructed Ofgem to conduct a review when the cap ends to ensure that the groups of customers identified can be helped. My understanding is that there is nothing in Ofgem’s existing powers that will prohibit it from doing the same thing in future. The regulator was in the past given extremely broad powers under the gas and electricity Acts, and it would be within its discretion to carry out

such reviews. However, across all parties we felt it was important to put on the face of this Bill, which is the first piece of legislation to introduce these sorts of tariff caps and to empower further the regulator to use its powers, the requirement to carry out the initial review.

Ian Murray (Edinburgh South) (Lab): On the same theme, what powers does the regulator currently have to ensure that energy companies are not artificially inflating prices ahead of the Bill coming into force?

Claire Perry: The hon. Gentleman refers to the regrettable series of price increases that we have seen from all the major, big six energy companies. Prices will of course go up because, as the hon. Gentleman will know, the wholesale price of gas in particular doubled—I believe; I will make sure the record is correct—in the last six months. The regulator can always define price rises as excessive, but the point of this very welcome cap is that those who are particularly vulnerable and who are on standard variable and default tariffs—often people who are elderly, perhaps less well-educated and furthest from the digital market, in which we all compete to switch—will be protected without having to switch. Indeed, the work that Ofgem is currently undertaking to ensure that the cap is set at a fair level will be vital to making sure that those protections come forward.

Amendment (a) will ensure that the legacy of the Bill, of which we should be extremely proud, is not undone by a return to business as usual by those suppliers that have thought up or carry out additional practices, such as tease and squeeze. I thank Members of this House, including Members from the Opposition Front-Bench team, for helping to create the amendment, which we believe is the most appropriate response to the concerns raised by members in this House and in the other place. I am delighted to see my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (John Penrose) nodding during my speech. Along with the right hon. Member for Don Valley (Caroline Flint) and others, he has been vital in driving this issue up to the top of the Government’s agenda and making sure that we get the Bill and this amendment right. I offer huge thanks to my hon. Friend and the others who have been involved.

James Heappey (Wells) (Con): Will the Minister confirm that while the Bill has had to take this unexpected second lap of this place, Ofgem has been hard at work on its preparations for enacting what is likely to be in the Bill when it is passed? Will she join me in advising any energy companies that are considering legal action over the summer that it would be rather inappropriate for them to get in the way of legislation passed in this place quite legitimately?

Claire Perry: I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention, because it enables me to say four things. First, I am grateful to the noble Members of the other House, because legislation is always better when it is scrutinised carefully. I think amendment 1 is helpful, so I am not unhappy to have the chance to talk about it.

Secondly, the new chair of Ofgem, Martin Cave, who will shortly take up his post, is a brilliant campaigner in support of the idea that customers should benefit from this regulated energy market. Indeed, I think he proposed the original idea of a tariff price cap. His appointment

[*Claire Perry*]

and the Bill will both help to strengthen Ofgem's powers. Members will know that he wrote to the Chairman of the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee—I think it was only last week—setting out Ofgem's determination to use its powers as widely as possible.

Thirdly, I reassure my hon. Friend that I have come to the House from a meeting with Ofgem, at which we discussed its progress on the price cap. That is well under way, and Ofgem has an extremely good team working on it. Ofgem has already published various technical papers setting out the methodology behind the cap calculation, and it intends to publish in full the details of that in very short order. That will give everybody a chance to scrutinise the cap and make sure that there is nothing untoward.

Fourthly, I wrote to the chairmen of the big six—I think they are all men—last week setting out that the Government would take an extremely dim view of companies that sought to frustrate the introduction of the cap, for which we have all worked so hard, by some sort of legal challenge; and that instead they should work with Government in this exciting time in the energy markets and look to their own activities to see how they can drive down costs, and drive up efficiency and customer service.

Rebecca Pow (Taunton Deane) (Con): On that note, does the Minister believe that the Bill will narrow down competition, and thereby affect prices, or increase it? Competition is generally viewed as good for a market, because one tends to get lower prices as companies try to attract customers.

Claire Perry: I strongly believe in competitive, well-regulated free markets. Indeed, in this market there are now more than 60 energy suppliers, all bidding for our business. I have recently switched again to a company that appears to be offering a very good green tariff. However, the problem, and the reason for the Bill, is that there is a very large group of customers who are sticky—who stay on expensive standard variable and default tariffs because they do not know how to switch, or they are not aware that they can. We can all think of grandparents, parents and others who fall into that category—it also includes young people who are renting accommodation—and they tend to be the furthest from the white heat of the switching market.

Understanding what the Bill does to the economic conditions in the market is, of course, an important part of Ofgem's role. To go back to the original CMA report, however, we also know that the current pricing practices result in £1.3 billion of what it described as “excessive” returns, and we expect that number to come down. If you will indulge me, Madam Deputy Speaker, I wanted to make sure that the House was aware of that.

It is important that we have a level playing field for companies in the market. I have received representations stating that the customer accounts threshold for offering warm home discounts and ECO should be dropped to ensure that more companies can offer them to customers. We introduced legislation recently to reduce that threshold from 200,000 to 150,000, in increments of 50,000. Customers in receipt of warm home discounts will have a lower chance of losing them if they switch.¹

1. [Official Report, 4 September 2018, Vol. 646, c. 2MC]

I hope the House agrees that amendment (a) is the most appropriate response to the concerns that have been raised, and that it will be welcomed by Members in this place and the other place. I hope that we will be able to move swiftly on this issue and keep our remarkable outbreak of cross-party consensus going, because I think the Bill is an absolutely vital piece of legislation.

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con): Can the Minister give us some indication of the kind of saving we that we could expect from the managed market, as a result of the amendment, compared with where we are at the moment?

Claire Perry: I do not know whether my right hon. Friend is referring to the per-household saving. We have been quite careful not to talk about that, because although we can understand that a total maximum excessive disbenefit of £1.3 billion is created by current pricing practices, how much of that is saved and passed on to consumers will depend on all sorts of things, including changes in the wholesale market and the efficiency of companies. I can reassure him, though, that the absolute price cap that was brought in to protect customers on pre-payment meters and those classified as vulnerable has led to savings of about £60 per household since it was introduced. Of course, prices go up, but customers are still better off than they would have been. Our expectation is that both overall and per household, consumers will see bills lower than they would otherwise have been.

3.45 pm

James Heapey: Will the Minister reassure the House that she does not see this price cap as “job done” in terms of reducing people's bills, and that she and her team in BEIS will continue to drive forward innovation in the energy markets so that new tariffs can come forward, and continue to focus on energy efficiency measures so that we can drive down people's bills in those ways as well?

Claire Perry: My hon. Friend uses his great experience in this area to point to this being two halves of an equation in making sure, first, that energy is going into a property at the lowest possible price, and secondly, that consumption is as low as can be.

With ECO now at over £600 million, we are targeting that entirely at fuel poverty. The consultation has closed and we have the responses to come out. There is the whole challenge of getting energy efficiency levels up so that, overall, households are more energy-efficient. I am looking at the hon. Member for Neath (Christina Rees) on the Opposition Front Bench. I very much enjoyed a visit to her constituency to see an energy-positive home. That is an incredible innovation funded by her local excellent councillors, looking at how to design homes that return energy to the grid and are cool and lovely to live in. That is the kind of technology and innovation that we want to see.

I hope that we can all agree on this amendment, send it up to be agreed in the other place, and get on and pass the Bill before this place rises, because the regulator has told us that it will need up to five months to calculate the mechanism. It is absolutely vital, as my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (James Heapey) said, that that

mechanism is absolutely watertight so that energy companies do not seek to frustrate further the introduction of this measure. We want it in place by the end of this year so that people can start saving on their energy bills this winter.

Dr Alan Whitehead (Southampton, Test) (Lab): Labour Members are delighted that the Bill to institute an absolute price cap on energy costs is about to pass into law, mechanisms notwithstanding, this afternoon. We are delighted because of the parentage of the Bill, which emanates from the Labour Benches. If hon. Members are worried about the authenticity of the parentage, I can produce a birth certificate: the motion that was debated in this Chamber on a Wednesday afternoon, at exactly this time, on 6 November 2013. It said:

“That this House calls on the Government to freeze electricity and gas prices for 20 months whilst legislation is introduced to ring-fence the generation businesses of the vertically integrated energy companies from their supply businesses, to require all electricity generators and suppliers to trade their power via an open exchange, to establish a tough new regulator with the power to force energy suppliers to pass on price cuts when wholesale costs fall, and to put all over-75-year-olds on the cheapest tariff.” That motion was in the name of my right hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley (Caroline Flint). When it was debated that afternoon, it did not, I have to say, receive a terribly positive response from the Government of the day.

James Heappey: How times have changed.

Dr Whitehead: Indeed.

Five and a half years later, we are almost there. I hope that the procedures on the market issues that we have discussed during the Bill’s progress ensure that while there is a price cap those issues are addressed so that we can, as the mechanism in the Bill suggests, come out of the price cap with market conditions resolved in a much better way for customers. Indeed, just as was suggested in that motion, the Bill provides for a procedure to declare the market in place, at which time the cap is ended. That could be about 20 months or perhaps three years, but nevertheless there is a mechanism for that.

What happens at the end of cap conditions is important, and that is what the amendments that have come from the other place at the end of the Bill process deal with, rather than the principle of the absolute cap—the central principle of the Bill—which, I am delighted to say, was received in the other place as warmly as in this House. On termination of the cap, the Lords amendment would put in place a relative tariff differential that would limit the price range between the highest and lowest tariff a company can charge—the so-called “tease and squeeze” problem that the Minister mentioned. That would be not within the absolute cap but part of the return to market conditions that would nevertheless shape how the market subsequently works for the benefit of customers.

I am delighted that the Government have responded positively in the shape of their amendment in lieu, which I am pleased to say the Opposition not only were given sight of but had the opportunity to work on in detail, to ensure that between us we had a resolution to the outstanding issue from the other place. We can endorse the amendment and recommend that their lordships consider it a worthy response to the message we received.

The amendment is slightly different, using an Ofgem mechanism to bring about a solution to tariff ratios, but from the amendment’s drafting I am confident that Ofgem would receive the message in no uncertain terms of how it should use its powers, should the report it is required to write before termination of the cap comes about demonstrate a continuing problem in tariff differentials.

The Bill has always had more than a tinge of Labour parentage to it and now its offspring has further elements of Labour input, which I, for one, very much welcome. It is now a Bill that all sides can agree does the right thing on energy prices and how the market works. That signal of unity from all sections of the House sends an important message to all those affected by the legislation—that this is a serious piece of work, which will work, and that we are all determined to make it happen. If the Bill can pass back to the other place for its final procedures on that basis, that will strengthen considerably the efforts that we are embarking on to ensure that prices are maintained in the interests of customers over the next period through the freeze mechanism.

I thank the Minister very much for the constructive and open way in which she has conducted discussions on the Bill hitherto, and I at least note in distinguished messages the input of the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (John Penrose), and of course my right hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley, who I mentioned at the beginning of my comments, whose role in the Bill’s parentage should be not underestimated at all; indeed, it should be written up in dispatches.

John Penrose (Weston-super-Mare) (Con): We are nearly there. With fingers firmly crossed, it looks as though this is the last, or last but one, trot around the track for the Bill before it goes off for Royal Assent. I echo the thanks that have come from all sides for the combined and cross-party efforts to get us here. The fact that everyone is rushing to claim a degree of authorship shows the truth of the old saying that success has many parents, whereas failure is an orphan. Thankfully, this is not a failure.

I was extremely concerned by the Lords amendment as it came to us before the amendment in lieu was tabled. That was not because I disagreed with the principle of a relative cap—in fact, I spoke strongly in favour of relative caps at earlier stages—but because, in trying to install a relative cap, their lordships had made it an open-ended intervention in this market. For people like me—perhaps more on the Conservative side of the House—who are avowed free marketeers, a temporary intervention is very important. An open-ended commitment would create a great deal of unease among many of us, on the grounds that the opportunity for regulatory meddling would be extremely strong, and that the temptation would prove too hard to resist over time.

I am therefore delighted to see the proposed amendment in lieu. Not only does it not add any fresh powers—it asks Ofgem to use its existing powers, giving it a firm and direct mandate from this House that those powers should be used—but it refocuses the Bill. I for one—I do not think I am alone in this—had become a little bit concerned that the Bill had gone a little off track or off topic in its passage through Parliament.

The Bill was proposed in the first place in response to an underlying mischief or immorality—that of “tease and squeeze” behaviour. People could start off on a

[John Penrose]

razor-keen introductory tariff and then, without taking any firm decisions, they might find that when the tariff came to an end after one or two years, they had in a surreptitious way become liable for a sky-high default tariff. That would happen without their saying yes to anything, because of the tease and squeeze tactics, particularly of the big six. The central behaviour, which is deeply embedded in this market, of taking advantage of people's loyalty and inertia—their stickiness, as my right hon. Friend the Minister said—was griping everybody and making them feel that customers were being taken advantage of. That was why the Bill was first conceived, and why it rightly garnered so much support throughout the House.

The amendment in lieu brings us back to that central point. It reminds us why we are here and, most importantly, it means that Ofgem will no longer have an excuse to look the other way. We all want this temporary price cap, when it comes to an end, not to be needed any more because the market—the big six in particular, but also the market as a whole—will have learned the error of its ways and will stop behaving in the way that has griped everybody, so that there is no need for further interventions. However, I do not think I am alone in being a little bit cynical and saying that that might not happen, even with all the other interventions and reforms that Ofgem is rightly introducing to try to sharpen competition, improve consumer choice, and both improve the behaviour of suppliers and help us as customers to use our freedoms more actively.

It is just possible that, even after all the changes introduced by Ofgem during the period of the cap, the market is not yet properly reformed. We are all here because Ofgem has in the past refused to use the powers it has. I have had conversations with senior people in Ofgem, as I am sure have many others in the Chamber, asking, “Why don't you get on with it? Why don't you use these powers? You're being weak-willed, and you are pathetically—like wet lettuces—not doing what you are there for. What's the point of having an economic regulator if you aren't going to stick up for people who are vulnerable and people who are being taken advantage of?” We all got fed up with arguing that it should do so, and it would not do so, and that was why the Bill came into being. The amendment in lieu should solve that because, for future reference, it should ensure that Ofgem has a backbone statutorily inserted into it.

We all hope that those powers are not needed, and that the reforms designed to sharpen competition mean that they will never be needed, but the amendment in lieu means that they can be used in the future. With any luck, as with a good nuclear deterrent, no one will ever have to press the button, but my goodness me, they will know that they are there. That is the crucial point. With that, I welcome the amendment in lieu. I hope that the message goes out loud and clear to Ofgem that we will not put up with its being weak-willed in the future. It is up to Ofgem to ensure that this market functions properly, not just during the temporary period of the cap, but on an ongoing basis in the future. With any luck, after that none of us will ever have to worry about the energy market's mispricing again.

4 pm

Alan Brown (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (John Penrose), and I pay tribute to his work, as well as that of the right hon. Member for Don Valley (Caroline Flint) and my hon. Friend the Member for North Ayrshire and Arran (Patricia Gibson). The hon. Gentleman lost me a wee bit at the end when he compared the amendment in lieu to the nuclear deterrent. Apart from that, I concurred with his comments.

I will be brief, because there seems to be consensus across the House, and will simply outline my thoughts on the Lords amendment and the Government amendment. When Labour originally tabled the Lords amendment, I chose to abstain because, as I said at the time, I remained unconvinced by the arguments. Labour was against a relative cap, so it seemed anomalous to me to introduce a relative measure on a permanent basis. The risks and arguments are the same about the relative aspect—it really does risk increasing the price of standard variable tariffs and there is a further risk that if that came into operation in the absence of an absolute cap, we might see prices creep up again, which would be counter-productive.

The Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee was against the absolute cap when it did its pre-legislative scrutiny. Consumer organisations were against it and even the Competition and Markets Authority has outlined where relative aspects have not worked in other sectors, so why would they work in this situation? That was certainly the concern. There seems to be cross-party agreement that an absolute cap is a temporary measure, so this would effectively be a temporary Bill. Why introduce a permanent measure into the Bill?

One good thing about the Lords getting the amendment through is that it has clearly allowed the Government to rethink and it is clear that the Government have worked with the Opposition to strengthen the Bill. They have agreed to introduce these measures, which basically instruct Ofgem to review the operation of the absolute cap and how it affects customers, including the most vulnerable, and to ensure that the companies take action to protect those customers. I welcome the Government's amendment and, given the cross-party consensus, it is time to get on with it and get the Bill finished, and for the Government to concentrate on getting cheaper energy through renewables and by scrapping nuclear.

Stephen Kerr: I join others in paying tribute to the work done by my right hon. Friend the Minister in leading the Bill through the House. I also pay tribute to the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Southampton, Test (Dr Whitehead), and to my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (John Penrose). There has also been mention of the right hon. Member for Don Valley (Caroline Flint). I agree with much—indeed everything—of what I have heard, including from the Scottish National party spokesman, which is always noteworthy, as I think he would agree.

I want to take this opportunity to comment on the nature of the marketplace because, as my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare rightly mentioned, this is a marketplace where consumers are punished, or at least treated as suckers, by the companies they are loyal to, and that surely cannot be allowed. I am therefore

proud to stand in support of this Bill, and to see it progress quickly from this place to the other place and, very quickly after that, into law. A lot of significant issues have been discussed as the Bill has made progress through pre-scrutiny, Committee and back to the Floor of the House.

I genuinely cannot understand the justification for the Lords amendment. I agree with the hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Alan Brown). The idea that we could legislate in a temporary Bill for an energy market in 2023 seems to me to be quite absurd. Sitting here today, we have no idea what the energy market will even look like in 2023-24. Perhaps the noble Lords have a crystal ball that allows them foresight that we do not enjoy in this House, but somehow I doubt that they do. With the rate of change in the market being what it is, we can comfortably expect that, when we get to the sunset year, 2023-24, the landscape will be much changed from what it is today.

While we have debated many issues on the Bill, I would disappoint the Minister if I did not mention smart meters, as a sideline. I know that the Bill is a temporary measure to fix the energy market, which is badly broken, but it also gives consumers control. It should also give them the right to see how their energy usage is affected by their choice of appliance and how they use their appliances. One way we will do that is through the roll-out of smart meters. I support that but continue to have what I hope are felt to be genuine concerns about the nature of the roll-out and how it is being conducted.

The SMETS1 meters are a poor substitute for the real thing. We have not heard recently how many SMETS2 meters are installed and connected to the Data Communications Company but, bearing in mind the £11 billion cost and that this is a vital part of our national infrastructure for the energy networks of the future, I feel that it is appropriate to mention in passing that we need a stronger handle on where the SMETS2 programme is, its cost and all the issues surrounding it.

James Heappey: I very much agree with my hon. Friend. Rushing into the deployment of SMETS2 meters before the technology has been properly proven and the Data Communications Company is fully up and running might lead to a collapse in consumer confidence in smart meters generally, which would have an adverse effect on the smart programme.

Stephen Kerr: I agree, and that is why it is important to discuss the real-time issues surrounding the SMETS2 meter and the future smart meter network, which is so important to the future of our energy market.

In conclusion, at the heart of this issue is the need for lower energy prices, and helping consumers to understand how much energy they are using and how they can save money by changing supplier. I look forward to the day when through an app, or rather, with one click, it will be possible for consumers to make smart choices painlessly. If we do this right—and I think we are—this tariff cap measure can fall away in 2023 without causing any problem, and more consumers will be engaged and able to make the right decisions for their households. We will also be able to see the energy companies properly competing and creating the competitive market that the Bill seeks to create.

James Heappey: What a joy it is to be in this Chamber when consensus abounds, after a couple of days of tearing strips off one other. It is really rather nice to be in here, all agreeing. That has rather characterised the progress of the Bill throughout its time in this place and in the Bill Committee, on which I had the privilege to serve. I think it is right that we seek to remove the amendment that the Lords have sent back, but I am glad that a compromise has been agreed between the two Front-Bench teams and I think that the amendment in lieu that we have proposed is very sensible.

Since the Bill has been delayed by this extra lap in Parliament, I think it is worth while to rehearse the arguments once again. The price cap is only a part of the challenge, so I want to add a few other things to the exhortation from my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Stephen Kerr) about smart meters. The Government must push on with those very urgently, because the savings from them will be far greater than the savings that we will achieve for our constituents from this Bill.

First, on decentralised generation, putting storage in behind the meter and aggregated demand-side response, I know that the Minister is looking at what comes after feed-in tariffs when they start to run out next year. I hope that she can see merit in finding a mechanism to replace them that really unlocks the market for people who want to install generation in their homes or businesses, storage, demand response and the capacity that comes from electric vehicles.

Secondly, I hope that we can send a strong signal to industry and the regulator over the delivery of heat as a service. Heat as a service is a huge opportunity for energy efficiency to become the responsibility of the supplier, not out of obligation, but because it sees an opportunity to make bigger margins by providing energy more cheaply and efficiently. If we can make that happen, we will secure huge savings for consumers. Thirdly, as we replace the green deal, let us allow storage to be a part of this so that again people can find savings. Fourthly, on replacing the ECO, the consultation has been completed and responses have been had, and I know that plenty of tech companies have made representations for smart thermostats and other clean tech to be included within the ECO catalogue. Let us make that the case.

We have put in an awful lot of time, in this place, the other place and in Committee, to deliver a saving to our constituents of around £100. That is not to be sniffed at, but we can prove to an awful lot of people that an enduring price cap is not the answer by getting all sorts of other things right at the same time. Energy efficiency, storage, the flexibility of demand response and decentralised generation have the potential to slash bills to a fraction of what they currently are. Let us not let this price cap distract us from the real prize, which is huge savings for our constituents from clean tech.

Rebecca Pow: I welcome the Bill, as it places consumers at its heart. That is really what we are talking about. In particular, I welcome the amendment in lieu, which is a tweak but a valuable tweak that makes the Bill really work. I also reiterate what my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (James Heappey) said. How wonderful it is to have unity in the Chamber after these last few days. It is welcome and a lovely feeling.

Alex Chalk (Cheltenham) (Con): It's quite unsettling.

Rebecca Pow: Quite unsettling, yes.

I believe that pressing for an absolute cap over a relative one is the right way to go. As the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Select Committee stated, a relative cap could force cheaper energy tariffs to disappear, harming consumers, not protecting them. That would run counter to the sentiment of the Bill. As we have heard, Ofgem will be given the task of making the cap work effectively with its formula and will be responsible for setting the cap and reviewing it every six months. As outlined by my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (John Penrose), it is beholden on Ofgem to get this right and hold people to account, otherwise it will not have been worth while. It is vital that energy companies do not take advantage of any price cap and lift their tariffs to the maximum allowed. As I mentioned earlier, the energy sector needs more price competition to encourage lower prices, and an absolute cap can help to achieve this.

I am delighted that the Government will require the Gas and Electricity Markets Authority to protect consumers beyond the end of the energy price cap. Energy companies must not slip back into their old habits as soon as the cap is lifted, putting ordinary people back in the position they were in before the cap and leaving them paying over the odds. The Bill will ensure better value for money for many people who, frankly, have been taken for a ride and been paying over the odds for the self same energy that the person down the road has been getting cheaper.

As the Minister stated, it cannot be fair that between 2012 and 2015 customers paid £1.4 billion more than they ought to have done. In 2016, this escalated to an incredible £2 billion. As I have said before, many of these people fall into the “vulnerable” category. Many are elderly. My constituency and wider Somerset have a great many elderly people. The number of over-75s is set to double in the next 10 years and they could be the

people who would have been adversely affected. The Bill will help them. They are the people who do not switch very often, as are younger people and tenants. My children, in their 20s, have raised this with me. The Bill will help them. It is right that the cap system should be temporary. It is an artificial lever to control the market for a short while and is being applied in the interests of consumers. This is the right way to go, as it will still enable competitiveness in the market, which is essential. We want the market to work better for everybody.

As other Members have said, it is essential for us to engage all the different methods in the energy market, such as smart meters—we must get them right—and technology, including data-driven technology. What has not been mentioned before, however, is the need to encourage people to use less energy. There are now many devices on the market that we can put in our homes to ensure that we do not waste so much of it, and I shall be presenting a ten-minute rule Bill on that subject fairly soon. We also need even more investment in renewables. If we are to hit our clean growth strategy targets, we must do all those things, and I am delighted to say that the Government are indeed doing them. We are going in absolutely the right direction.

4.15 pm

As I have said, I fully support the Government amendment, which will make the Bill really work for those for whom it was designed: the consumers. It is a valuable addition to the Bill, and I congratulate all those who have brought it this far and will make it into law.

Mr Speaker: Marvellous. The hon. Lady has completed her oration? Yes. [*Interruption.*] Well, it was an oration. That is a good thing.

Lords amendment 1 disagreed to.

Amendment (a) in lieu of Lords amendment 1 agreed to.

Future Relationship Between the UK and the EU

4.16 pm

The Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Dominic Raab): I beg to move,

That this House has considered the future relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union.

Let me begin by paying tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Boris Johnson). I could not make it into the Chamber, but I listened to his personal statement from my office. I pay tribute to the huge service that he did for our country during his tenure as Foreign Secretary, and also to the passion and optimism with which he spoke in relation to Brexit.

Last week the Government published their White Paper “The future relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union”. It is a principled and pragmatic plan for the relationship that we wish to build for the future.

Ian Murray (Edinburgh South) (Lab): I congratulate the Secretary of State on his promotion to his new role. He mentioned the personal statement made by the former Foreign Secretary in the House today. I wonder if he could tell us which parts of it he disagreed with.

Dominic Raab: I was paying tribute, and paying my respects, to the service that my right hon. Friend had done for this country as Foreign Secretary, and admiring the optimism and the passion with which he had spoken, particularly in relation to Brexit. It is not for me to pick at the detail of his statement. I think that all Members, whatever their views on Brexit, recognise the convictions held by other Members on both sides, and in all parties, in relation to this important matter.

As I was saying, the White Paper is a principled and pragmatic plan for the relationship that we wish to build for the future. It delivers on our dual strategic aim of taking back control over our laws, our money and our borders, while preserving and building on the historic ties with our EU friends—such as trade and security—that we all rightly prize.

The White Paper proposes a free trade area for goods to maintain frictionless trade, supported by a common rulebook and a new facilitated customs arrangement, but only for the rules that are necessary to provide frictionless trade at the border. That will help to secure the complex supply chains and just-in-time manufacturing processes that we have developed with the EU over 40 years. It will give businesses certainty and clarity, and will help us to preserve the jobs that thrive on the basis of frictionless trade across the border. Under those arrangements, businesses from Stockholm to Sunderland and from Cardiff to Krakow will be able to rely on smooth procedures to avoid any potential disruption of their livelihoods.

A key component of the free trade area will be our proposal for a facilitated customs arrangement, a business-friendly model that removes the need for new routine customs checks and controls between the UK and the EU while enabling the UK to control its own tariffs to boost trade with the rest of the world. The UK would

apply the EU’s tariffs to goods intended for the EU, and its own tariffs and policy to goods intended for consumption in the UK.

Mike Gapes (Ilford South) (Lab/Co-op): I have not yet had a chance to welcome the Secretary of State to his interesting post. What assessment has he made of the EU-Japan trade agreement that has just been announced? Will he take this opportunity to welcome it as a potential boost to trade for our country, and confirm that the Government are not planning to take us out of that arrangement?

Dominic Raab: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his kind words. That is a draft agreement, which has not yet entered into force. We will of course be champions of global free trade with precisely those emerging markets of the future, from Asia to Latin America, which is where the jobs and opportunities will come from. Like him, I want to see more of that. In fact, one of the advantages of leaving the EU is that we will be able to have an even more energetic and liberal approach to free trade.

Sir Edward Leigh (Gainsborough) (Con): My right hon. Friend was talking about the facilitated customs arrangement. Before Monday, it was already going to be difficult enough to persuade the EU that it was in its interests for us to collect tariffs on its behalf, but after Monday’s vote the arrangements must be reciprocal. Is there the remotest chance of us persuading the EU to collect tariffs on our behalf on some distant border? It just will not happen. It’s dead in the water, isn’t it?

Dominic Raab: My hon. Friend mentions the earlier approach. Under the earlier proposals for a new customs partnership, businesses would only receive tariff rebates after tracking goods through the entire supply chain to the point of final consumption in the UK. In contrast, the FCA—I hope this addresses his point—will be an upfront system. That means that most businesses, the overwhelming majority, would pay the right tariff to begin with. Other businesses could claim a tariff repayment as soon as possible in the supply chain. We will agree with the EU the circumstances in which repayments can be granted. As the White Paper makes clear, we will negotiate a reciprocal tariff revenue formula, taking into account goods destined for the UK entering via the EU and goods destined for the EU entering via the UK.

Mr Jim Cunningham (Coventry South) (Lab): What discussions has the Secretary of State had with companies in this country, such as Jaguar Land Rover, regarding their concerns about Brexit? What reassurances has he given them, or is it too early to ask him that question because he is fairly new in the job? I congratulate him on his appointment.

Dominic Raab: The hon. Gentleman is being far too kind, but I appreciate it. I have already met business leaders, from the Federation of Small Businesses to the CBI. The devil will of course be in the detail as we negotiate, but we have received a positive and constructive response. I will be meeting more business leaders on Friday, so perhaps next week I can fill him in further. I think it is widely understood that we have a principled but pragmatic and flexible approach that will preserve

[Dominic Raab]

frictionless trade. The key advantage of the model we have is that it protects the UK-EU supply and value chains, and the businesses he refers to that rely on them. As well as supporting business, the approach would meet our shared commitments to Northern Ireland and Ireland in a way that respects the autonomy of the EU without harming the UK's constitutional and economic integrity.

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that a very large number of components and materials come into this country from non-EU sources every day and fuel just-in-time systems alongside things from within the EU, proving that there is not a border issue about running just-in-time without being within the EU ring fence?

Dominic Raab: I understand the point my right hon. Friend makes. What we are trying to do, and what I think this model does achieve, is to make sure that any potential disruption to businesses through the supply chains is minimised to the lowest degree. That is the aim, but I do understand the point he makes.

Owen Smith (Pontypridd) (Lab): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Dominic Raab: I will make a little progress, but I promise the hon. Gentleman I will come back to him.

Alongside the close arrangements for goods, we will negotiate a wide-ranging but different approach on services, including the digital sector, which is one of the fastest growing sectors for the UK. That will protect businesses from unjustified barriers or discrimination. It will cover mutual recognition of professional qualifications and it will also preserve our regulatory freedom.

On financial services, we will seek a new partnership in that area, reflecting the mutual interests of the UK and the EU. This approach to services is based partly on the absence of any of the risks of border disruption that might affect trade and goods, coupled with the distinct advantage of regaining domestic regulatory control and the ability to forge new trade deals with fewer fetters so that we are well placed to grasp the opportunities of the future.

Owen Smith: I welcome the right hon. Gentleman to his new position. I hear what he says about the Government's desire to retain as frictionless trade as possible, but does he share my concern that the chief executive of Airbus has said only today that he is so concerned about the prospect of friction that Airbus is having to stockpile components in this country lest the Government make a further mess of Brexit and we end up unable to have frictionless, just-in-time trade?

Dominic Raab: I think that, in the hon. Gentleman's own elegant way, that was a backhanded welcome for these proposals to minimise any risks in that regard, and what we should now all do in all parts of this Chamber is not call for second referendums or returning to the customs union, but get behind the Government's plan and show a united front so we get the very best deal for everyone in this country.

Owen Smith: Will you tell the former Foreign Secretary that?

Dominic Raab: I shall indeed, but I appreciate the support.

This is the ambitious and balanced approach reflected in the White Paper. As well as sensibly managing the risks of disruption to trade with our EU friends, it frees the UK to trade with greater vim and vigour with the rest of the world, and particularly to capture the growth markets and opportunities of the future. It will allow us to seize the opportunities for more liberal and energetic free trade arrangements with the export markets of the future from Mexico to Japan, which is important for creating the jobs of the future, and for cutting the costs of goods in this country to ease the cost of living for lower and middle-income families.

As we leave the EU, free movement will end. Our immigration policy will be set not in Brussels but by hon. Members elected by the people of this country in this House. We will design a new immigration system that works in the national interest: a system that enables us to control the numbers of people coming to live in this country and that places stronger security checks at the border. We will end free movement, but that does not mean pulling up a drawbridge or turning away the talent we need, and indeed want, for the UK to be an outward-looking nation attractive to investment and open to business.

In line with the arrangements we will negotiate with our close trading partners around the world, the White Paper makes it clear that we want to support businesses being able to transfer to their UK offices those from the EU with the bespoke expertise or experience required to deliver services here. We also want people to be able to travel without a visa between the UK and the EU for temporary business activity. We want families and youngsters to travel for holidays and tourism, and students to study at university across the continent. We can agree these common-sense reciprocal arrangements while regaining control of our immigration policy. That is the balanced approach that will best serve the UK.

Robert Neill (Bromley and Chislehurst) (Con): I welcome my right hon. Friend to his post. Will he bear it in mind that there must be linkage between the very welcome liberal approach to visa regimes that he mentions and, in relation to professional services, mutual recognition of qualifications so that lawyers and other professional advisers can operate on the current fly-in, fly-out policy that is critical to the City of London and other financial sectors?

Dominic Raab: My hon. Friend makes the right point, and he will see extensive text in the White Paper covering precisely that point.

Our vision for a security partnership covers those vital areas and interests that we share in common. Our proposals will maintain operational capabilities that are necessary to protect our citizens, and enable rapid and secure data exchange, practical cross-border operational co-operation, and continued participation in key agencies including Eurojust and Europol, which already have partnerships with many non-EU countries. We will also pursue arrangements for co-ordination in other areas where we have mutual interests: foreign policy, defence, development issues, joint capability development and wider co-operation.

On the return of democratic control over powers and authority to the UK, the White Paper proposals end the jurisdiction of the European Court in the UK. Laws will be decided by elected Members in this House, and UK courts will no longer refer cases to the Luxembourg Court. In a limited number of areas we will choose to adopt common rules to ensure the free flow of goods, but that body of law is relatively stable and where there are any changes Parliament—this House—must approve them. When the UK and the EU need a clear and consistent interpretation of such rules, as between the UK and the EU, we can choose to make a reference to Luxembourg Court for such an interpretation, but the UK will have to agree to that first, and reference for legal interpretation is very different from giving the European Court the authority to apply the law to the facts or to decide which party to any litigation is successful in its claims. When the UK Supreme Court is no longer subordinate to the European Court, it will finally do what it says on the tin.

This is a principled and practical approach. We have shown flexibility as we strive for a good deal for both the United Kingdom and the European Union and as we demonstrate our ambition for a close partnership through the White Paper.

Karin Smyth (Bristol South) (Lab): I am grateful to the Secretary of State for giving way, and I welcome him to his new position. He might be coming on to talk about Northern Ireland, but just in case he has no more to say than his brief comment, may I ask him a question? His predecessor admitted that he had not actually visited the border area, apart from on one brief occasion recently, for more than 20 years, since when times have changed massively. Will the Secretary of State give an indication today of whether he has any more plans, besides his rather vague infrastructure promises, for dealing with the question of the border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland?

Dominic Raab: I understand precisely the hon. Lady's concern. This is an important and sensitive issue, and I will be engaging on the EU track in relation to it. I will also, at the right time, make sure that I am properly versed and properly briefed on the matter, and indeed that I visit the border area to take a look for myself.

It is worth emphasising two key principles that we share with our EU friends. The first is that article 50 dictates that a withdrawal agreement must come alongside a framework for the future agreement. The second, flowing from that, is that nothing is agreed until everything is agreed. The Government respect and prize both those principles, and we will not sign away our negotiating leverage or spend taxpayers' money in return for nothing. In December, we agreed that the financial settlement would sit alongside a framework for a deep and mutually beneficial future partnership. We agreed that we would meet our commitments as they fell due, with ever-declining payments over a finite period that will add up to a tiny fraction of what our net contribution would have been as a member. If either side should fail to meet their commitments under this overarching package—we certainly do not expect that to be the case—that would have consequences for the deal as a whole that we are striving to secure.

Stephen Kinnoch (Aberavon) (Lab): I thank the Secretary of State for giving way and I should also like to take this opportunity to congratulate him on his appointment.

On Tuesday, I hosted an event here in Parliament where the BeLeave whistleblower, Shahmir Sanni, told us that every member of the Vote Leave campaign committee knew precisely about the £680,000 that was donated by Vote Leave to BeLeave. The Secretary of State was of course an active member of the campaign committee for Vote Leave, and presumably therefore knew about that £680,000 donation. Given the importance of his role now in the negotiations with Mr Barnier, will he take this opportunity to set out in precise detail what he knew about that donation to BeLeave? This could be an opportunity to enhance and reinforce his authority and credibility in the negotiations.

Dominic Raab: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's efforts to try to strengthen my leverage in the negotiations to get Brexit delivered, and I take him at his word. I had nothing to do with any of the financial arrangements; I was on the campaign board. Those details are subject to investigation by the appropriate authorities, and I would just gently say to him that trying in this rather backhanded way to undermine the credibility and the verdict of the British people will only rebound on him—

Stephen Kinnoch: It is the verdict of the Electoral Commission.

Dominic Raab: But the verdict of the British people is the one that we in this House must give effect to.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Dominic Raab: I will not give way.

Tomorrow I will be in Brussels to meet my counterpart, Michel Barnier, to discuss the details of the White Paper and to take stock of the negotiations. The UK will extend the arm of friendship in a spirit of optimism and good will, backed by an ambitious and innovative plan that respects the position, interests and concerns of the EU. I certainly hope that that ambition and good will will be reciprocated.

Sir Hugo Swire (East Devon) (Con): I also welcome my right hon. Friend to his place. When he meets Mr Barnier for the first time tomorrow, will he ask him, as evidence of that good will as the pace of the negotiations starts to increase, whether he will look again at the exclusion of Britain from some parts of the Galileo project and also address why the Department for International Development is being excluded from some projects that it co-funds with the EU?

Dominic Raab: I will certainly consider all those areas not only in detail, but in terms of the strategic overview and the state of play of the negotiations as a whole. As I said, I hope that the ambition and good will reflected in the White Paper will be reciprocated.

Equally, it is the duty of any responsible Government to prepare for every eventuality, including the unlikely scenario that we reach March 2019 without agreeing a deal. It is essential that plans are in place to mitigate risks and ensure stability whatever the outcome of the negotiations. The Government have been working on nearly 300 no-deal plans for almost two years, and some of them are already in the public domain. Last month, we passed the Nuclear Safeguards Act 2018, which provides the legal basis for developing our own regulatory system in that vital area. We have also been taking other

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practical action to ensure that the infrastructure is in place. For example, we have recruited 300 extra border staff, and a further drive to create another 1,000 was launched earlier this year.

Many of our no deal preparations have so far been developed internally and through targeted engagement with relevant parties. However, more of the preparations will now become public, and I can tell the House that the Government will release a series of technical notices over August and September to set out what UK businesses and citizens will need to do in the event of a no-deal scenario, thereby making the public more aware of our preparations. That due diligence is designed to provide reassurance. In reality, such planning cannot properly be done without some public-facing engagement.

Thangam Debonnaire (Bristol West) (Lab): I add my congratulations to those of other hon. Members on the right hon. Gentleman's appointment. He mentioned advance preparations, but I find it incredibly curious that it took two years before we even started them. He says that no responsible Government would wait to make backstop arrangements, but what happened before the referendum? What has happened over the past two years? Why have we waited until there are just weeks to go before making backstop arrangements?

Dominic Raab: I listen carefully to the points that the hon. Lady and all hon. Members make, regardless of their views on Brexit, but I just said that the Government have been working on 300 no-deal plans for almost two years. Planning has not just started. However, we are going to start increasing the pace of the preparations—

Wera Hobhouse (Bath) (LD): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr Steve Baker (Wycombe) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Dominic Raab: May I make some progress? As a result of the further measures that we will be taking, more of the preparations will become public facing. It is important that we talk about that in order to reassure the public that it is the responsible thing to do.

Mr Baker: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on taking up his new post. As he knows, I am well familiar with the work that has been done. He may have heard my question at PMQs earlier, but may I put to him what I put to the Prime Minister? When technical notices or any communications related to no deal are released, will he please ensure that they are shaped to ensure that they support the credibility and feasibility of our plans, not only to give comfort and reassurance to business, but to strengthen our negotiating position?

Dominic Raab: This is an opportune moment to pay tribute to my hon. Friend for all his work in the Department, particularly on no-deal planning. He makes an excellent point that will be at the forefront of my mind as we continue to step up our preparations.

Owen Smith: Will the Secretary of State give way before he moves on?

Dominic Raab: I will not. Other people want to speak and I have already given way to the right hon. Gentleman.

We will strive in the spirit of optimism to strike the very best deal with our European friends but, whatever the outcome of our negotiations, we stand ready to make a success of Brexit.

4.39 pm

Keir Starmer (Holborn and St Pancras) (Lab): She may have left the Chamber, but I begin by paying tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend (Mrs Moon) for her moving speech in support of her Access to Welfare (Terminal Illness Definition) Bill. I also listened to some of the debate on the Domestic Gas and Electricity (Tariff Cap) Bill, on which unity broke out—in fact, there was a celebration of unity. I am not sure we can maintain that unity in this debate, but we can remain civil in our disagreements. In order to do that, apart from one reference, I had best avoid mentioning the right hon. Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Boris Johnson).

The Prime Minister insists that her Brexit plan will deliver a “smooth and orderly” exit from the EU. Anyone looking in over these past few weeks will be bound to conclude that nothing could be further from the truth. The Chequers agreement took two years to reach and two days to unravel and, even in the past hour and a half, the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union has said that we should get behind it. The right hon. Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip called it the

“miserable permanent limbo of Chequers”

to great cheering from that part of the Chamber.

A White Paper that should have been published before article 50 was invoked arrived late for the statement last week and, after this week's votes, lies in tatters. There have been daily resignations and knife-edge votes, and we see a Government clinging on literally vote by vote by using, as I understand from last night, threats of no-confidence votes and of a general election to achieve a result and, it seems, by breaking pairing arrangements with an MP on maternity leave. I listened carefully to what the Prime Minister said about that earlier, but I ask the Secretary of State to explain how the Tory party chairman, the right hon. Member for Great Yarmouth (Brandon Lewis), accidentally voted on two crucial votes and yet managed, presumably deliberately, to abstain on the others as agreed.

Now the Secretary of State is trying to sell a White Paper that he had not seen until last week and in which, in many respects, it is hard to believe he really believes. It is already dead in the water. That is before he has even had the chance to meet Michel Barnier.

Although some Brexiteers predicted that the negotiations with the EU would be the easiest in history—that was the Secretary of State for International Trade—and that new trade agreements would be signed by March 2019 with countries totalling 10 times the geographical size of the EU, which was the corker from the former Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, most of us recognised that, in honesty, the Brexit process would be very complicated and very difficult. I have always accepted that negotiating Brexit would be a challenge for any Government.

What we have seen in the past few weeks is not just a weak Government struggling with the inevitable complexities of Brexit; this is simply the latest battle of a political party at war with itself. A war once contained in the Conservative party now threatens to engulf the country. For 30 years or more the Conservative party has been engaged in a civil war over Europe, and the national interest has been the collateral.

The European question has brought down the Conservative party's last three Prime Ministers, and it could well bring down this one. Margaret Thatcher was completely at odds with her Cabinet on the exchange rate mechanism, and it eventually led to her downfall. John Major grappled with his Maastricht rebels, and we know how he referred to them. Indeed, that accidental recording of John Major's comments has resonance today:

"The real problem is one of a tiny majority...a party that is still harking back to a golden age that never was, and is now invented." Then we had David Cameron, the man who told his party to stop "banging on about Europe" before calling a referendum, losing it and then riding off into the sunset.

While the Tory party fights with itself over Europe, as we have seen in the past couple of days, inequality continues to grow, the housing crisis spirals out of control, our NHS and public services groan under the cuts to their budgets, and any principle to guide our foreign policy has fallen by the wayside.

Nick Boles (Grantham and Stamford) (Con): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Keir Starmer: I will in just a moment.

Frankly, most people are sick and tired of this Tory war. Whether they voted to leave or remain, most people look on aghast at the mess the Government are making of Brexit; we have all had those comments made to us in the past few days.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Keir Starmer: I will give way in a moment. People are aghast at the threat that that approach poses to jobs, the economy, peace in Northern Ireland and our place in the world. So I have a simple message to the Prime Minister and to the Government: this has got to stop. The Tory party has no right to risk the wellbeing of our country in this way or to plunge our politics, our Parliament and the wider country into the kind of chaos we have seen in recent weeks.

Simon Hoare (North Dorset) (Con): I am listening with great attention to what the right hon. and learned Gentleman has to say. I take the point that we are talking about the future of our nation. Is it not time, therefore, to build on this issue, as this House sculpts how this country looks as and when we leave the EU, and time for us to pull together, at the pragmatic centre ground of this House, to shape and sculpt the sort of Brexit that we want to see—one that works for our country and our economy, both now and in the future? We should not play party politics, but instead work together with common sense and pragmatism.

Keir Starmer: I am grateful for that intervention. Anybody who has looked in on the past two days and seen the infighting on the Conservative Benches would

question whether that process cannot start with the Tory party. I have laid out the history because this is a deep divide, which has been at the heart of the Conservative party for decades. It has been waiting to break out since the referendum result. It has been contained time and again, but now it has broken out. Now it more than risks the Conservative party; it risks the future of our country, and that is why it has got to stop.

Nick Boles: The right hon. and learned Gentleman is a distinguished lawyer, so he would never say anything without appropriate evidence. He should therefore withdraw his comment that inequality is rising, because he will know as well as everyone else that the Office for National Statistics and the Institute for Fiscal Studies have confirmed that inequality has not risen at any point in the past 10 years.

Keir Starmer: I simply disagree, on so many fronts, but that is a whole discussion in its own right. I invite the hon. Gentleman to walk around my constituency on any day of his choosing to see the obvious inequality there.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Keir Starmer: I will make some progress and then I will give way again.

The flaws in this White Paper and the mess the Government find themselves in do not just stem from the history of Conservative party splits over Europe—there are mistakes of this Government, too. After the referendum, we needed decisive leadership to bring a divided country together—to honour the result, but also to speak for those who voted remain. We needed a vision where everybody could see their future, and we needed to ensure that the social and economic causes of the referendum were addressed. Instead the Prime Minister set out, in October 2016, impossible and extreme red lines: no customs union; no single market; having nothing to do with a European Court; having no common EU agencies. She also had no plan to avoid a hard border in Northern Ireland. In addition, she pushed away Parliament. There was a moment when she could have sought its backing, but she pushed it away and avoided scrutiny. None of the speeches she has ever made on Brexit—the "House speeches"—have been put to a vote in this Parliament to see whether they would be approved. She has rejected sensible amendments and proposals from across the House to make Brexit work. What is the result? It has taken two years to produce this White Paper and it has lasted less than a week.

Mark Pritchard (The Wrekin) (Con): The right hon. and learned Gentleman is a fair-minded individual and he is doing a great job of bringing the Government to account over the Chequers plan, but of course he and his party agree with parts of that plan. Would he like to say what parts he agrees with, rather than just those he disagrees with?

Keir Starmer: I am grateful for that intervention. I will come to that, because I am coming to the detail now and I will go through it.

I turn to the facilitated customs union arrangement, because it demonstrates how unworkable the White Paper is. It is based on the idea that traders can reliably

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distinguish at the border between goods intended for the UK and goods intended for the EU. Paragraph 16a of the White Paper says that

“where a good reaches the UK border, and the destination can be robustly demonstrated by a trusted trader, it will pay the UK tariff if it is destined for the UK and the EU tariff if it is destined for the EU.”

The idea is that, at the border, someone can safely distinguish between goods that are going on to the EU and those that are not and then apply different tariffs and regimes to them. Whatever “robustly demonstrated” means is not set out, but it is a complicated two-tier system, which is why business has been so concerned about it. It involves the idea that we will account to the EU for the tariffs that are collected. If the destination of goods is not known, the higher tariff is paid at the border and recouped at some later stage. That is a hugely complicated two-tier system, with a third system overlaid for goods the destiny of which is not known.

I have heard it said that, happily, for 96% of goods, the destiny will be known on the border. The reference for that is footnote 6 on page 17 of the White Paper. I do not know whether the Secretary of State has chased that footnote, but I have. I challenge him to explain on some occasion—now, if he can—how that 96% figure is arrived at, because it is not at all clear from that footnote. However, the important point is this: whether it is 96%, or some lesser percentage, there will need to be checks to ensure the integrity of the system and to avoid abuse.

The solution that the Government have put forward is the tracking mechanism that was floated last summer. It is an interesting idea; it is a shame that it does not yet exist. It is no good Ministers on the Front Bench shaking their heads. If the position is that there will be no checking at all after the event to see whether the right tariff was indeed paid, to avoid abuse or to protect the integrity of the scheme, I will let the Secretary of State intervene on me to say that the proposal is that, as goods pass the border, that is it—no check. If that is not the case, he must accept that, as with any system, whatever the percentage rightly designated or not at the border, there will have to be tracking systems to check that the correct tariff was paid; otherwise, it is very obviously open to gross abuse.

Vicky Ford (Chelmsford) (Con): This time last week I met Members of the European Parliament, including one from the Socialist group who explained to me that a senior member of the Labour party had addressed their group and, in the words of that parliamentarian, effectively they had been discouraged from giving the UK too good a deal because it would encourage other countries to Brexit themselves. Can the right hon. and learned Gentleman confirm whether he or any other Opposition Front Bencher has indeed addressed the Socialist parliamentary group of the European Parliament, and can he confirm that if and when negotiations are concluded along the lines of the White Paper, he will encourage people to vote for it in the best interests of our country?

Keir Starmer: I am grateful for that intervention. I have made many, many trips to Brussels. I have had many discussions with political parties across all of the EU27 countries, and I have never, on any occasion,

sought to undermine the Government in any of those discussions. I made that commitment to the former Secretary of State when he started his role and when I started my role. Therefore, there is absolutely nothing in what the hon. Lady has said.

Alex Chalk (Cheltenham) (Con): The right hon. and learned Gentleman is giving, as one would expect, a forensic and detailed scrutiny of these proposals, but the end point of his argument must be that there should be a customs union. I understand the point, but has he made any assessment of the extent to which, in the country, there would be a sense of betrayal, which would place the disquiet that has taken place in this House into a cocked hat? Does he have any assessment of that?

Keir Starmer: The referendum answered the question, “Do you want to stay in or leave the EU?” We are now grappling with the question of what the future arrangements should be. We have to safeguard the manufacturing sector and we have to keep to the solemn commitment that there will be no hard border in Northern Ireland. Anybody who has looked at the issue has accepted that the only way to keep to that solemn commitment on Northern Ireland is to have a customs union with the EU.

Mr Marcus Fysh (Yeovil) (Con) *rose*—

Keir Starmer: Let me complete my point.

The second half of the intervention by the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Alex Chalk) implied that anybody who voted leave would not countenance a common rulebook on goods; well, that is in the White Paper, because we have all had to work through the practical consequences of the referendum. It is no good to take such an extreme interpretation of Brexit that we wreck the manufacturing sector, abandon the service sector and abandon the solemn commitment to Northern Ireland. We have all been grappling with those issues for two years and we have to stop this suggestion that to put forward any practical arrangement for moving forward and safeguarding our country is somehow to frustrate or betray the referendum.

I see that the former Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for Haltemprice and Howden (Mr Davis), has walked in. Earlier, there was a suggestion that in my discussions in Brussels or elsewhere in the European Union I had somehow been trying to undermine what he has done. He and I know that that has never been the case, so I invite him to intervene, if he would.

Mr David Davis (Haltemprice and Howden) (Con): The right hon. and learned Gentleman has had many discussions with me, on Privy Council terms, over the past two years, and I have to say to the House that he has always been supportive of the country’s interests in those discussions and, indeed—at least in my understanding—in his conversations in the European Union.

Keir Starmer: I am grateful for that intervention; I hope it deals with the suggestion made earlier.

Let me go back to the facilitated customs arrangement. It is a complicated, two-tier arrangement that involves different tariffs being charged at the border and, if it is not known what tariff should be taken, it involves the tariff being reimbursed later if it was wrong.

Dominic Raab *indicated dissent.*

Keir Starmer: It is no good the Secretary of State shaking his head, because that is what it says in paragraph 16 of the White Paper. It is complicated. It is no wonder that businesses have said that they are sceptical about it and it is no wonder that the EU has said that it does not think it can operate such a system. It is no doubt for that reason that paragraph 17a says, after a description of the arrangement:

“However, the UK is not proposing that the EU applies the UK’s tariffs and trade policy at its border for goods intended for the UK.”

There is no reading of that other than, “This is so complicated and bureaucratic that we know the EU will not be prepared to do it and we are not going to ask it to.” There is no other reading of that sentence.

Enter Monday’s European Research Group new clause 36, which says:

“Subject to subsection (2), it shall be unlawful for HMRC to account for any duty of customs or VAT or excise duty collected by HMRC to the Government of a country or territory outside the United Kingdom”,

unless

“arrangements have been entered into by Her Majesty’s Government and that government under which that government will account to HMRC for those duties and taxes collected in that country on a reciprocal basis.”

In other words, it will be unlawful for us to collect and account for taxes at our borders unless other countries and territories—the EU27—collect tariffs and account for them for us. It will be unlawful. The White Paper says that we are not going to ask the EU to do it, but new clause 36 says it will be unlawful if the EU does not.

Dominic Raab *indicated dissent.*

Keir Starmer: I invite the Secretary of State to intervene if he wants to quibble with that analysis. By that amendment, the Government have cut across their White Paper and inevitably made it more difficult for the Secretary of State to negotiate with the EU when he goes there tomorrow, because the EU has said, “This is not attractive to us and we don’t want to do this.” The White Paper says that we will not ask the EU to—presumably, as part of that discussion, that makes sense as the logical next move—but Monday’s new clause, which was a wrecking amendment, has now made it unlawful for a sensible way to be found through.

Mr Fysh *rose—*

Keir Starmer: I shall make further progress, then give way.

This is not just a forensic challenge to the White Paper; it is fundamental. Absent a workable customs arrangement, the Government have no answer to the question of how they would protect the manufacturing sector. Absent a workable customs arrangement—

Dominic Raab: The right hon. and learned Gentleman’s analysis is not that forensic, because—inadvertently rather than deliberately, I suspect—he omits the key words from the White Paper:

“The UK and the EU should agree a mechanism for the remittance of relevant tariff revenue. On the basis that this is likely to be the most robust approach, the UK proposes a tariff revenue formula”.

That, of course, will be agreed as well; that is what the negotiations are for. It is set out plainly and squarely in the White Paper, and I think he knows that.

Keir Starmer: I anticipated that challenge, and I anticipated that sentence. Let us read the sentence:

“The UK and the EU should agree a mechanism for the remittance of relevant tariff revenue.”

Will it be reciprocal or not? If it is not reciprocal, it will be unlawful; that is the difficulty. If it is intended to be reciprocal, what is the point of the sentence reassuring the EU that

“the UK is not proposing that the EU applies the UK’s tariffs and trade policy at its border for goods intended for the UK”?

Whatever the arrangement is, we know one thing about it: it will not involve the EU applying UK tariffs and trade policy at its border. Otherwise, what is the point of that qualification?

Dominic Raab: I am afraid that the right hon. and learned Gentleman is making a false distinction. The key line in the paragraph is that

“the UK proposes a tariff revenue formula, taking account of goods destined for the UK entering via the EU and goods destined for the EU entering via the UK.”

That is the most explicit statement of reciprocity. What more could he expect?

Keir Starmer: I invite the Secretary of State to intervene just one more time. What is the point of the sentence that follows the one that he has just read out?

Dominic Raab: It is the exception to those arrangements, which is that we are not requiring the EU to levy the tariffs.

Keir Starmer: This must be my failure to comprehend. There is an arrangement whereby tariffs are applied at the border and accounted for. The UK is not proposing that the EU applies the UK tariffs and trade policy at its border for goods intended for the UK, so how is it going to account for them?

Wera Hobhouse: Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman share my suspicion that the proposals are designed to be so complicated and difficult that the EU will find it very hard to engage with them, so that time will go by and we will end up crashing out without a deal, as has always been the Government’s intention?

Keir Starmer: I am grateful for that intervention, because it demonstrates why this is so important. Unless there is a customs arrangement that works for manufacturing, there is not an arrangement that works for manufacturing. The Government last night voted down an amendment to say, “If we cannot make something else work, we will have a customs union.” So if this does not work, there is nothing for manufacturing. Equally, if this does not work, there is nothing for Northern Ireland.

Dominic Raab *indicated dissent.*

Keir Starmer: The Secretary of State shakes his head, but if this does not work, what is the plan? If he wants to intervene, that is fine. If this plan does not work—if this facilitated customs arrangement is not acceptable—the default, according to the Government, is not a customs union. What is the plan?

Dominic Raab: This model will work. I gently say this to the right hon. and learned Gentleman: if he cared about it that much, why did the Labour party go into the last election committed to having an independent trade policy, which can only mean leaving the customs union?

Keir Starmer: I really do not like the Secretary of State saying, “if he cared about it that much”. The suggestion that we are not both engaging in a difficult analysis of the White Paper with the interests of our country at heart is not fair. I care about this greatly, because without the right arrangement, I genuinely believe that manufacturing in this country will be at risk. Having worked in Northern Ireland for five years, I genuinely believe that, without a working arrangement, the solemn commitment to no hard border in Northern Ireland may not be kept. It is really serious, and point scoring about whether one is serious about it or not does not help; doing so demeans the Secretary of State in his role. It is not the way to conduct such debates.

It is not just the manufacturing sector; the White Paper’s proposals on services reveal a huge black hole. Likewise, the proposals on rights and protections are simply inadequate. On social rights, employment rights and environmental rights, there is a non-regression approach: we will not necessarily keep up and we will not necessarily improve, but things will not necessarily get worse.

There is no clarity on the role of the European Court of Justice. [*Interruption.*] The Secretary of State says, “It ends”, but it clearly does not end. The European Court has two different primary jurisdictions: first, dispute settlement; and, secondly, reference. That is the jurisdiction that it has had, as he very well knows, with his experience. The second of those is being preserved for everything in the common rulebook. That is why it has caused such difficulty within his own party. The jurisdiction of the Court would exist on reference procedure for that wide range of issues, and he well knows it. It will operate, I should imagine, in precisely the same way that it operates now. That is, there will be a reference to the Court, the Court will decide the question before it, it will give a ruling and an interpretation, and that interpretation will be binding, because if it is not, there is no point in that reference procedure, as he knows.

Dominic Raab indicated dissent.

Keir Starmer: Well, if the Secretary of State is going to suggest that the reference to the Court is for a ruling that is not binding, I will be very interested to hear about it, because there is not much point in referring something to a court for a ruling and then saying, “Well, it’s very nice but we’re not going to apply it.” The whole thing only works if the ruling of the European Court can be binding.

The proposal for the labour mobility framework says things about business trips and tourism, but is completely silent on the terms under which EU citizens will be able to live and work in the UK and UK citizens in the EU.

The grim reality is this: it has taken two years to get to this point, yet, on analysis, there is nothing there—or, more accurately, there is nothing that the warring Conservative party can agree on. The Prime Minister’s plan is exposed as unworkable and unacceptable to her own party, but she cannot move forward, as Monday night showed, and she cannot move backwards, as last

night showed. That is not taking back control; it is no control—stalemate. But the country cannot keep paying the price for these divisions in the Conservative party. We need a Brexit plan that can unite the country and protect jobs and the economy, and I am sorry to say that this White Paper is not it.

5.6 pm

Mr Steve Baker (Wycombe) (Con): A little over a week ago, I appeared on TV and invited colleagues to take stock, so I hope that in this speech I will make some attempt to do that.

The first thing I should like to say is that I believe we should develop

“a special relationship with”

the European Union,

“aiming to establish an area of prosperity and good neighbourliness, founded on the values”

which we share

“and characterised by close and peaceful relations based on cooperation.”

Informed Members of the House will have spotted that in saying that I have transposed article 8 of the treaty on European Union. That should be our common goal.

What kind of character should this co-operation have? I do not want us to build a wall; I want us to remain the closest of friends and partners. In that spirit, I propose, first, that

“as we are confronted with similar security threats...the EU and the UK continue our common fight against terrorism and international crime.”

Secondly, I propose that the UK should

“participate in EU programmes in the fields of research and innovation, as well as in education and culture. This is key to maintain mutually beneficial and enriching personal networks in these...areas, and for our shared common community of values to prosper...in future.”

Thirdly, I would like to

“avoid that particularly absurd consequence of Brexit that is the disruption of flights between the UK and the EU.”

I would also like to make sure that there is no disruption on data, the channel tunnel or roll-on/roll-off ferries. Finally, I

“propose that we aim for a trade agreement covering all sectors and with zero tariffs on goods. Like other free trade agreements, it should address services. And in fisheries, reciprocal access to fishing waters and resources should be maintained.”

In saying that, I have just stuck very closely, with some variations, to quoting President Donald Tusk’s statement on the draft guidelines on the framework for the future relationship with the UK, issued on 7 March 2018.

I have been astonished recently to learn just how many colleagues had not noticed that offer which was placed before us—a wide-ranging offer including free trade and no tariffs in all sectors, including services. We have to ask why we have not taken this path. I have concluded from my experience that it is first and foremost because the establishment, the governing class of this country, does not believe in Brexit. The governing class believes in EU membership and is trying to deliver something as close as possible to the EU—not the EEA and the customs union because it is known that such an arrangement would not be accepted as leaving, but something like the customs union and EEA-lite, if I might call it that. That is what is before us in the Chequers White Paper.

Peter Grant (Glenrothes) (SNP): Will the hon. Gentleman explain who and what is the governing class? If it is not the former Foreign Secretary, what on earth is it?

Mr Baker: As you know, Mr Speaker, I have been asked to keep to a time, and that term is sufficiently familiar to people in this House and across the country so I will not spend minutes defining it. It is the great class of people who govern our country, whether in politics, the civil service or the media, and those who govern our large companies.

Owen Smith: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr Baker: No. I am making my points gently and trying to do so in a spirit of co-operation. I heard the hon. Gentleman accuse me from a sedentary position of Trumpism, and I am not willing to go down that path with him.

Stephen Gethins (North East Fife) (SNP): Will the hon. Gentleman give way to me?

Mr Baker: I will not; I will go on.

I will say this, because it is important that it is said—*[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. There is a rather discordant atmosphere in the House. This is a matter upon which there are passionately held and differing points of view, but Members are entitled to be heard with courtesy. I simply reference the fact that the hon. Gentleman is an immediate-past Minister and he must be heard, and heard with courtesy.

Mr Baker: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I will try most sincerely not to be too indiscreet, but before Christmas—I believe it was September or October but my detailed, copious notes are at home and so not available to me—I was asked by a very senior person what the political consequences would be of choosing an EEA-lite deal. I explained that it would be a political cataclysm for the Conservative party and there would be a great political explosion if such a thing were chosen. We discussed it at some length.

Shortly after Christmas, after the Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, my hon. Friend the Member for Fareham (Suella Braverman), joined the Department, I will reveal that we had a ministerial meeting at which all the Ministers looked at the proposals in advice, and we all agreed we should build from a free trade agreement Canada-style rather than take an EEA-lite deal. Yet, despite proceeding on that collective basis in our Department, here we are with a proposal before the House that requires a mandatory degree of high alignment to EU rules. It is an EEA-lite proposal, not a Canada-plus proposal, if I may put it in those terms, despite a long history of Ministers rejecting that.

I have to conclude that it has long been the intention of those providing advice that we should arrive at such a relationship. Those proposing this category of close relationship, with the up-front choice of mandatory alignment, have two profound problems. First, the project of the European Union is in real difficulty. I take no pleasure in that, and no one need take my word for it—Jean-Claude Juncker said on 14 September 2016:

“Our European Union is, at least in part, in an existential crisis.”

Monsieur Macron said in Strasbourg on 17 April this year:

“There is a fascination with the illiberal, and that is growing all the time... Month after month we are seeing views and sensibilities emerge which call into question certain fundamentals. There seems to be a sort of European civil war.”

That is the most of extraordinary thing to have been said, yet it was said by a man who supports the European project. George Soros, who famously supports the project, has said:

“The European Union is mired in an existential crisis. For the past decade, everything that could go wrong has gone wrong.”

Andrew Lewer (Northampton South) (Con): I thank my hon. Friend not only for his words today but for the hard work he put into trying to get us to the right place. Does he recall that it was my view as an MEP at the time, and that of the British people, that it was the EU's very direction of travel and the concept of it not as a static, safe, solid entity with which we are entering some sort of new relationship but an organisation moving in a particular, disturbing direction, that led the British public to make the decision they did, and it is our responsibility to fulfil that?

Mr Baker: I agree with my hon. Friend, but I would extend his remarks by saying that it is clear, across the European Union, that the project is running into the problem, as its proponents have said, that it lacks democratic consent for what is being done. This is a profound problem that should alarm all of us.

If we look at Hungary, we see that almost 70% of the vote share is for parties that could be considered populist. In Germany, Alternative für Deutschland has risen from obscurity to be the third largest party, forcing Frau Merkel into a coalition—an unwanted coalition—to keep it out. In the Netherlands, the major parties have announced that they would do everything they could to keep the so-called Freedom party out of power, refusing to form coalitions with it despite the Freedom party getting the second largest share of the vote. I am very grateful to those in the Italian Parliament for passing a helpful motion, but I hope they will not be offended if I say that their parties are not necessarily considered mainstream. The rejection of the status quo in Italy is indicative of a trend right across Europe where, politically, the project is being rejected.

On the economy, I would just say that, according to the House of Commons Library, the European Central Bank has, in total to date, purchased €2.5 trillion of assets, which includes €2 trillion of Government debt. By the end of 2018, the figure is scheduled to be €2.6 trillion. That is equivalent to about 23% of annual eurozone GDP. This is the most extraordinary economic and monetary period in history. I personally believe that the distortions sown by quantitative easing on such a scale will unwind, and will do so in a very harmful way. That is the first problem faced by those who propose a high-alignment scenario such as this one. It seeks to cling on to institutions and a kind of political economy that are running out of public consent and have economic difficulties.

Stephen Gethins: I thank the hon. Gentleman for the speech he is delivering. I am glad that he is using statistics from the House of Commons Library that he

[Stephen Gethins]

clearly believes. As a former Minister, will he reflect on the statistics that the UK Government put together showing just how disastrous every form of Brexit would be?

Mr Baker: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, but I am afraid that I will just refer him to the answer to the relevant urgent question, which I will stand by for a very long time.

The second point—I have received some private communications reinforcing my view—is that, unfortunately, the establishment believes that any deal will be voted through by this House and is working on that basis. I have to say it is with some horror that I face the possibility that that consideration is being borne in mind by negotiators, because I do not believe for a moment that it is true. I believe that Scottish National party Members will always vote in a way that reinforces their hopes of secession from the UK, which is bound to mean voting against any agreement. I believe that the Labour party, for all the good faith of the shadow Secretary of State, will in the end vote against any agreement—any agreement. That therefore means that people—whether or not they like it, and however impartial they may be—must bring forward a deal that can be voted through by the Conservative party.

The number 40 has been bandied around in this House in the past few days. I am sorry to say it—it gives me no pleasure to say it, but I must do so—“and the rest”. People who have said 40 are not out by a fraction: when they come to consider the number of Members on the Conservative Benches who do not like this deal and are willing to vote in line with that dislike, they are out by a factor, not by a fraction. That means people must face up to the difficult truth that a high alignment—a Brexit that requires a high degree of permanent alignment to the European Union—will not go through this House of Commons; it will fail. Those are the two difficulties that officials—officials—must face up to.

Stephen Kinnock: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr Baker: I will give way briefly, and I then want to try to move to a conclusion.

Stephen Kinnock: The hon. Gentleman is being very generous in giving way. Will he confirm that he is in effect saying that Chequers is absolutely dead in the water? The implications of that are enormous for the Secretary of State, who is about to go to Brussels to meet Monsieur Barnier. How is he supposed to do that, and on what basis is he conducting those negotiations? If the hon. Gentleman could also say what his alternative plan is, that would be very useful for the House.

Mr Baker: I am about to come on to my alternative, but I will not have words put in my mouth. I said when I appeared on the television last Monday that this was a time for reflection and taking stock, because the choices before this country are grave. Every Member of this House, on whichever Bench they sit, needs to think extremely carefully about how we go forward. I will not have words put in my mouth. What I have said, I have said from my knowledge and I believe it. No one should plan on a high-alignment deal—an EEA-lite style deal—going through this House.

Three key steps should be taken as we go forward. The first is that those in the UK who I would call the establishment, the governing class—those who create the climate of opinion—must accept the referendum result and its consequences. I encourage them to look at President Tusk’s March statement on the guidelines. The red lines that the British public expect us to fulfil imply that the common landing ground of our relationship with the EU, which I spelled out, taking words from his statement, is partnership on security, some participation in research, innovation, culture and education, dealing with the absurd consequences that would otherwise arise, and having a free trade agreement in the style of a normal FTA, not EEA-lite. That must be embraced.

Secondly, I refer the House to the question asked of the Prime Minister by my right hon. Friend the Member for Haltemprice and Howden (Mr Davis) today. The Government should table a legal text that should include a solution for the border in Ireland. We should stand ready, open, to negotiate this common ground set out in March.

Sir Edward Leigh: The Prime Minister appears to be saying that President Tusk’s suggestion of a Canada deal is not acceptable because it would result in some kind of hard border. That is not something I accept, but perhaps my hon. Friend can comment on it. If we have the facilitated customs arrangement, will we not need some tracking device and, if we have a tracking device, could that not be used to alleviate any hard border in Northern Ireland?

Mr Baker: Mr Speaker, I am conscious that I am going beyond the guidance that you gave us, and I am very grateful to you for allowing that.

What I would say to my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough (Sir Edward Leigh) is that I believe that the problems of the Irish border are first and foremost to do with political and administrative will. A great deal has been said about technology, which is in fact a distraction from the reality that there is already a border, particularly in relation to excise. It is necessary to have an element of political and administrative fudge on the border, if I may say so, but to do it in a way that works for both sides. I believe that it really is political and administrative will that stands in the way, and that there are no insurmountable problems on the border. I also believe that there are no insurmountable problems with customs declarations or rules of origin. I very much hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr Fysh) might touch on that, as I know that he is an expert on the subject.

The second point is to table legal text to stand ready in good faith to negotiate the landing zone set out by the President and Council and to be ready to deliver in the spirit of article 8.

The third thing we must do is that thing which the Cabinet resolved collectively at Chequers. We must accelerate the delivery of our plans to leave the European Union in the unwanted eventuality that nothing can be agreed. We must be ready. We cannot allow ourselves to be in a position where complacency means that the Government machine goes forward thinking that any deal will go through Parliament, when I feel confident that deals that are, for want of a better term, too soft will be rejected by this House. We cannot allow ourselves

to be put in a position in which we are perhaps not as ready as we should be and a deal is unexpectedly voted down.

Tom Brake (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr Baker: I want to wrap up. The right hon. Gentleman intervened on me so many times when I was in another role that I hope that he will forgive me for not giving way now.

I am sure that our country is on the cusp of delivering a catalysing transformation both of global free trade and corresponding political institutions in delivering democratic self-government that can deliver on the aspirations of the British people. There is a greater future ahead for the UK, Europe and the world if we do it, but if those who set the climate of opinion and decide what we shall do persist in turning their face against accepting the democratic decision and the red lines that people expect us to fulfil, and thus rejecting President Tusk's vision of where we should land together, it will be their fault if we end up exiting this European Union with nothing agreed.

5.24 pm

Peter Grant (Glenrothes) (SNP): Follow that! I gently say to the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr Baker) that he might not be able to explain briefly who and what the governing class is, but I can, because I am looking at them right now. For him to suggest that if Brexit all goes wrong, it is somebody else's fault is typical of the approach that we have seen from his colleagues from day one. There was a mass evacuation, when Farage and Co. left, or prepared to leave, the country as soon as the dirty deed had been done. We had the former Foreign Secretary bailing out, trying to avoid becoming a Minister. We saw it again last week when Ministers and Parliamentary Private Secretaries could not get off the sinking ship quick enough, so we will not have anybody, either now or in future, trying to point over to the Opposition Benches and say that it was our fault that their ridiculous, reckless escapade all went horribly wrong.

While we are talking about the United Kingdom's relationship with the European Union, this debate and the last few days have shown that there is a massive problem with the United Kingdom's relationship with itself. The hon. Gentleman referred to the right problem, but in completely the wrong way. We have been lectured to since June 2016 that we must respect the will of the people. These are the people that the leave campaign lied to, cheated and campaigned on illegally, with dodgy money from who knows where. People were conned into a vote. They were deliberately targeted. The strategy was to identify people who were susceptible to racist propaganda and to bombard them with it until they voted leave. Now we are being told that we are supposed to respect these people, who were treated as mindless, meaningless lobby fodder by the leave campaign for so long, so I will have no lectures in respecting the people from anyone who has been in any way associated with what has to have been the dirtiest and most unprincipled, dishonest, unlawful campaign in recent history—and possibly the worst ever.

I saw a Minister trying to defend that yesterday by basically saying, "Yeah, but everybody knows that folk break the rules in elections." What is that, coming from

a Minister in the Government of what is supposed to be mother democracy to all others? "Yeah, we know that people cheat, lie and break the rules during elections, but just let them get on with it. As long as we get a result, it doesn't matter if the result has been achieved by fraud. As long as we get a result, things can carry on regardless." No, things can no longer be allowed to carry on regardless, if it means that elections and referendums in these islands can be bought and sold by dodgy money from who knows what unspeakable sources.

Stephen Gethins: Like me, does my hon. Friend find it absolutely astonishing that those who have had a political lifetime to prepare for Brexit—two years in the most senior positions in Government—are trying to blame everybody else but themselves as the wheels come off the Brexit bus?

Peter Grant: I would find that astonishing, but I am sorry to say that I am getting used to it, because that is exactly what the hard Brexit campaign has been doing since the referendum was run. In fact, we have still not had a proper debate in this place about what exactly was the reason for Nigel Farage, even before the result was declared, conceding defeat and then changing his mind when the result was announced. It is possibly the only time in history that he has deliberately talked down his own chances of success. I wonder what that could have been about. We are not allowed to discuss that yet, but I sincerely hope that one day, we will be allowed to.

Let us get back to the question in hand: the relationship that the United Kingdom will have with the European Union. I say first that I want us to have a relationship, because after listening to the attitude expressed by many who have spoken from the Tory Benches over the last weeks and months, I wonder whether some of them want to have any kind of relationship at all. I wonder whether some of them still think that the relationship is the one that applied between the United Kingdom and some parts of Europe in the 1930s and 1940s, and whether some of them think that somehow Europe is a colony of the United Kingdom, just waiting to be brought back into the mother-fold. I do not want any part of that kind of relationship with Europe or anywhere else. I want to be part of a nation that regards all other nations on Earth as equally respected partners, that will stand up for its own rights alongside all of them, and that respects the rights of nations throughout the world to govern themselves.

Luke Graham (Ochil and South Perthshire) (Con): The hon. Gentleman is talking a lot about respecting other nations, but does he not find it slightly ironic that someone from a party that is based on dividing itself from the country that it currently exists in is then talking about respect for other nations?

Peter Grant: The House agreed unanimously two weeks ago that the people of Scotland were sovereign. It has unanimously and irrevocably abandoned any claim it ever had to the right to usurp the sovereign will of the people of Scotland. It would be bad enough hearing that kind of nonsense from a Member of Parliament with no understanding of Scotland, but to hear it from somebody who claims to represent part of Scotland is utterly ridiculous.

[Peter Grant]

I will explain once again. I cannot do it in words of one syllable, though, so I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman might need somebody to explain it to him. I respect the results of the referendum in all four nations of these islands. I respect the result of the referendum in England and Wales, but that respect is conditional on it being established that the result was not rigged. I respect the decision of the people of Scotland and demand that each and every MP in this Chamber respect it likewise. I also respect the decision of the people of Northern Ireland—they get left out of this far too often. Their decision was not for a soft border to be introduced, or for the border to be magically moved a few miles inland to avoid any infrastructure at the border. The people of Northern Ireland have voted overwhelmingly on two occasions now for no border controls or infrastructure between them and their southern neighbours, and no solution that the Government put forward that breaks that decision of the people of Northern Ireland can be tolerated or should ever even be contemplated.

In respecting the results of the referendum in our four nations, I want to see the Government put forward proposals that recognise that the biggest partner in this Union voted to leave but that two of the four equal partners voted to remain. Scotland voted to remain by a majority of 24 percentage points. That was the size of the gap. It was not a close-run thing; it was overwhelming. There was a remain majority in every count declaration area in the country.

None the less, we are told that the way in which we are to be dragged out of the EU will be dictated not by proper discussions, on equal terms, between Scotland's Government and the UK Government and will be determined not by listening to the views of the MPs and MSPs elected to represent Scotland but by a minority of Members of a minority governing party who think that because they can shout the loudest they have the right to tell the Prime Minister what to do. I was disappointed that she caved in to the minority, instead of seeking to find consensus across Parliament.

Luke Graham: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Peter Grant: I will try once again, but I have my doubts.

Luke Graham: The hon. Gentleman is talking about minorities. The SNP is in a minority Administration in Edinburgh. It does not own Scotland and it cannot speak for all of Scotland. We are here—Liberal Democrat, Labour and Conservative MPs—speaking for our constituencies in Scotland. We want to remain part of the United Kingdom and my constituents will respect the votes of the United Kingdom.

Peter Grant: I would expect everyone in Scotland to respect the result of the Scottish general election in 2016, which returned a majority of MSPs who supported independence and a Government with a mandate that said that if Westminster did to Scotland exactly as it is doing now, it would be grounds to give the people of Scotland a chance to control their own fate.

Sir Hugo Swire: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. We have very little time for this important debate, and I suspect that at any stage you might limit

our speeches, yet the debate seems to be turning into an internal, navel-gazing exercise by the SNP about what it has and has not achieved at Holyrood. Can we get back to the subject of the debate, which is the future relationship between the UK and the EU?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): I understand the right hon. Gentleman's point, but the hon. Member for Glenrothes (Peter Grant) is setting out the context of his remarks. What he says is, of course, not a matter for me, but if he exceeds the parameters of the debate, I will stop him and insist that he stay within them. At the moment, I think that he is erring a little but will soon come back to the main purpose of the debate. I am also certain that he, appreciating that a lot of people wish to speak and that his speech is not time limited, will not take an awful lot longer.

Peter Grant: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. It goes without saying that I will at all times respect any judgments made by you and by any other occupant of the Chair.

I have said all along that I think that the people of England have made a catastrophic mistake, but sometimes democracy means that people must be allowed to make mistakes and then to sort them out. I rather think that the Government could have made a better fist of sorting out the mistake than they have over the last two years, but we shall see how that pans out.

Simon Hoare: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Peter Grant: No, I really cannot, given that one of the hon. Gentleman's own colleagues has complained that I am going on for too long. I am sorry, but other Members want to speak.

In return for that, it is not at all unreasonable to ask that the Government who lead the negotiations should have proper regard to the fact that two of the four nations in this partnership of equals voted for a different result. Clearly we cannot have an arrangement whereby some parts of the United Kingdom are in the EU and some parts are not, but—with political will, with a willingness to be flexible, with a willingness to do the unprecedented because these are unprecedented times—there are ways in which the Government could present proposals to the EU that would come much closer to respecting the will of the people of Scotland and the will of the people of Northern Ireland than anything that they have been prepared to put forward in the past.

I do not accept the analysis of the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr Baker), who is trying to tell us that there is a huge and building majority in the House for a hard Brexit, or a Brexit that respects the European Research Group's eight red lines. These are the people who do not want us to tie the Prime Minister's hands. They have put down eight red lines, and if she violates any one of them, she would face a vote of no confidence.

Mr Baker: Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

Peter Grant: No. The hon. Gentleman spoke for long enough.

Mr Baker: Will he give way?

Peter Grant: No.

I accept that there are Members here who have a great love for their country, however they describe it, and who want their country to go in a different direction from the direction in which I want my country to go. However, I remind Members once again that this House no longer claims the right to dictate to the people of Scotland the direction in which our country will be taken. This House unanimously accepted a proposal. The Secretary of State for Scotland spoke in favour of it. No one spoke against it. The United Kingdom Parliament has never had the constitutional right to rule over the will and against the consent of the people of Scotland. What has changed in the last few weeks is that the United Kingdom Parliament has finally recognised that. What I am asking the Secretary of State to do, what I am asking the Minister to do, what I am asking the Government to do—

Luke Graham: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman is misinterpreting the British constitution. There are Scottish Members of Parliament here, representing our constituencies and representing Scotland. The hon. Gentleman is suggesting that there is no sovereignty of this place over Scotland. While we still have MPs in this place, this place is sovereign. The hon. Gentleman is out of order, and he is not telling the truth to all the people who are in the Public Gallery today.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): Order.

Luke Graham: I believe that the hon. Gentleman is misinterpreting the constitution in his oration.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for correcting his language. “Misinterpretation” I can allow. Of course, the matter of sovereignty is subject to many interpretations—indeed, volumes have been written about it—and it is not for me to judge whose interpretation of the meaning of sovereignty is correct, but the hon. Member for Glenrothes (Peter Grant) is not out of order in what he is saying.

Peter Grant: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am happy to refer the hon. Gentleman to the good reporters of *Hansard*, who, as we know, never make any mistakes when they record the decisions of this Parliament.

It was disappointing that the exchanges between the two main Front Benchers tended to go into the nitty-gritty of customs and trade. It may be understandable, because that is where the battle lines have been drawn recently, but our relationship with the European Union is fundamentally about people.

Once again, the Front Benchers have not spoken enough about the millions of people who are currently living in one another’s countries as a matter of right, and who are seriously concerned about what their future will be. They have not yet spoken about the fact that in a few weeks, many of our great universities will welcome further waves of ambitious, talented young people from Europe and from other parts of the world who will feel that they are coming to a place that is less welcoming than it was a few years ago. The Government can deny it, and the Minister can shake his head, but people from other European countries who live here believe that

they are less welcome now than they were before. Racism has been emboldened since the referendum in a way that it was not before.

I accept—I have accepted it for a while—that there is very little that is likely to happen that will prevent Brexit from happening. I am still hopeful that it can happen in a way that respects the will of the peoples of the four nations. I want to live in a country that sees itself as an equal of all others. I want to live in a country that is not only attractive to workers, students and visitors from all around the globe, but that welcomes them all with open arms and open doors. I will continue to live in such a country. At some point in the not too distant future, a decision will be taken as to whether that country remains part of the Union represented in this Parliament.

Several hon. Members rose—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): Order. It will be obvious to the House that a great many people wish to speak and we have limited time. We will start with a time limit of 10 minutes.

5.40 pm

Mr Andrew Mitchell (Sutton Coldfield) (Con): I draw the attention of the House to my entry in the Register of Members’ Financial Interests.

I want to extend the warmest possible congratulations to the new Secretary of State on joining the Cabinet—I know he has had to pop out for a short while—and to salute the speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr Baker). Whether one agrees or disagrees with him, he is clearly a man of integrity and principle. He worked incredibly hard in his Department.

This is the first contribution that I have made to any of the Brexit debates. It was 25 years ago that I was a Government Whip engaged in securing support for the Maastricht treaty, with Britain’s two opt-outs, so brilliantly negotiated by John Major. I learned from that experience the deep and fierce passions on Europe that are held by so many of my friends and colleagues across the House, and in particular on the Conservative Benches.

I have to say, in all honesty, that the position today is far worse in terms of internal conflict and disagreement than ever it was during the Maastricht era. Of course the divisions are not just within this side of the House; they run throughout our constituencies—mine was divided almost exactly 50:50—and between friends and family. They have led to a breakdown in collective responsibility in the Cabinet, with a consequent breakdown in normal party discipline far worse than anything we remotely saw during the parliamentary stages of Maastricht. This breakdown in relationships, these deep divisions in this place and outside, are going to be very difficult indeed to heal.

I come now to the White Paper. I was dismayed, although not surprised, that my right hon. Friend the Member for Haltemprice and Howden (Mr Davis) resigned; dismayed because, despite some of the ludicrous, and at times mischievous, briefings he was subjected to, he was so clearly the right negotiator for Britain, with his business and European experience making him uniquely qualified for the task.

I have always felt throughout this process, as a Back-Bench Member of Parliament, that the best interests of my constituents are served by supporting the Executive

[Mr Andrew Mitchell]

in these very difficult negotiations: that the legislature—that is us—should give the Executive some leeway and the benefit of the doubt. That is not an enormously dissimilar approach to the way the 27 other stakeholders in the EU are more or less rowing in behind Monsieur Barnier. But in the end, particularly in a Parliament where there is no majority, and where therefore power has so self-evidently passed from the Cabinet room to the Floor of the House of Commons, it is we, the legislature, who will decide, and the House of Commons that will reach its verdict on the deal that the Executive negotiates. It is for that reason that the arguments for a meaningful vote are so essential and have had to prevail, as they have done, in the House.

Alex Chalk: My right hon. Friend makes an excellent point. Does he agree with the maxim of the former President of the United States, Lyndon Baines Johnson, that the first rule of politics is that its practitioners must be able to count? That is so important when we come to consider our debates over the coming weeks.

Mr Mitchell: That is a very true maxim, and one that is engraved on the walls of the Government Whips Office.

It seems to me that there are now really only two possible outcomes. The first is a deal based very largely on the Chequers settlement. Both my hon. Friend the Member for North East Somerset (Mr Rees-Mogg) and my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr Grieve) have honourably and eloquently voiced reservations and no one is going to be entirely satisfied with what has been produced, but the current Administration have basically bet the farm on the Chequers formula and will now have to repel all boarders, if I may mix my metaphors, whether from Brussels or from Somerset.

Many of us regret the Government's decision to give in at the first whiff of grapeshot emanating from the west country earlier this week, precisely because giving in will make it more difficult to resist counter-pressure from other directions for change. It is extraordinarily unlikely that we will do better than the plan set out in the White Paper, but there ought to be enough in the broad Chequers outline for people of good will to work with and coalesce around.

Robert Neill: I entirely agree with what my right hon. Friend says. Does he recognise that that is also the sentiment of businesses in this country, from manufacturing through to the key financial services sector? Does he also agree that ultimately the Conservative party is a pragmatic party rather than a rigid one, and imperfect though any deal or proposal may be, it is worth going for?

Mr Mitchell: My hon. Friend makes a wise and sensible point.

I have just set out the first option. The alternative option, I believe, is no deal, and I fear it is as simple as that. If there is no deal, I am sure we will survive and all will be fine in 10 years' time, but it will not be fine at the outset. No deal—at least at first—will threaten our levels of growth and risk the living standards and prospects of

those we are sent here to represent. It risks endangering the opportunities we want to see for our constituents, not least the younger ones leaving education and entering the world of work. And it will be this Administration who will be blamed: whether people voted leave or remain, the Conservative party owns this process and will be held to account for no deal. In any event, the Government need now to increase massively their planning for this eventuality and, in my submission, to report to Parliament in detail on it when we return in the autumn.

I have one final point to make. There are those who, with great eloquence, advance the case for a second referendum, but I have come to the conclusion that while it is just possible that Parliament might wish to seek public endorsement of the deal itself, it is most unlikely. That is because if we held another referendum with a different result, why not have the best of three? We see ourselves as a serious country, we have settled the matter in a significant referendum, and for better or worse we are leaving.

Sir Hugo Swire: Could not my right hon. Friend cite as an example what happened over the Lisbon treaty and the Republic of Ireland, when its voters were invited to have a second referendum, but not until the EU had made it worth their while to vote in a different way? Does my right hon. Friend fear that that could happen here if we had a second referendum, and be very divisive?

Mr Mitchell: For the reasons I have set out, I think another referendum would be profoundly divisive, and actually it might not advance agreement in our country and bring people back together again.

The Government must now use the summer to advance the case that they all agreed at Chequers and move towards some specific agreement with the EU. It will then be for the Government to propose, but for this House to dispose.

5.48 pm

Hilary Benn (Leeds Central) (Lab): May I begin by apologising to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, to the Secretary of State and to the shadow Secretary of State for not being present at the start of the debate? As Mr Speaker was aware, I was questioning the Prime Minister as a member of the Liaison Committee on the subject we are debating now.

I listened to the speech by the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr Baker) and respect the passion with which he advocates his position, although I profoundly disagree with it. I do, however, gently say to him that I think it is unfair to seek to blame civil servants for the situation in which we find ourselves as a nation when for two years they have had to watch the spectacle of Ministers, including Cabinet Ministers, openly arguing among themselves about the right course of action, and it was not until Chequers that the Prime Minister tried to bring them together.

Mr Baker: I did not mean to blame civil servants. I mean to blame the broadest governing class, the establishment, which is well represented in here and which clearly does not believe in leaving the European Union. I have paid tribute to civil servants over and over again. The people I have worked with have been the most outstanding professionals and I am proud to have worked with them.

Hilary Benn: I am sure that those with whom the hon. Gentleman worked will appreciate that, but there are particular civil servants who appear to have been singled out for his criticism, which I think is unfair. When we hold elected office as Ministers—there are many in this Chamber who have had that experience—it is our responsibility to take decisions and to lead. If things go wrong, we cannot blame the people who support us in our work. That responsibility falls on our own head.

I also say to the hon. Gentleman, although this is a debate for another day, that the European Union is by no means perfect, and that we need to find a new balance in our relations between self-government and international co-operation rather than destroying it, because the challenges that we face as a world will absolutely require co-operation between nation states in order to solve them. This is about balance; it is not about destruction.

We have certainly arrived at a particular moment in the Brexit process. It would be churlish not to acknowledge what the Prime Minister did at Chequers to bring most of her Cabinet together, but whether we are any further forward in practice is debatable. The truth about the White Paper is that it is a political construct as much as it is an economic one. Just as the Prime Minister is hemmed in by the disagreements within her own party, so is her proposal hemmed in by the red lines that the Government have laid down. The question that arises is: if the proposal does not fly, where on earth is the Prime Minister to go? There are two great questions, in the light of the White Paper. First, is the EU going to agree to what has been put forward? Secondly, is there a majority for it in the House of Commons?

The first question arises particularly in relation to the facilitated customs arrangement. Bluntly, will the European Union agree to let a third country—because that is what we will be when we have left—collect tariff revenues on its behalf? I have yet to be persuaded that it will agree to that. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Keir Starmer) talked about bureaucracy, and about whether any such arrangement would be ready in time for the end of the transition period. There are many of us in the House who think that remaining in the customs union would be a much better way of achieving the frictionless trade that many of us want to see.

When I questioned the Prime Minister earlier, she indicated that the Government were hoping to get most of the arrangements for the facilitated customs arrangement in place in time for the end of the transition period, but the Minister will be aware that previous Ministers, when talking about its antecedents—its parents, if you like: the customs partnership and max fac—openly acknowledged that they would not be ready until some time after the transition period had come to an end. This is very novel, and it is untried, untested and not yet agreed, but if that proved to be the case, will the Minister tell us what would fill the gap?

Paul Masterton (East Renfrewshire) (Con): I understand the right hon. Gentleman's concerns about the White Paper, and I share some of them, but I think that it is a deal worth fighting for. If the Prime Minister succeeds in getting the European Union to agree to this, is he seriously saying that the Labour party would vote down a deal that was good but not perfect, and walk through

the Lobby with some of my hard-line Eurosceptic colleagues so that we would end up with no deal at all, given that we both know the economic consequences that that would have for this country? Will he accept the deal or not?

Hilary Benn: I will be delighted to answer the hon. Gentleman's question when we have a deal—*[Interruption.]* We do not have a deal. We have a proposal. It is an opening bid. The time for the House of Commons to make that judgment, as the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr Mitchell) said, will be when the House takes the final decision. At that time, the hon. Member for East Renfrewshire (Paul Masterton) will see what stance each individual Member takes.

Vicky Ford: Does not the right hon. Gentleman agree that in order to move the negotiations along it would be helpful if those on the other side of the negotiating table understood whether Labour Members were prepared to vote for a deal along the lines of the White Paper? By not answering the question posed by my hon. Friend the Member for East Renfrewshire (Paul Masterton), the right hon. Gentleman creates greater uncertainty for the negotiators.

Hilary Benn: I will not allow the hon. Lady to get away with putting the responsibility for the difficulties that the Government and the governing party are in, which are of their own making, on those of us on the other side of the House.

Owen Smith: Or are we the governing classes now?

Hilary Benn: I am not going to enter into that debate, either. The fundamental truth is that those in Brussels look at the chaos on the Government Benches, created by the efforts of Conservative Members of Parliament, and that weakens our ability to get a deal that is in the national interest. I do not know whether the hon. Member for Chelmsford (Vicky Ford) voted in favour of the customs union amendment yesterday.

Guy Opperman (Hexham) (Con): She asked you a question.

Hilary Benn: I answered it. I do not know how the hon. Lady voted yesterday, but the customs union amendment would have been a way of providing much greater certainty to those with whom we are negotiating.

On Northern Ireland, the White Paper basically says nothing more about the backstop, and the reason why we do not yet have a withdrawal agreement is that there is no backstop proposal. All the discussion about the facilitated customs arrangement and the political declaration is for later, because if we do not get a withdrawal agreement, we will not get on to that, and we will not get a withdrawal agreement until we have a backstop proposal from the Government. They produced one in June and said, "There's a bit missing," which related to the rules on regulation, so will the Minister say whether, now that the Government have embraced a common rulebook, they plan to apply that to the backstop? It would be helpful if we could understand that.

On services, I echo what my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Holborn and St Pancras said. Free movement apart—I accept that issue—I do not

[Hilary Benn]

really understand why the Government have turned their back on a common rulebook for services, especially given what the Prime Minister said in her Mansion House speech about trying to maintain the same approach. On the free movement of people, we will obviously have to wait for the White Paper, but that is one of the single most important issues raised with the Exiting the European Union Committee by those who have given evidence.

The question of sovereignty goes to the heart of all of this, because the objection is that we are somehow going to enter into a state of vassalage—a word that I was not familiar with before it was uttered by the hon. Member for North East Somerset (Mr Rees-Mogg). However, the truth is that this country, which has never ceased to be sovereign, chooses to enter into agreements with other countries in which we agree to abide by the rules of the relevant organisation. That is true of the United Nations, it is true of the European convention on human rights, and it will be true of the WTO if we end up retaking our seat as an independent country. Are we really going to impale the future prospects of the British economy on red lines that arise from an utter state of dispute about the question of our sovereignty and how we need to exercise it?

The Prime Minister now needs to build a consensus, but she will not do so by giving in at the first rustle of incoming letters to the chair of the 1922 committee. I believe that there is a natural majority in the House for a sensible Brexit that ensures frictionless trade, protects the economy, keeps an open border in Northern Ireland and maintains sensible co-operation on defence, foreign policy, security, the fight against terrorism, consumer safety, scientific research, the exchange of data and broadcasting. Our task now is to enable that majority—there is no majority for no deal—to give expression to itself. The sooner the Government seek that out, the better it will be for the country's future.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): Order. I must reduce the time limit to seven minutes.

5.59 pm

Sir William Cash (Stone) (Con): I am glad to follow the right hon. Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn) because he talked about sovereignty, although he rather distorted the focus of it, to put it bluntly, and I will explain why in a moment.

Brexit is ultimately about our democracy, our sovereignty and our self-government. All the other issues, including our right to free trade with the rest of the world, are subsidiary to the questions of sovereignty, self-government and democracy because they flow from them. This is the ultimate test. To get our sovereignty and our democracy, and to get it right, we must govern ourselves. I am deeply concerned about the White Paper and the Chequers settlement for that reason, and I will set out what I believe will be the practical outcome.

We have managed to achieve something quite remarkable, which is to turn the gold of democracy into the base metal of subservience—a new kind of alchemy. In other words, we have effectively turned leaving into not leaving in a whole range of areas, despite the repeal of the European Communities Act 1972 and despite the

EU withdrawal Act itself, the promises made in the Conservative party manifesto and, of course, the result of the 2016 referendum.

The European Scrutiny Committee, of which I have the honour to be Chairman, unanimously criticised the Government a few months ago. We argued that they are supplicating themselves to the EU and accepting its guidelines, contrary to our lawful departure under article 50, which gives us the legal authority to leave under the treaties. That is a massive strategic mistake. We have summoned Mr Olly Robbins to appear before our Committee and, although the Prime Minister originally was not prepared to allow him to come, he will be appearing before the Committee—that was resolved this morning.

Simon Hoare: I hear what my hon. Friend says, but is it not the case that, whenever we enter into a free trade agreement with another country, we will abide by the rules and regulations that it seeks to apply to imported goods? The fact that we choose to do so is our choice, as made either by the Executive or by Parliament. Whether we do a free trade agreement with the EU, New Zealand or Japan is immaterial. We will always have to follow the third party's guidelines and meet its requirements in order to export to that country.

Sir William Cash: My hon. Friend is slightly missing the point. I am talking about the legal framework of the EU itself, which imposes on us a requirement, through the 1972 Act, to accept the rules. I will come on to that in a moment, because I believe that what is happening under the Chequers proposal and under the White Paper will, in many respects, make it worse than it is already.

The big picture is about why we had to leave the EU to regain our democracy. The decisions imposed on us through the 1972 Act—those decisions are imposed through the Council of Ministers—as my Committee exposed a few years ago, will in practice be continued under the common rulebook and will continue to be taken by a majority vote of the 27 without our being there. The Prime Minister even wrote a pamphlet about that in 2007 in which she said

“Parliament is supposed to be Sovereign but in practice it is not.”

That will be made even worse under the White Paper. We will have no voting rights, no blocking minority and a mere useless consultation.

The White Paper mirrors the EEA arrangements, which slavishly follow the decisions of the EU Council of Ministers. Furthermore, given that the Government will already have agreed to the international obligations it will have entered into, it is absurd to suggest that under the “threat of consequences” during the scrutiny process, the MPs appointed to a Committee run by the Whips would ever overturn the Government's agreed rules. The manner in which the common rulebook will absorb European rules and European jurisdiction through the creation by the UK Government of international obligations binding of itself, with the deliberate connivance of the Government and the Whips, will predetermine the outcome of the parliamentary scrutiny when it reaches the Committee. In other words, it will fictionalise real sovereignty. This White Paper is a sovereignty car crash.

As for the European Court of Justice, the former president of the EFTA court—I have just put this to the Prime Minister in the Liaison Committee—clearly stated only a few days ago:

“the UK would recognise that the European Court of Justice is supreme on the interpretation of EU law.”

He went on to say that under the independent arbitration we would agree

“to refer questions to the ECJ”.

The White Paper itself concedes that the UK makes an “upfront choice to commit to ongoing harmonisation with the relevant EU rules and requirements”.

Thus, the ECJ will determine not only the interpretation, but the outcome of any disputes, so it will be calling the shots.

I wish briefly to turn to the issues of foreign policy and of Germany, which has been very much underplayed for many, many years in this context. Of course we want to work with other neighbours in Europe—I have no problem with that. However, this problem, which has been with us for so many generations—over the past 20 or 30 years—has simply been ignored to far too great an extent. It is clear that Germany calls the shots, and everybody knows it. To see that we have only to look at what has been going on in Greece; what went on in Ireland when it had the crash; and what happened to Italy, whose EU Affairs Minister recently described the euro as “a German prison”.

The reality is that Germany tore up the Dublin regulation, which led to this incredible surge of refugees, some of which were justified and some of which certainly were not. We have seen how Germany broke the stability and growth pact with impunity, but ensured the manner in which it is applied to other European member states. The result has been that the people of Europe are voting with their feet, and it has also led to the rise of the far right, not only in Germany, but elsewhere. That is one of the things I have argued against ever since I first wrote about this in early 1990. Anyone who believes we could remain in the present EU, from which we have escaped in the nick of time, is simply living in cloud cuckoo land.

I wish to add something about those who would want to reverse this process, although I am not pointing the finger at anybody or any group of people in particular. I have heard of rats leaving a sinking ship but never of rats trying to sink a leaving ship. We really must leave this EU, above all else. We need to regain our democracy and our self-government, and not be dictated to by qualified majority vote, which we have mistakenly accepted for 40-odd years. We live in a world of massive change. We now have the opportunity to decide our own history, our own future, our own economy and our own destiny. People have fought and died for this over generations. We wish to co-operate, but not to be subservient.

6.8 pm

Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield) (Lab): I am grateful for the opportunity to say a few words in this debate, Mr Speaker. I wish to start by declaring an interest: I chair the all-party parliamentary motor group, which receives secretarial support from the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, the Motorsports Industry Association and the RAC Foundation.

I want to say a few words about why the stakes are so high for that industry and sector in terms of getting our approach to Brexit right. That is not a narrow parliamentary debating point. It is not about which faction is on the up or on the way down in the Conservative party—or indeed in any other organisation. We are talking about the future of that sector in this country. It is a sector that brings in £77.5 billion every year in revenue and which makes up almost 10% of manufacturing output. It is an industry on which literally hundreds of thousands of jobs up and down the country depend. This is about the livelihoods of people in the west midlands and in other parts of the UK. It is about reality. I want to focus my remarks on why, despite the vote earlier this week, I really think that continued customs union membership has to be a negotiating objective of our future relationship with Europe and why the so-called facilitated customs arrangement—whether it be max fac, quite fac, relatively fac or not very fac at all—just really will not cut it.

Every day, trucks deliver £35 million-worth of parts to the UK. Most of those are then shipped back to the European Union. The whole industry relies on a delicate system of just-in-time delivery, with the ability to move parts and goods within the European Union quickly and efficiently and with costs kept to a minimum. Any barrier to that frictionless movement will result in delays at the border, additional customs bureaucracy and extra costs to business.

Just think about Operation Stack and about how quickly the roads to the channel ports got gridlocked when industrial action in France caused delays three years ago. It cost the freight industry £750,000 every single day. Just think about how quickly customs checks at our ports would cause the same kind of snarl-ups and about the millions that it would cost the automotive sector. I say to Members: do not just take that from me; listen to what the industry itself is saying. The Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders issued this warning:

“Any customs model that fails to replicate the benefits of UK automotive’s current trading relationship with the EU is likely to create delays, disrupt highly efficient “just-in-time” manufacturing and undermine competitiveness.”

As its chief executive Mike Hawes said in May:

“Continuation of customs union membership is a minimum for the car industry.”

Just listen to the warning from Jaguar Land Rover, which said:

“a hard Brexit would cost £1.2 billion a year in trade tariffs and make it unprofitable to remain in the UK”.

Earlier this year, the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee warned:

“There are no advantages to be gained from Brexit for the automotive industry for the foreseeable future”.

Its warning must be taken seriously. It said that the most that we can hope for is

“an exercise in damage limitation”

Unfortunately, on current form, the Government are even falling short of that objective.

Matt Western (Warwick and Leamington) (Lab): My hon. Friend makes a very important point. Specifically, does he share my frustration that there was not greater support from the Conservative Benches for new clause 18, which would give that default—the customs union—at the end of January 2019 to give that reassurance and safeguard to the industry?

Richard Burden: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. If there is one thing that business says time and again it is that it wants certainty. It is the idea that, even if one's objectives do not go quite right, one has something else there that can provide that certainty for the future. That "backstop" of customs union membership would have provided that much needed certainty.

How can we describe the Government's approach in the long-awaited White Paper? Well, "courageous" is the term that Sir Humphrey Appleby probably would have used. Others may describe it as fantasy. Nowhere else is that more obvious than in relation to what it describes as the facilitated customs arrangement. If we read through it, we see gobbledegook explanations that are so opaque that they could have been written by Sir Humphrey himself.

Just look at how the White Paper suggests we deal with imports from third countries arriving in the EU for onward transfer to the UK and vice versa. The Government say that the EU's customs approach will be "mirrored" at the same time as we will be imposing our own tariffs and customs arrangements elsewhere. As far as I can see, this is entirely reliant on a non-existent track and trace system to verify origin and tariff application, but until that technology exists, we will need to check everything meticulously at the border to apply different tariffs and different rules to different things. Put together, that means that the UK is taking on a huge bureaucratic and systematic burden for every single item imported to, or transferring through, our ports and slowing down the movement of goods in the process and causing the very friction that we always say that we want to avoid. But now, after the last couple of days in this Chamber, the Government have managed to twist themselves into even more knots by kowtowing to the Brexit fanatics on their own Back Benches. Doing so has made the White Paper's proposals, problematic as they were, even more unworkable.

Of course, we know that the motivation of at least some Conservative Members is to create a proposal so chaotic and so unreasonable that we crash out with no deal and fulfil some sort of long-held Eurosceptic fantasy project. That is why I do not believe that the Government's suggested approach will work. Far better and far simpler to remain in a customs union with the European Union so that trade between the EU and the UK can be truly frictionless; so that there really is simplicity and maximum facilitation of goods arriving from third countries, with one easily understood set of external tariffs; so that there is no hard border on the island of Ireland; and so that we can continue to benefit from the trade deals that the EU has with 68 other countries, without having to renegotiate them.

We could have made the resolution of this whole thing a lot simpler if the Prime Minister had not said that single market membership was a red line in the first place. Were it not for the chaos and the confusion that the Government have created, we could, by now, be an awful lot further on than we are. That is why I urge the Government, even at this late stage, to listen to the voices of industry when they say that the only reliable way to achieve the frictionless trade that we need is to remain in a customs union with the European Union.

6.16 pm

Mr John Baron (Basildon and Billericay) (Con): I want to address my remarks to the two core tenets of the EU: the customs union and the single market.

I think there is a danger in this place, and perhaps in certain sections of the community outside, of taking the view that people did not know what they voted for when they voted to leave. Not only is that incorrect, but it can come across as very patronising and condescending.

I think we know what people voted for. The twin tenets of the EU are the single market and the customs union. If that point needs to be reinforced, we have only to look at the two manifestos of the two main political parties at the last general election. They confirmed that we would be leaving the customs union and the single market, and 80% of the electorate voted knowing that to be the case. I take exception to the view that somehow the British electorate did not know what they were voting for. It is particularly important to say that, because I believe that if this Parliament does not accept the will of the British people, we risk pushing the mainstream to the edges of the political spectrum. That would not be a healthy development for democracy in this country.

Peter Grant: Does the hon. Gentleman not accept that the information that the Government sent out before the referendum was that even in the event of a leave vote, their intention was to remain in the single market? Is it not also the case that the Government won a majority on a manifesto that said they would stay in the single market, and then lost that majority on a manifesto that said they would leave it?

Mr Baron: I think it is quite straightforward. We had a referendum on the question of whether people wanted to stay or leave. The decision was to leave, and the political parties woke up to that fact and put that decision at the heart of their manifestos, on which we then went to the country. I remind the House that it is there in black and white in both manifestos: we will leave the customs union, and we will leave the single market. My concern about the Chequers agreement is that having gone to the country on that basis, there seems to be a bit of a fudge that needs explaining by the Government.

Let us take the common rulebook and the customs union. It is no accident that the EU has had a problem negotiating free trade deals with countries outside the EU. It does not have a free trade deal with the US, with Australia or with New Zealand. It struggles on emerging markets—big economies like Brazil, India and China. The reason for that, in large part, is that it has protectionist non-tariff barriers that a lot of countries cannot abide. If we incorporate those protectionist non-tariff barriers into our own regulations, that will make our task of negotiating trade deals that much more difficult. It will therefore take away from us one of the key upsides of Brexit, which is to negotiate our own trade deals.

We all have our own views of President Trump, but one thing that he was very direct about, stating the blindingly obvious, was that if one incorporates protectionist non-tariff barriers as part of one's own regulations, it will—surprise, surprise—be more difficult to negotiate trade deals. That is why there is concern among Conservative Members about the common rulebook. If we incorporate those rules, it makes trade deals more difficult.

Wera Hobhouse: Is that not exactly what President Trump is currently doing—building trade barriers, because he is putting up tariffs?

Mr Baron: There are pluses and minuses with President Trump, perhaps, but I think he is trying to be a very good friend of the UK. Unlike President Obama, who said that the UK would be at the back of the queue, it is quite clear that President Trump does want to do some form of trade deal with the UK. He is stating the obvious when he says that incorporating protectionist non-tariff barriers is going to make trade deals much more difficult.

Let me move on to freedom of movement. The SNP spokesman said that racism is on the rise in this country. There is a sort of implication that if somebody voted to leave, they were somehow anti-immigration. That is completely wrong. Under the current immigration policy, because we are members of the EU we discriminate against people wishing to come to this country from outside the EU. We cannot say no to immigrants from Europe or from the EU, but we have to say no to immigrants coming in from outside the EU. That, in any language, is discriminatory. One of the main benefits of Brexit will be that we will be able to forge an immigration policy that will be not only controlled but fair—it will not discriminate on the basis of nationality as the current policy does.

On the second big idea, we are being told that with a mobility framework, freedom of movement will end. However, I worry slightly that it is not being clearly explained how a mobility framework will be any different from freedom of movement. That needs fleshing out by the Government. If I know anything about my constituents and constituents across the country who voted for Brexit, we want a controlled but fair immigration system, and the Government need to better explain how the mobility framework is going to deliver that. Without that explanation, I think they are going to struggle in selling this package to the country, because we no longer want an immigration system that discriminates against the rest of the world.

I want to make a final point about leaving on WTO terms. There has been a little bit of nonsense spoken about this issue. There have been too many lawyers in this debate and not enough businesspeople. Whoever has been exposed to business will know that one can have frictionless supply chains crossing customs arrangements. It happens right across the globe, particularly in the far east.

Wera Hobhouse *rose—*

Mr Baron: No, I have taken one intervention from the hon. Lady and I am not going to take another. I have taken my two.

There are these arrangements right across the globe, and they are not a hindrance to trade. We trade profitably with many countries outside the EU on such terms, and that trade is prospering. Those countries are often faster growing than the EU.

The idea that we must protect the supply chains and that leaving on WTO terms would disrupt them is utter nonsense. Look around the world and at the far east in particular, where a number of complex supply chains cross customs arrangements without any friction. A particular example of that is Japan, which has outsourced much of its manufacturing capability to countries such as China because of the strength of its yen. The bottom line is that that has made for good trade and actually it has helped to lower costs.

If we ignore the wishes of the British electorate as expressed at the referendum, I really do worry that we will push the mainstream in this country towards the extremes of the political spectrum, because people will have lost faith in this place to deliver what they clearly believe they voted for, which is to leave the EU, and that meant leaving the customs union and the single market. Anything less than that will be seen as a betrayal by the British electorate.

6.26 pm

Tom Brake (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD): I welcome the Secretary of State to his new role—we wish him the best of British. He will know that my views and his diverge as much as is possible on this subject. Although I could point out that my views are closer to those of his constituents than his are, perhaps he can point out that his views are slightly closer to those of my constituents than mine are—such is the way things are working on Brexit.

I am confused by the contribution of the hon. Member for Basildon and Billericay (Mr Baron). There are clearly constituencies where every single person who spoke to him was raising the single market and customs union in the run-up to the EU referendum, whereas in my constituency every single person talking to me was speaking about immigration. I cannot recall someone saying during the referendum campaign, “I want to be out of the single market and customs union.” May I point out that if the European Union does not currently have a trade deal with India, that is because of our then Home Secretary—now our Prime Minister—rejecting the trade deal because it would have required issuing visas to Indians? He needs to look more carefully at some of the reasons why such things have not happened.

The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the number of migrants to the UK went up in 2017 compared with 2016 because there was growth in non-EU migration, which is something he omitted to point out in his comments.

Mr Baron: Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that the practical effect of the immigration policy we are pursuing is to discriminate against countries outside the EU?

Tom Brake: I agree that there is clearly a difference between the treatment of EU citizens and migrants from outside the European Union, but the number of non-EU migrants has gone up, which has more than compensated for the numbers of EU citizens coming to the United Kingdom. I assume he welcomes that.

I see the hon. Member for Bromley and Chislehurst (Robert Neill) is back in his place. The Conservative party was a pragmatic party, but I am afraid to say it is clearly no longer such. It is now very much a party driven by ideology. I suspect that is why he is as uncomfortable with it as he is.

Robert Neill: Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman would like to consider this: at least virtually the totality of the Conservative party was here to take part in the debate, which cannot be said about other parties. Will he also bear in mind that what matters to both his constituents and mine, in areas heavily dependent on the City and financial services, is that we ensure security of access to

[Robert Neill]

the best available talent and, above all, a form of regulatory alignment that goes beyond the proposals in the White Paper? They are a starting point, and I support the White Paper, but we need to go further to give the City the ability to bring in the billions of pounds of tax revenue that subsidise the public services of everyone in this country, including leave voters as well as remain voters.

Tom Brake: I am very happy to say that I agree entirely with the point the hon. Gentleman has made. We need to make sure that the City can continue to operate and that we are able to attract the skills we need.

The subject of this debate is the future relationship between the UK and the EU. I am very clear, and this will not be a surprise to anybody, that I would like us to stay in the European Union. I believe that that is still going to be possible, but for it to happen people will clearly have to vote for it in a final say on the deal. How do we get to a final say on the deal?

The first thing we need is for article 50 to be extended. I know the Prime Minister has said on a couple of occasions that that is not going to happen, but the likelihood of securing any sort of deal before March 2019 is for the birds. It is simply not going to happen, so an extension will be required. An extension would be needed to enable the legislation required for a final say on the deal to be passed, as well as to enable such a campaign and the votes at the end of it. I think it is perfectly possible that the EU may be about to offer to extend article 50, or the UK could of course seek to do it.

The other thing that is clearly required if there is to be a final say on the deal and a people's vote is to take place is that a majority—I would say a clear majority—of people have to vote to stay in the European Union. At the point that such an election campaign took place, there would in reality be only two options: either voting for whatever deal the Government had secured, which I suspect would probably be no deal at all; or voting to stay in the European Union.

Why would people vote to stay in the EU? First, there is Trump. Frankly, if Trump is our friend, then who needs enemies? Trump has made the world a more dangerous place. In my view, he cannot be counted on to provide security. We and, yes, others in the European Union will have to step up to the plate to do that, but I do not think he can be counted on to do so.

We need to develop an offer that appeals not just to remainers, but to those who voted to leave. That will require some movement on the question of freedom of movement. I am sure that Members are aware that the issue of migration within the EU is a really big challenge for its members. At the European Council a couple of weeks ago, that was what they were worried about. Frankly, they were worried not about Brexit, but about migration within the European Union. They are very focused on that, and progress on it might be possible.

We also need to be able to demonstrate that the UK would be an active member of the EU and fighting to reform it, so that it would not simply be the EU carrying on as it was, but an EU subject to change. Of course, we would need to sell much more effectively than we have ever done before the advantages of EU membership.

The Government sometimes try to claim the credit for things that the EU have done. Most recently, for instance, they have done so in relation to strengthening the rights of millions of British citizens who take package holidays or book linked travel. Our Government have claimed credit for something that the European Union had actually done. When the EU does things that are positive, we need to make sure that we talk about them.

The other thing we need to do is to set out the impact of voting for the Government's deal. I am afraid that what the Government are offering as a result of the Chequers statement is no deal. Notwithstanding the point made by the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr Baker), I am afraid that it is very clear that the purpose and objective of ERG members is to leave us in a position where we have no deal. That is what they are trying to achieve, and that was the purpose of their amendments, which comprehensively trashed the Chequers statement. I am afraid to say that the Prime Minister is so weak that she had no alternative but to walk into their trap.

What does no deal mean? Some Members seem to think that no deal would be a temporary aberration that would cause us a few problems for a couple of weeks, but that is clearly not the view of the port of Dover and Airbus or, for instance, of people concerned about medicines coming into the UK, their availability and how quickly they come to market. No deal will not cause problems just for a few weeks or so. I suspect that it will mean five years of difficulties for the United Kingdom.

One thing we will not do is allow the Brexiters to say that this is the European Union's fault—the hon. Member for Wycombe made this very clear. The Brexiters claimed that this would be a straightforward process that would all be over and done with overnight. They said that it should be very simple, and that trade deals would be struck with a landmass 10 times the size of the European Union, which would, of course, probably need to include a few planets as well, as that is not physically possible. They made that claim. They pretended that it was going to be straightforward. If we end up in a no-deal scenario, a catastrophe for the United Kingdom, that is their fault and we will not let them get away with it.

To adapt the words of the outgoing Foreign Secretary, it is not too late in my view to save the United Kingdom. We can provide the people with a way out of this ideological folly. I am not too scared to test the will of the people and I am not too scared to be bound by the result. Why are Ministers?

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr Speaker: Order. I would like to accommodate a further two Back-Bench speakers, but that will require a generosity of spirit on the part of the right hon. Member for East Devon (Sir Hugo Swire), who I shall call next, and that is up to him.

6.36 pm

Sir Hugo Swire (East Devon) (Con): We can all quibble about how this whole process has been handled, from the perhaps premature triggering of article 50 through to the backstop arrangements and how much we will pay the EU. Indeed, some of us have continuing concerns about the continuing reach of the European Court of Justice—

Mr Speaker: Order. My apologies, I should have formally announced the five-minute limit.

Sir Hugo Swire: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

We are where we are, and this White Paper is the first time, in all fairness, that those with whom we seek to negotiate will have some idea of what we seek to negotiate. That is important in itself. We need to learn the art of compromise. We did not get a clear indication one way or the other either in this House or in the country, and we should now compromise and do what is the best interests of the British people. It seems to me that this is the best we have so far.

The most important thing to me is business certainty. This country has had an extraordinary record of inward investment, and that is a climate that we have unfortunately begun to damage through all these deliberations over where we are now heading. We have heard perhaps too much from the big businesses and multinationals, all of whom employ huge organisations or have people to represent them, such as the CBI. We heard very little from small businesses. Those are the businesses of our constituents. This is often forgotten, but there are only 2,000 plc's in this country; 0.3% of UK business, employing 2.6 million people and providing 8% of the workforce. There are 4.8 million family-run businesses in this country, and they make up 87% of all UK private sector businesses—5% are manufacturing firms, and 19% are construction firms. They employ 12.2 million people, 38% of the 32.2 million UK workers. That is 46.5% of UK private sector employment in these smaller, often family-run companies. They generated £149 billion in tax in 2016. These are the companies that we seek to protect. These are the companies that need to grow. These are the companies we need to enshrine in a framework with the EU that ensures they can continue to prosper. They are the lifeline of the economy and the lifeblood of our constituencies.

I shall end soon, Mr Speaker, but let me just say that those who seek a second referendum basically want to introduce a new range of questions and to overturn what the British people decided the first time. We saw second referendums in Denmark on Maastricht and in Ireland on the Nice treaty. In 2008, the first time that Ireland was invited to reflect on the Lisbon treaty, 53.4% rejected it, versus 46.6%. Lo and behold, a year later, after negotiations with the EU, the Irish people were invited to vote again and voted in favour. You know what? They were told at the time that they did not understand the question. They were told that it was too complicated for the people—the same accusations that people make in a very condescending way against those people who voted to leave. I voted to remain, but the difference is that I abide by the wishes of the British people—I do not question them, as the right hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Tom Brake) did—and that is what the rest of the House should now do.

6.39 pm

Owen Smith (Pontypridd) (Lab): For the avoidance of doubt, let me start by saying that I am absolutely campaigning for a second referendum. I am doing so because I want to give the people of this country an opportunity to turn away from Brexit, which I think will be damaging to their prosperity and to the security of all of us in this country. I will continue to make that argument in all sincerity.

Today's debate and the events of the past 10 days have been edifying and terrifying in equal measure. They have exposed the full horror of the Tory civil war and, more importantly, the gravity of the risks that all the people in this country are now being exposed to as a result of the potential outcomes of that Tory civil war. We have seen resignations and revelations, and even the sinister, though softly spoken, speech by the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr Baker), who is now not in his place, threatening in effect his Front Benchers—the governing classes, as he put it, by which I think he was coyly referring to the Prime Minister, the Chancellor and other people advising the Conservative party.

Those threats have been heard in the country and they have revealed, as other speeches have today, that some of the Brexiteers have always wanted sovereignty to absolutely trump security or prosperity. They have always wanted an isolated, independent Britain. They have wanted to row back to a fantastical past that cannot deliver in the modern era. We in the Opposition have to acknowledge that, and that the scale of risk that the country faces is grave. The Prime Minister's White Paper was a brave attempt to try to recognise that, and to at last acknowledge that an integrated, involved relationship with the European Union is not only necessary but inevitable. There are over 100 references in the White Paper to common rules, common partnerships, common objectives, the common rulebook—just about every page is littered with such examples, which is precisely why it sparked the neuralgia on the European Research Group Benches, and precisely why we have effectively seen the coup of the last week and the capitulation of the Front Benchers to the ERG.

We must realise how grave the risks are, because we are now blithely talking about an exit on World Trade Organisation terms, as though that is something that we can countenance in this House. We cannot. The risks are enormous. Calculate what it would cost our country in extra borrowing, which is something that the Tories used to bang on about endlessly when I first came into the House. "You are hanging debt around the neck of future generations," is what we used to hear from George Osborne and David Cameron. The reality is that the hit that the country will take—the extra borrowing that we will require as a result of the hole in our public finances—if we pursue the Chequers model is around £40 billion per annum in the long run, at 15 years out. We will not, unfortunately, get to a good place in 10 years, as one hon. Member said. The Government's own analysis says that we will be £40 billion worse off.

What happens if we pursue WTO terms—if we take the no-deal option that is now being openly, terrifyingly advocated by so many on the Tory Benches? We heard earlier that there is ostensibly now a majority among the ERG group for that, and much more than the 40 that we heard from the hon. Member for Wycombe would vote for it. According to the Government's analysis, the impact would be a 7.7% reduction in our GDP. That equates to about £150 billion less per year. It is more than we spend on the NHS. We are talking as though we are about to throw away the entire annual expenditure of the NHS to satisfy the fantasies of the hon. Member for Stone (Sir William Cash) and others, who have been banging on about this not just in the past few years, but for 30 years.

Luke Graham: The hon. Gentleman is making a lot of criticism of the Conservative party, but does he accept that there have been over 100 resignations on the Labour side of the House, and that the customs union amendment failed because Labour Members voted with the Government? It is fine to criticise, but he is wrong to say that this is just a Conservative problem; it is right across the House.

Owen Smith: I am criticising, in large measure, a small part of the Conservative party that is currently holding the Treasury Bench to ransom, but I would absolutely condemn the actions of Labour Members who failed to support the amendments this week and so allowed the Tories not to put in place some of the backstops that would mitigate the gravest risks we face—the risks of capital flight, job losses and massive borrowing being hung around the necks of our children; the risk to our manufacturing industry; the risk that our pharmaceutical industry, in which I worked for many years, will be unable to supply medicines; the risk of losing prosperity and security; and the risks in Northern Ireland. How can we countenance allowing any return to violence, which the Chief Constable of the Police Service of Northern Ireland warned would be the consequence of a hard Brexit? How can we countenance being so reckless as to allow that to happen?

We have to fight this at every turn. I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench will listen and understand that there is no such thing as a good Brexit or a “jobs first” Brexit. We have to acknowledge that there is just the hard Brexit now being proposed by Members opposite. We have to stand up for the only way in which we can reconsider this—a people’s vote. Trust democracy, trust the people, and ask them to choose between this sovereignty fantasy and the reality and prosperity we need.

6.45 pm

Paul Blomfield (Sheffield Central) (Lab): After the last couple of days, today’s debate has something of the feel of the morning after the night before. Indeed, it has been a sobering debate, reflecting the depth of the crisis that we are in. Two years on from the referendum, the Government are still unable to speak on behalf of the British people. The most important negotiations the country has faced since the second world war are being led by the most dysfunctional Government in living memory.

It does not have to be like this. The Prime Minister was right at Mansion House to say we had to face up to hard facts, but that meant facing down those in her party who put their ideological hostility to the EU before the interests of the country. If she had faced up to the facts two years ago—if she had said then that the country had voted to leave the EU but by a painfully close margin, and that it was a decision to depart but not to destroy our economy, and if she had said that we would leave the EU but remain in a customs union and close to the single market and the members of the agencies and partnerships we had built together—she could have secured a clear majority in this House and built a consensus in the country, which had been so bitterly divided by the referendum.

But she did not. Instead, she handed a veto to the European Research Group—the people who have sought to undermine not just herself at every step but every one

of her predecessors. They are, as John Major commented recently, even more hard-line than those he faced. They are less than 10% of this House but are calling the shots. The tail is wagging the dog. They are demanding the red lines that have held us back—no single market, no customs union, no European Court of Justice, no agencies. To be fair to the Prime Minister, she put that proposition to the British people in last June’s general election. She sought a mandate for an extreme Brexit, but she did not get it. She went into that election with a majority and came out without one.

I remind the hon. Member for Basildon and Billericay (Mr Baron), who sought to misquote our manifesto, as others have done, that at that election we said:

“We will scrap the Conservatives’ Brexit White Paper”—

as we would this one—

“and replace it with fresh negotiating priorities that have a strong emphasis on retaining the benefits of the Single Market and the Customs Union – which are essential for maintaining industries, jobs and businesses”.

Mr Baron: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Paul Blomfield: I will not, because I have answered the hon. Gentleman’s points and we cannot get into a detailed exchange.

The result of the Prime Minister’s approach has been paralysis, not simply on Brexit but on the other crises facing our country. The Government have neither the authority to deal with Brexit nor the ability to tackle the issues that led to it. There has been a dawning realisation from the Prime Minister that those early red lines were a mistake, but each time she tries to step over them, she has been hauled back by the extremists within her party.

At Chequers, it did seem that the Prime Minister was beginning to face up to the hard facts—to break free from the icy grip of the European Research Group. Not far enough, not soon enough, but tentative steps towards reality, towards a customs settlement and a regulatory alignment demanded by business—a point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Richard Burden)—and also necessary to resolve the issue of the Northern Ireland border.

Of course, the former Brexit Secretary was right when he endorsed Donald Trump’s view that the plan would “kill” the prospect of a US-UK deal; and of course, it was just a starting point, not the end point of negotiations. It would inevitably involve further movement by the Government. Knowing that, the ERG tore it to shreds, and Monday night’s debacle was the last nail in the coffin. Rather than defeat the amendments—as they could have, overwhelmingly—the Government rolled over and accepted wrecking amendments that left their White Paper dead in the water. The Minister shakes his head, but if there was any doubt about its death, the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr Baker) laid it to rest today in what was, frankly, a chilling contribution.

While the Prime Minister turns on those in her own party who would welcome the Chequers plan, threatening them, she embraces those who would destroy her, and she continues to bring them into the Government. Having resigned, the hon. Member for Wycombe was succeeded as a Brexit Minister by his predecessor as chair of the ERG, the hon. Member for Daventry (Chris Heaton-Harris) —who, of course, joins another

former chair, the hon. Member for Fareham (Suella Braverman). It is beginning to look as if there is a secondment scheme going on between the ERG and the Brexit ministerial team.

Sir William Cash: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Paul Blomfield: No, I will not; I have not the time. I would love to, but I have not the time.

As I say, it is beginning to look as if there is a secondment scheme. So we may yet see the hon. Member for North East Somerset (Mr Rees-Mogg) make his way down to the Front Bench—or perhaps he thinks he has more power where he is.

Sixteen months into the negotiations, the White Paper says that the Government will now

“charge the UK’s negotiating team to engage with the EU’s at pace”.

The time for “pace” was long ago, but better late than never. It is 16 months since the House set the clock ticking, and in three months we need to resolve the deal. Whatever the polls say now, the public will not thank politicians who deliver a damaging Brexit based on false promises.

Without the threats and bullying that Members faced last night, there was a majority across the House in favour of a sensible approach—one that respects the referendum result, one that protects our constituents’ jobs and livelihoods. If the Government are not willing or are not able to deliver that sensible result, in the months ahead it will be the duty of this House to step in.

6.52 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Mr Robin Walker): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Sheffield Central (Paul Blomfield). He talked about what people had been saying two years ago; of course, the leader of his own party was saying two years ago that we should just trigger article 50 and damn the consequences, and we should not worry about planning and preparing.

The White Paper sets out the right Brexit deal—which will deliver on the result of the referendum, and take back control over our money, laws and borders—and makes detailed proposals for a principled and pragmatic Brexit. I thank Members on both sides of the House for their contributions today, and for the many congratulations to my new Secretary of State, to which I add my own. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr Baker). He will not be surprised that I disagree with much of his analysis, but I recognise his dedication and his passion for this subject. I thank him for his work in our Department, and for his constant courtesy to all our officials.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr Mitchell)—who notified me that, unfortunately, he would have to leave early—spoke about deep divisions on the referendum, but also about the need for people of good will to work together and come together to deliver a successful outcome. I have always believed in that, and it is exactly what we must do in relation to the constructive proposals in the White Paper.

I listened carefully to the right hon. and learned Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Keir Starmer). Both he and the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Owen Smith) included colourful political commentaries in their speeches,

but I think that, coming from a party that has experienced 103 Front-Bench resignations, those should be taken with a pinch of salt. He actually had very little to say about the topic of this debate. What he said about the White Paper was based on taking snippets out of context, which I do not think is a helpful or constructive way to debate.

We talked about the proposal for a free trade area in goods. This would be enabled by a common rulebook for goods, including agri-food; participation in EU agencies that provide authorisation for goods in highly regulated sectors; and the phased introduction of a new facilitated customs arrangement. The arrangement would remove the need for customs checks and controls between the UK and the EU as if they were a combined customs territory, enabling the UK to control its own tariffs to trade with the rest of the world and ensure that businesses pay the right tariff or no tariff. Put simply, it means neither the UK nor the EU imposing tariff barriers on one another that do not exist today.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Richard Burden) spoke passionately about the automotive sector. I believe this is an approach that many in the automotive sector, including those I met over lunch today from Bosch, actually welcome and support. They have said that they would want to get a good hearing in EU member states. In combination with no tariffs on any goods moving between the UK and the EU, these arrangements will avoid new friction at the border and protect integrated supply chains that span both territories. We have heard from a wide range of international and multinational businesses that they would support that approach, but, crucially, as my right hon. Friend the Member for East Devon (Sir Hugo Swire) said, it is one that would deliver for many UK small and medium-sized enterprises that are part of the supply chains. We should never forget the importance of those SMEs.

We heard concerns from Government Members about the common rulebook and parliamentary sovereignty. The UK has played a crucial role in shaping the rules over the past 40 years. They do not change very regularly. They are relatively stable and are supported by a large share of our manufacturing, agricultural and farming businesses.

Sir William Cash: Will the Minister give way?

Mr Walker: I cannot. I am afraid I do not have the time to give way.

High standards in food and product safety are something all our constituents value. As we saw around debates on the TTIP negotiations, our constituents are unlikely to want any trade deal or arrangement that lowers standards. As my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon and Billericay (Mr Baron) pointed out, both the Government and Opposition parties were elected on a promise that we would be able to strike international trade deals. That is a very important point. Our proposals, unlike those from the Opposition, will allow the UK to negotiate new international trade agreements in line with our priorities and interests, including on goods, services and investment. This could include arrangements with the United States, Australia and New Zealand. The UK will explore accession to the comprehensive and progressive agreement on the Trans-Pacific Partnership, consistent with our future relationship with the EU and domestic

[Mr Robin Walker]

priorities. In that context, my right hon. Friend the Trade Secretary recently announced the first public consultations on our future trade agreement negotiations with global partners, which we were not able to do in the TTIP context because that was a negotiation conducted on our behalf by the European Union. I sat on the Business, Innovation and Skills Committee with the hon. Member for Sheffield Central when we scrutinised those proposals at one remove.

I have talked a little about goods. I want to address the important point on services raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Bromley and Chislehurst (Robert Neill). We want a comprehensive but different deal on services and digital, which allows us to exercise greater regulatory freedom in an area where the UK is a world leader. This will not involve adopting a common rulebook for services, as proposed for goods. Instead, we are seeking an ambitious deal for services, which will, among other things, minimise new trade barriers to service provision, allow UK firms to establish in the EU and cover mutual recognition of professional qualifications. On financial services, we are proposing a new economic and regulatory partnership in financial services. That makes sense because, unlike goods, services are not affected by frictions at the border. They are not subject to tariffs or customs. Unlike the vast majority of manufactured goods and agri-food products, most services are not subject to specific standards and regulatory frameworks. The UK is a world leader in services and in the regulation of services. I suspect we will continue to be so.

The Government's proposals deliver a balance—the right hon. Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn) called for a balance—that respects the result of the referendum and the decision of the UK public to take back control of the UK's laws, borders and money, while supporting growth and maintaining security co-operation. Importantly, they safeguard the constitutional and economic integrity of the UK while reclaiming the UK's sovereignty. They protect our economic interests, supporting supply chains and jobs all over the UK, and delivering global opportunities for trade.

The UK will leave the European Union in March. The proposals in the White Paper mean that as we leave we will be a close friend, ally and partner of the EU and a major market for it. Our economy will continue to be strong.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House has considered the future relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union.

Business without Debate

EUROPEAN STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS COMMITTEE (MEMBERSHIP)

Ordered,

That Kirsty Blackman, Nic Dakin, Mr Philip Dunne, Sir David Evennett, Ms Angela Eagle, Vicky Ford, Patrick Grady, Trudy Harrison, Julia Lopez, Ian C Lucas, Sir Patrick McLoughlin, Bridget Phillipson, Mary Robinson, Andrew Selous, Jo Stevens and Liz Twist be members of the European Statutory Instruments Committee.—(Mims Davies.)

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE (19 JULY)

Ordered,

That, at the sitting of the House on Thursday 19 July, the Speaker shall not adjourn the House until he has reported the Royal Assent to any Act agreed upon by both Houses.—(Mims Davies.)

SITTINGS IN WESTMINSTER HALL (4 SEPTEMBER)

Ordered,

That, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No 10(2)(b), the sitting in Westminster Hall on Tuesday 4 September shall begin at 11.30 am, shall be suspended from 1.30 pm to 4.30 pm and may then continue for up to a further three hours.—(Mims Davies.)

DELEGATED LEGISLATION

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118(6)),

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

That the draft International Fund for Agricultural Development (Eleventh Replenishment) Order 2018, which was laid before this House on 20 June, be approved.—(Mims Davies.)

Question agreed to.

[Interruption.]

Mr Speaker: I can tell that these matters are of intense and consuming interest to the right hon. Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn) and the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Owen Smith). Their interest can scarcely be overstated in this important matter.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118(6)),

PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

That the draft Single Source Contract (Amendment) Regulations 2018, which were laid before this House on 4 June, be approved.—(Mims Davies.)

Question agreed to.

Mr Speaker: And finally in this sequence—colleagues bear with me; members of the public do not be too bored—we come to motion 10 on energy.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118(6)),

ENERGY

That the draft Oil and Gas Authority (Offshore Petroleum) (Disclosure of Protected Material after Specified Period) Regulations 2018, which were laid before this House on 13 June, be approved.—(Mims Davies.)

Question agreed to.

PETITIONS

Welsh Performers List

7.1 pm

Susan Elan Jones (Clwyd South) (Lab): I rise to present a petition of residents of Hanmer and Bettisfield in the Clwyd South constituency.

The petition states:

The petitioners...request that the House of Commons urges the Government to legislate in order to ensure that a GP may work in any part of the UK; further to allowing...“English” GPs to work in Welsh GP practices without being included on the Welsh Practitioners List.

Following is the full text of the petition:

[The petition of residents of Hanmer, Bettisfield and Chwyd South,

Declares that GPs having to be listed on the Welsh Performers List in order to practice as a GP in Wales is discriminatory and an unnecessary barrier to attracting GPs to work in Wales.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to legislate in order to ensure that a GP may work in any part of the UK; further to allowing a GPs' Performers List in any other part of the UK; and further to allowing "English" GPs to work in Welsh GP practices without being included on the Welsh Practitioners List.

And the petitioners remain, etc.]

[P002211]

Home Education: draft guidance and consultation

7.2 pm

Steve Double (St Austell and Newquay) (Con): I rise to present a petition on behalf of parents in my constituency who home-educate their children. My constituents feel that, while the views of local authorities have been sought in issuing the guidance, the views of those most directly involved—the parents—have not been sought.

The petitioners therefore request:

that the House of Commons urges the Government to withdraw the draft guidance and the consultation, until it has put in place an accessible and workable complaints procedure and further has consulted with home educating parents, as it has with Local Authorities, what the contents should include.

Following is the full text of the petition:

[The petition of residents of St Austell and Newquay constituency,

Declare that the "Home Education - Call for Evidence and revised DfE guidance" has been written following significant consultation with local authorities and no consultation whatsoever with the home education community; further that the consultation is consequently for little more than show as an intention to implement the content has already been stated: further that it seeks to encourage local authorities to breach the ECHR Article 8 and the GDPR; and further that the report provides no accessible means for a parent to address ultra vires behaviour by their local authority, where many of those authorities already act routinely in an ultra vires manner.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to withdraw the draft guidance and the consultation, until it has put in place an accessible and workable complaints procedure and further has consulted with home educating parents, as it has with Local Authorities, what the contents should include.

And the petitioners remain, etc.]

[P002220]

7.3 pm

Dr Roberta Blackman-Woods (City of Durham) (Lab): I rise to present two petitions. The first is on behalf of my constituents who wish to have better consultation with home educators in drawing up Department for Education guidance on this topic.

The petition states:

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to withdraw the draft guidance and the consultation, until it has put in place an accessible and workable complaints procedure and further has consulted with home educating parents, as it has with Local Authorities, what the contents should include.

Following is the full text of the petition.

[The petition of residents of United Kingdom,

Declare that the "Home Education - Call for Evidence and revised DfE guidance" has been written following significant consultation with local authorities and no consultation whatsoever with the home education community; further that the consultation is consequently for little more than show as an intention to implement the content has already been stated: further that it seeks to encourage local authorities to breach the ECHR Article 8 and the GDPR; and further that the report provides no accessible means for a parent to address ultra vires behaviour by their local authority, where many of those authorities already act routinely in an ultra vires manner.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to withdraw the draft guidance and the consultation, until it has put in place an accessible and workable complaints procedure and further has consulted with home educating parents, as it has with Local Authorities, what the contents should include.

And the petitioners remain, etc.]

[P002234]

Leasehold Terms in Chase Park, Sherburn Village

7.4 pm

Dr Blackman-Woods: I present this petition on behalf of my constituents, and in particular of the petition co-ordinator, Mr Steve Wrathmall.

The petition of residents of the United Kingdom,

Declares that the terms and conditions associated with the lease extensions of leasehold property on the Chase Park Estate, Sherburn village, Durham, are unfair; and further that the current terms and conditions make it difficult to afford a lease extension and to sell or purchase the respective leasehold properties.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to call on the current administrators of the leases on the Chase Park Estate to provide fair evaluation for the cost of lease extension, and to provide fair ground rent terms after the extension of a lease.

[P002235]

Liane Singleton

7.5 pm

Jim McMahon (Oldham West and Royton) (Lab/Co-op): I rise to present a petition in the name of Liane Singleton. I should say that it is quite graphic, but it is the words of her parents who prepared the petition. I also present this on behalf of my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham East and Saddleworth (Debbie Abrahams), who is recovering from a hip operation.

The petition of residents of the United Kingdom,

Declares that on the 3rd of May 1998, our 18-year-old daughter was brutally murdered and dismembered, her body parts then put outside in bags with the rubbish further that her head was shattered with a monkey wrench, she was strangled, and her body was stamped on so hard, her liver was virtually split in two; further that the severity of Liane's injuries, Police were unable to determine which one ended her short life; further that Liane's murderer is soon to be considered for parole, but we strongly

[Jim McMahon]

believe he should remain behind bars for the good of society, and further to protect other parents and families from having to go through the torture and heartbreak that we have endured for the last 20 years.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to review the Liane Singleton case and any other information relating to it, and take action to stop the release.

And the petitioners remain, etc.

[P002236]

Home Education: draft guidance and consultation

7.6 pm

Tom Brake (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD): It is a pleasure to present a petition tonight from my constituent, Natasha Coull. It is on the subject of “Home education: call for evidence and revised DfE guidance”. There are just over 50 signatories. I know that, compared with others, that is not a particularly large number, but I know that the signatories are very passionate about this subject. I recall that, some years ago, I was the subject of one of the home educators’ lessons at one of their homes.

The petition states:

The petition of residents of Carshalton and Wallington constituency,

Declare that the “Home education: call for evidence and revised DfE guidance” has been written following significant consultation with local authorities and no consultation whatsoever with the home education community; further that the consultation is consequently for little more than show as an intention to implement the content has already been stated: further that it seeks to encourage local authorities to breach the ECHR Article 8 and the GDPR; and further that the report provides no accessible means

for a parent to address ultra vires behaviour by their local authority, where many of those authorities already act routinely in an ultra vires manner.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to withdraw the draft guidance and the consultation, until it has put in place an accessible and workable complaints procedure and further has consulted with home educating parents, as it has with Local Authorities, what the contents should include.

And the petitioners remain, etc.

[P002237]

7.8 pm

Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield) (Lab): I rise to present a petition from home educators in my constituency, led by Abigail Purkis and Anne Lyse. The wording of the petition is identical to previous petitions on this subject this evening.

The petition states:

The petition of residents of Birmingham Northfield,

Declare that the “Home Education: Call for Evidence and revised DfE guidance” has been written following significant consultation with local authorities and no consultation whatsoever with the home education community; further that the consultation is consequently for little more than show as an intention to implement the content has already been stated: further that it seeks to encourage local authorities to breach the ECHR Article 8 and the GDPR; and further that the report provides no accessible means for a parent to address ultra vires behaviour by their local authority, where many of those authorities already act routinely in an ultra vires manner.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to withdraw the draft guidance and the consultation, until it has put in place an accessible and workable complaints procedure and further has consulted with home educating parents, as it has with Local Authorities, what the contents should include.

And the petitioners remain, etc.

[P002238]

Road Restructuring: Oxfordshire

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—(Mims Davies.)

7.9 pm

Robert Courts (Witney) (Con): In this House, we often spend a great deal of time discussing national and international issues, but we ought not to forget that sometimes it is the seemingly smaller issues that make a real difference to the lives of the residents we represent. For many of my constituents in West Oxfordshire—rural and town dwellers alike—their first journey to work or to school takes place in a car. Even a short uneventful journey can be marred by the phenomenon known as potholes, which are caused by poorly kept roads.

Potholes may seem like a small problem, but they are in fact a large one, and there are several reasons for that. There is of course the pure discomfort and irritation that affects everybody's quality of life, but things are much more serious than that. On small, poorly lit rural roads, particularly in winter, there is a real danger to the people who are navigating those roads. There is a danger to life and limb, and there is a danger to property. Many constituents have written to me to explain how they have spent many hundreds and sometimes thousands of pounds on vehicle repairs having hit a pothole. This is unquestionably one of the most frequently raised issues with me on the doorstep, so I am grateful to the House for giving me the time to bring the matter before the Minister and to ask for his help.

With the House's permission, I will read out from one or two emails that I have received from constituents as an illustration of the scale of the problem. Peter from Bampton said that the road near him was like "driving on a ploughed field."

A couple from Finstock said that they have lived in West Oxfordshire their whole lives and are "ashamed of our roads". Perhaps Paul from Standlake puts it best:

"The roads in the area are an absolute disgrace, and downright dangerous in many places."

Indeed, as an illustration, I was pleased this week to welcome to Parliament for a tour a group of students and parents who had entered my West Oxfordshire schools photography competition. One of the parents took me aside and said, "While I've got you, could I please take a minute or two of your time to talk to you about potholes?" We cannot possibly overstate the importance of this matter to the residents of West Oxfordshire and Oxfordshire as a whole, and there will be many Members from rural and urban areas alike who will agree.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): Through the armed forces parliamentary scheme, I had the opportunity to visit an RAF base along with the hon. Gentleman and experienced the roads in his constituency, so I understand that this is an important issue not only for him, but for everyone in the House. There is huge tourism potential in the hon. Gentleman's beautiful constituency, so does he agree that we need massive infrastructure investment to ensure that roads are clearly marked, easy to use and in decent condition? Tourism is about visiting big cities and visiting and enjoying rural idylls such as his constituency, but people can do that only if the roads are decent.

Robert Courts: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for making that excellent point and for joining me on that trip to RAF Brize Norton, which I like to speak about in the House as often as I can. This matter is important for tourism, absolutely, because it forms part of the offer and image that we project of our local area, but it is equally important for businesses, which are moving goods around and will wear the costs of vehicle repairs, and for private individuals.

The scale of the issue and of people's concerns should not be underestimated. The issue is not specific to Oxfordshire, but it is more keenly felt because of the many miles of rural roads, which make maintenance a real challenge. The road network in Oxfordshire is 2,994 miles long—15% is A roads, 10% is B roads and 75% are C or unclassified roads, which are the small rural lanes to which the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) referred. A high proportion of C or U roads are often not built to the modern standards that we would expect were the roads to be built now. They are essentially old cart tracks through the rural county which have had tarmac added to them over the decades, and rural locations are hard for maintenance teams to reach to make repairs. That is a particular problem when temperatures drop so low during the winter months.

Alex Chalk (Cheltenham) (Con): Does my hon. Friend agree that what frustrates people across the country, and certainly in Cheltenham, is that contractors are often getting away with poor-quality repairs? If they just did the job properly in the first place, the repair would have a chance of holding and would not leak at the first sign of frost.

Robert Courts: My hon. Friend makes a superb point. I have mentioned the concerns raised when I knock on people's doors, and people express that frustration that potholes come back a few months after being repaired. They just wish it was done properly so that did not happen. The problem is particularly acute around street works, metalwork and so on. The Government are consulting on moves to try to remove metalwork from the roads and to put it on verges and footpaths, where it is safe to do so, as a way of making sure that the phenomenon my hon. Friend rightly mentions is ameliorated. We have to find a way to ensure that repairs remain sound not for a few weeks or months but for years to come.

John Howell (Henley) (Con): Oxfordshire County Council has been given close to £20 million to solve this problem. Why does my hon. Friend think we are seeing no great improvement, despite the advent of dragon patchers? When the council has that money, why does it not try to fix the problem?

Robert Courts: My hon. Friend makes an excellent point, and the Government have certainly been giving more money to local authorities, which are responsible for repairing the roads—I am sure the Minister will refer to that. I have provided some details of the scale of the problem, which perhaps has a great deal to do with it. We have a very rural area, and it is very adversely affected by weather.

One point that I have not yet covered, which relates to that raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Cheltenham (Alex Chalk), is the impact of development and of very heavy lorries. When a housing estate is built,

[Robert Courts]

heavy materials such as breeze blocks, girders, bricks and wood have to be brought in on small, narrow roads. There is a lot of development going on in Oxfordshire, which is a growing and economically busy area. That really adds to the scale of the challenge. The bigger the roads, the bigger the trucks and the greater the damage.

I briefly mentioned the challenge caused by the winter. The snow in December 2017 and further freezes in January and March 2018 have damaged an already fragile network, and it is worth noting that Oxfordshire has a lower proportion of roads assessed as good than the national average, but it also has a lower than average proportion of roads assessed as poor. Although Oxfordshire has a higher than average proportion of roads assessed as fair, fair means five to 15 years of life remaining. That is not a catastrophic state of affairs, but clearly it is an issue that requires a long-term solution.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Henley (John Howell) for mentioning the work of Oxfordshire County Council. Of course we would like the council to do more, but I would also like us to recognise the work it has been doing, particularly in recent weeks and months, while drawing the House's attention to the requirement for further works.

Oxfordshire County Council has 18 crews working on roads in the county, and I understand that is the largest number of crews it has ever used. In the summer it usually has only six crews, so the council is very much aware of the scale of the problem and is working hard to make changes

As my hon. Friend rightly said, Oxfordshire owns two dragon patching machines and shares a third with the highway authority. The machines, which are somewhat dramatically named, use hot tarmac to melt and mend potholes. Rather than just filling the potholes, which means the filler often comes out again, the dragon patchers melt and rework the surface, which is more efficient and lasts longer. Of course, it is much cheaper, too—costing about £22 per defect, compared with £80 per defect using the normal cut-and-fill method. That will help, but it only really helps in rural areas because the surrounding tarmac is melted in the process. That rural area is assisted by dragon patchers. Small crews are able to travel across the county to fix holes more quickly and cheaply and to handle traffic management at the same time. All these steps mean that the council has fixed more than 28,000 defects, of which about 23,000 were potholes, since January 2018. We are talking about potholes, drains and damaged signs.

Alex Chalk: Does my hon. Friend agree that what is so infuriating for residents is seeing one defect repaired but surrounding defects left or areas that we all know are going to crumble in the next frost left unattended? Do we not have to find a more efficient way of fixing holes and the defects around them?

Robert Courts: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that. I was wondering whether he was going to make that point in his earlier intervention, because this is linked to that. He rightly says that people find it frustrating is when one pothole is done but another a foot away is left because it does not meet the intervention level. We all understand that there has to be an intervention level at which county councils start to undertake work; otherwise,

we will be trying to have a bowling green surface and, clearly, it is unreasonable to expect any county council to provide that.

There is a solution, which I will come to shortly. It is why I have entitled this debate “Road Restructuring: Oxfordshire”, as that is what we need to be looking at. Let me give the last of my statistics. In March alone, 5,146 potholes in Oxfordshire were fixed. A lot of work is being done; this is a major task, but a lot is happening as we speak.

I also thank the Minister and the Government for what they have done, as we must not forget that. They have acknowledged the extent of this issue—I have raised it before, and Oxfordshire received an extra £2.9 million in funding from the Department for Transport to repair roads damaged last winter. That included a £1.5 million pothole grant and £1.3 million from the flood resilience fund. I am delighted that, with extraordinary timing—I am grateful to those at the Table Office for having pulled this debate out of the hat when they did—the county council's cabinet approved just yesterday an extra £10 million for road repairs across Oxfordshire. That will pay for a further 46 miles of surface improvements and 52,000 square metres of patching; this is on top of the £8.5 million already spent on carriageways and footway repairs.

Much as I thank the county council for that, and much as I thank the Government for the money they have given, more needs to be done, and residents of all our constituencies, and certainly those in West Oxfordshire, will be expecting me to push for more. The council has agreed in principle to invest a further £120 million over the next 10 years. That is funded by borrowing, so it will have to manage its finances correctly, although I know and trust that it will be able to do that. I would, however, like to register my concern that that is something the county council is having to look at doing, because, as my hon. Friend the Member for Cheltenham has rightly alluded to, what is happening not just in West Oxfordshire, but across the whole UK, is that the roads fundamentally need restructuring.

We are dealing with the fact that tarmac has been added to roads, which over the years have been patched and repaired. What really needs to happen is the removal of that whole surface layer, and kerbs need to be put in, along with sound, watertight, weight-proof surfaces. I accept that that is easier said than done. I understand that to bring the whole of Oxfordshire's road network up to an acceptable standard would cost about £250 million, with a further £21 million required to keep that going through resurfacing and £5 million a year needed for regular maintenance work, such as gully cleaning.

We can use modern technology, such as the FixMyStreet app, whereby people can take a photograph of the defect and send it to the county council, which will come to carry out the repair, and people can see the log of the complaint. That is brilliant and I encourage all hon. Members to speak to their constituents to encourage them to use it. However, it does mean that councils' workloads are dramatically increasing, because each time a defect is reported, someone has to go to look at it. Although this is very efficient, it means a lot more work is required.

I know that others want to get in on this debate, but I just wish to say something about solutions. I would like to reassure the Minister that I am not demanding that

he give me a £250 million cheque for Oxfordshire this evening, although if he has got one, I will gladly receive it—I can see that he is checking his pockets as I speak. The road network in Oxfordshire is going to undergo a dramatic transformation in the near future. We have the Oxford to Milton Keynes and Cambridge expressway. We are looking at A40 improvements, which are necessary; the housing infrastructure fund bid has gone in; and the major road network fund is involved in respect of work on the A40 and A420 in the Wantage constituency. All of this, if successful, will bring much needed improvements to the road network and ease congestion. The Minister will know how often I raise the issue of the A40, and it would not be right if I did not mention it again today.

Jim Shannon: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way again. He has very clearly outlined the important issues on the roads, but does he accept—I say this from the knowledge that I gained of his constituency when we were both involved in the scheme that I mentioned—that the roads were not built to take the current levels of traffic, and they need to be able to do so. May I also mention rural areas and the fact that tractors and vehicles are very large and the roads are not built for them either?

Robert Courts: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. In rural areas, agricultural traffic of tractors and combine harvesters is an added pressure.

The point that I particularly want to make before I conclude is that while much of it is wonderful, we do need extra work on the A40 in particular to ease congestion. That will be effective only if the feeder roads for those major roads are also repaired. That is important.

I raised the issue of potholes with the Minister in May this year. I was very pleased that he agreed with me that we need a more strategic approach to ensure that those C and U roads are not left out. We need to look at that lattice work of small rural roads that lead to the main trunk roads in a strategic way. I am looking forward to hearing from him, perhaps today or in the near future, about his plans on that score.

One thing is absolutely clear: potholes are not just a nuisance, but a real danger to people travelling either at speed on a trunk road or navigating a small rural road at night. They are a huge expense to drivers, and we must ensure that we invest what is required in our road network so that we have modern roads for a modern county.

7.26 pm

Matt Rodda (Reading East) (Lab): I am very grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, the Minister and the hon. Member for Witney (Robert Courts) for indulging me tonight. As a former councillor who served on our transport committee, I do understand and appreciate the issues that the hon. Gentleman faces; significant potholes are a huge problem for many motorists, cyclists and, indeed, pedestrians. I have a great deal of sympathy for him and for the issues that he faces.

I want to raise the related and important issue of the need for a third Thames bridge joining Reading and south Oxfordshire, which links into the overall need for greater infrastructure in Oxfordshire and the surrounding counties of Berkshire and Buckinghamshire. This is of great importance to my constituents and to many other neighbouring residents in other parts of Berkshire.

I want to draw the Minister's attention to the following issues. There are, indeed, a number of bottlenecks across the Thames, and, from speaking to him in the past, I believe that he has experienced lengthy delays at one of them going into Henley, so I hope that he will be sympathetic. Reading has a particular issue: it has a rapidly growing population. It has doubled in size over the past 70 years, added 10,000 extra people in the past 10 years, and the two existing bridges date from the 1920s. I should say, though, that they are positively youthful compared with the neighbouring Sonning Bridge, which straddles the Oxfordshire-Berkshire border and dates from the 18th century. As a result, we suffer from major delays, which have a significant impact on both residents and businesses in the area. Indeed, many commuters from south Oxfordshire struggle to get into work in Reading or in neighbouring towns in Woodley and in Maidenhead, which is in the Prime Minister's constituency, and they are very keen to see a new bridge.

On the possibilities going forward, there is widespread support for action. Indeed, the Prime Minister, as a very well-known and good constituency MP for Maidenhead, has been quoted in local council meetings as being very sympathetic to this issue. Wokingham Borough Council, our neighbouring local authority on the Berkshire side, is supportive. Oxfordshire County Council, at a meeting that I attended last year, agreed in principle that there was a need for a bridge. Indeed, other bridges have been put across the Thames in Oxfordshire—in Wallingford, in central Oxfordshire, for example, and Culham, in a similar area, is due to have a new bridge as well. There is a desire in Oxfordshire for further infrastructure linked with the growth of the central part of the county, linking the growing towns and cities of Oxford, Didcot and Banbury. However, the county council does not have the resource for this bridge in our part of Oxfordshire. I seek to work with it and other partners in government to persuade others who may be more reticent about it to support this project.

I would like to stress in my remaining time that a credible plan has been put forward by Reading and Wokingham councils. A route has been identified. Research has been carried out that shows that this would reduce many of the local pressures in the area, including in Henley and Reading town centres. There is support from a number of local councils, there is cross-party support and there is support from businesses, and we would now like to raise the matter with the Minister.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for indulging me tonight. This is a very worthwhile project, which links to the concerns that colleagues in Oxfordshire have expressed about their infrastructure. It would have huge benefits for local people and businesses. I urge the Minister to investigate it further and to work on it with colleagues from across parties.

7.29 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Jesse Norman): It is a delight for me to be able to speak to this very important issue, and to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Robert Courts) on securing the debate. Those who are watching may not be aware of this, but by Adjournment debate standards, this is a packed House. With all these interventions and speeches, it resembles nothing so much as the circus maximus, by comparison with our regular evening debates.

[*Jesse Norman*]

I can only congratulate the hon. Member for Reading East (Matt Rodda) on crowbarring the topic of his bridge into a debate about local roads in Oxfordshire. He has put his point on the record, and that is all good. As to my hon. Friend the Member for Witney, he has been, as he gently and delicately alluded to, a vigorous campaigner on such issues, and rightly so. One noticed his background as a lawyer in his skilful marshalling of data and arguments into a forensic case of great strength.

I will come to local roads in due course, but I want to start by touching on an important new development, from the Government's standpoint, which relates to the situation of local roads. That is the introduction of a major road network, which is designed to embrace key local roads in a much longer-term funding approach. As my hon. Friend will know, the major road network is designed to serve a series of important objectives: to reduce congestion; to support economic growth and economic rebalancing; to support housing delivery; to benefit cyclists and pedestrians, as well as road users; and, of course, to take some of the pressure off the strategic road network.

I am pleased to say that the major road network will be funded by the new national roads fund—I hope to make an announcement on that relatively soon—which will, in turn, be funded by the receipts from vehicle excise duty and used to invest in these vital roads and deliver a better performance for all users.

My hon. Friend has campaigned to ease congestion, which he quite rightly recognised, on the A40 in Oxfordshire. I assure him that the A40 is on the indicative map for the MRN. Whether that reflects the final map remains to be decided, given all the input from our consultation earlier this year. We intend to publish guidance on the MRN and to confirm the network by the end of the year. If the A40 were to be included, I would encourage my hon. Friend to work with local and regional partners—I am sure he will do so—to make the case for MRN funding.

I turn to local highways. I think it is widely understood, as my hon. Friend has said, that the local road network is one of our most valuable national assets and an essential component not merely of people's economic prosperity, but of their social wellbeing. It is therefore very important to the Government to keep local roads in good condition. After all, they represent 98% of our national highway network. To that end, we place a legal duty on local authorities to maintain the highway under section 41 of the Highways Act 1980.

Good roads are not simply a matter for individuals and families as they go about their lives; they are essential for businesses and important for commercial success. I get plenty of correspondence on this issue. If we were to take a straw poll of Members of Parliament on the importance of addressing potholes and improving local roads, I think we would have a vote of 650 to zero in favour, because everyone believes in it. As colleagues will know, the Government have already taken major steps. We are investing more than £6 billion in funding to local highway authorities in England outside London between 2015 and 2021, and that includes nearly £300 million for a pothole action fund. As my hon. Friend has said, that fund has been of some value in

Oxfordshire. The overall pot of funding is not ring-fenced. Its use is entirely at the discretion of highway authorities, based on their local needs and priorities—and rightly so—to enable them to address the issues they face in their own areas. We recommend that authorities publish a statement on their website as to how that funding is allocated, in the spirit of proper transparency and open accountability to local people. For our part, we allocate part of our funding to local authorities based on the level that they have themselves reached on the path to what we consider to be a proper, adequate asset management plan.

There is of course a backlog of repairs, and the recent winter has certainly not made the situation any better. That backlog is a legacy of past underinvestment that we are seeking to correct. Its effect hitherto has been that roads have been improving, at least until this year's series of cold snaps in the winter. My hon. Friend will know from the road condition statistics that A roads and B and C roads combined have seen a gradual improvement—fewer roads have been considered for maintenance in the past five years.

But of course we believe very strongly that more can be done in this area, and we intend to do more. We therefore champion the need for proper, planned, preventive maintenance based on seeing the road not merely as something, as it were, to be topped up periodically from time to time, but as a recognised asset subject to proper capital asset management principles. It is clear that organisations more widely that have adopted asset management principles can demonstrate benefits in terms of financial efficiency, improved accountability, value for money, and improved customer service. We see no reason why this is not doable with local authorities. Indeed, the evidence is that it is already starting to bear fruit for them.

We continue to offer a lot of money based on a funding formula, as my hon. Friend will know. That was reviewed in 2015 and followed consultation with the highways maintenance sector, including local authorities. We agreed, as part of that, that funding would be based on the local highway assets, including road length, the number of bridges with a span of 1.5 metres or more, and streetlights. We think that the formula is, overall, a fair and equitable way of allocating funding. However, it is important to say that we have also decided to allocate £578 million between 2016-17 and 2020-21. That is to be based on local authorities' own performances as a matter of incentive payments. It therefore provides an incentive for local authorities to treat their roads as assets and manage them properly as a result.

I would like to pick up on a couple of points that have been raised. My hon. Friend the Member for Cheltenham (Alex Chalk), who is no longer in his seat, alas, asked about utilities. We are very concerned that utilities should make proper reinstatements of the road surface to make it fit for purpose. We have powers that deal with such issues. We are seeking to update those according to what are known in the trade as the "Specification for the Reinstatement of Openings in Highways" rules in order to make sure that disruption to the travelling public is minimised where possible.

We have a variety of other schemes designed to serve that end. For example, lane rental schemes apply to the most congested 5% of the network in local authority

areas that choose to adopt them. They have been successfully trialled in London and Kent and we are looking to allow other authorities to set them up in future. We have Street Manager, which is a very important new digital service that may help to transform the planning, management and communication of local works. We are also seeking to encourage local authorities to use permitting schemes, to the extent that they can, to reduce the impact of congestion and better plan and co-ordinate their own works. We are using new technologies. Pothole-spotter trials are being led by the Department in partnership with Thurrock, Yorkshire and Wiltshire councils, with significant private sector input. Those trials, in at least one case, have already won awards for the best use of technology in the highways industry.

We recognise the importance of this issue. We work very closely with the Association of Directors of Planning, Environment and Transport, the RAC Foundation and others. I have met those organisations and others to discuss this issue. As my hon. Friend knows, I want a new settlement for local roads that is long term, transparent and strategic. We recognise their value. We want to bring the same kind of thinking to them that we have seen with the strategic road network and the major road network.

Question put and agreed to.

7.39 pm

House adjourned.

Deferred Divisions

1. EUROPEAN UNION

That the draft European Union (Definition of Treaties) (Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement) (Armenia) Order 2018, which was laid before this House on 4 June, be approved.

The House divided: Ayes 535, Noes 3.

Division No. 225]

AYES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane	Burns, Conor	Dent Coad, Emma	Grant, Mrs Helen
Adams, Nigel	Burt, rh Alistair	Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh	Gray, James
Afolami, Bim	Butler, Dawn	Dinenage, Caroline	Green, Chris
Afriyie, Adam	Byrne, rh Liam	Djanogly, Mr Jonathan	Green, rh Damian
Aldous, Peter	Cable, rh Sir Vince	Docherty, Leo	Green, Kate
Ali, Rushanara	Cadbury, Ruth	Dodds, rh Nigel	Greening, rh Justine
Allan, Lucy	Cairns, rh Alun	Donelan, Michelle	Greenwood, Lilian
Allen, Heidi	Campbell, rh Mr Alan	Dorries, Ms Nadine	Greenwood, Margaret
Amesbury, Mike	Campbell, Mr Gregory	Double, Steve	Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
Amess, Sir David	Campbell, Mr Ronnie	Doughty, Stephen	Griffith, Nia
Andrew, Stuart	Carden, Dan	Dowd, Peter	Griffiths, Andrew
Antoniazzi, Tonia	Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair	Dowden, Oliver	Grogan, John
Argar, Edward	Cartledge, James	Doyle-Price, Jackie	Gwynne, Andrew
Ashworth, Jonathan	Cash, Sir William	Drax, Richard	Gyimah, Mr Sam
Atkins, Victoria	Caulfield, Maria	Drew, Dr David	Haigh, Louise
Austin, Ian	Chalk, Alex	Dromey, Jack	Hair, Kirstene
Bacon, Mr Richard	Champion, Sarah	Duffield, Rosie	Halfon, rh Robert
Badenoch, Mrs Kemi	Chapman, Jenny	Duguid, David	Hall, Luke
Bailey, Mr Adrian	Charalambous, Bambos	Duncan, rh Sir Alan	Hamilton, Fabian
Baker, Mr Steve	Chishti, Rehman	Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain	Hammond, rh Mr Philip
Baldwin, Harriett	Churchill, Jo	Dunne, Mr Philip	Hammond, Stephen
Barron, rh Sir Kevin	Clark, Colin	Eagle, Ms Angela	Hancock, rh Matt
Beckett, rh Margaret	Clark, rh Greg	Eagle, Maria	Hands, rh Greg
Bellingham, Sir Henry	Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth	Efford, Clive	Hanson, rh David
Benn, rh Hilary	Clarke, Mr Simon	Elliott, Julie	Hardy, Emma
Benyon, rh Richard	Cleverly, James	Ellis, Michael	Harman, rh Ms Harriet
Beresford, Sir Paul	Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey	Ellman, Dame Louise	Harper, rh Mr Mark
Berger, Luciana	Coffey, Dr Thérèse	Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias	Harrington, Richard
Berry, Jake	Collins, Damian	Elmore, Chris	Harris, Carolyn
Betts, Mr Clive	Cooper, Julie	Elphicke, Charlie	Harris, Rebecca
Blackman, Bob	Cooper, Rosie	Esterson, Bill	Harrison, Trudy
Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta	Cooper, rh Yvette	Eustice, George	Hart, Simon
Blomfield, Paul	Corbyn, rh Jeremy	Evans, Chris	Hayes, Helen
Blunt, Crispin	Costa, Alberto	Evans, Mr Nigel	Hayes, rh Mr John
Boles, Nick	Courts, Robert	Evennett, rh Sir David	Hayman, Sue
Bone, Mr Peter	Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey	Fabricant, Michael	Heald, rh Sir Oliver
Bottomley, Sir Peter	Coyle, Neil	Fallon, rh Sir Michael	Healey, rh John
Bowie, Andrew	Crabb, rh Stephen	Farrelly, Paul	Heapey, James
Brabin, Tracy	Crausby, Sir David	Farron, Tim	Heaton-Harris, Chris
Bradley, Ben	Creagh, Mary	Field, rh Mark	Heaton-Jones, Peter
Bradley, rh Karen	Creasy, Stella	Fitzpatrick, Jim	Henderson, Gordon
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben	Crouch, Tracey	Flint, rh Caroline	Hepburn, Mr Stephen
Brady, Sir Graham	Cruddas, Jon	Ford, Vicky	Herbert, rh Nick
Brake, rh Tom	Cummins, Judith	Foster, Kevin	Hermon, Lady
Braverman, Suella	Cunningham, Alex	Fovargue, Yvonne	Hill, Mike
Brennan, Kevin	Cunningham, Mr Jim	Fox, rh Dr Liam	Hillier, Meg
Brereton, Jack	Daby, Janet	Foxcroft, Vicky	Hinds, rh Damian
Bridgen, Andrew	Dakin, Nic	Francois, rh Mr Mark	Hoare, Simon
Brine, Steve	Davey, rh Sir Edward	Frazer, Lucy	Hobhouse, Wera
Brokenshire, rh James	David, Wayne	Freer, Mike	Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Brown, Lyn	Davies, Chris	Frith, James	Hoey, Kate
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas	Davies, David T. C.	Furniss, Gill	Hollern, Kate
Bruce, Fiona	Davies, Glyn	Fysh, Mr Marcus	Hollingbery, George
Bryant, Chris	Davies, Mims	Gaffney, Hugh	Hollinrake, Kevin
Buck, Ms Karen	Davies, Philip	Gale, Sir Roger	Hollobone, Mr Philip
Buckland, Robert	Davis, rh Mr David	Gapes, Mike	Holloway, Adam
Burden, Richard	De Cordova, Marsha	Gardiner, Barry	Hopkins, Kelvin
Burghart, Alex	De Piero, Gloria	Garnier, Mark	Howarth, rh Mr George
Burgon, Richard	Debbonaire, Thangam	Gauke, rh Mr David	Howell, John
		Ghani, Ms Nusrat	Huddleston, Nigel
		Gibb, rh Nick	Hughes, Eddie
		Gill, Preet Kaur	Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
		Girvan, Paul	Huq, Dr Rupa
		Glen, John	Hurd, rh Mr Nick
		Glendon, Mary	Hussain, Imran
		Goldsmith, Zac	Jack, Mr Alistair
		Goodman, Helen	James, Margot
		Goodwill, rh Mr Robert	Jardine, Christine
		Gove, rh Michael	Jarvis, Dan
		Graham, Luke	Javid, rh Sajid
		Graham, Richard	Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
		Grant, Bill	Jenkin, Sir Bernard

Jenkyns, Andrea
 Jenrick, Robert
 Johnson, rh Boris
 Johnson, Dr Caroline
 Johnson, Diana
 Johnson, Gareth
 Johnson, Joseph
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, Darren
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Jones, Gerald
 Jones, Graham P.
 Jones, Helen
 Jones, rh Mr Kevan
 Jones, Mr Marcus
 Jones, Sarah
 Jones, Susan Elan
 Kane, Mike
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Keegan, Gillian
 Keeley, Barbara
 Kendall, Liz
 Kennedy, Seema
 Kerr, Stephen
 Khan, Afzal
 Killen, Ged
 Kinnock, Stephen
 Knight, rh Sir Greg
 Knight, Julian
 Kwarteng, Kwasi
 Laird, Lesley
 Lamont, John
 Lancaster, rh Mark
 Latham, Mrs Pauline
 Leadsom, rh Andrea
 Lee, Dr Phillip
 Lefroy, Jeremy
 Leigh, Sir Edward
 Leslie, Mr Chris
 Letwin, rh Sir Oliver
 Lowell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Lewer, Andrew
 Lewis, rh Brandon
 Lewis, Clive
 Lewis, Mr Ivan
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Lidington, rh Mr David
 Little Pengelly, Emma
 Lloyd, Stephen
 Lloyd, Tony
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 Lopez, Julia
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lord, Mr Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lynch, Holly
 Mackinlay, Craig
 Maclean, Rachel
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Main, Mrs Anne
 Mak, Alan
 Malhotra, Seema
 Malthouse, Kit
 Mann, John
 Mann, Scott
 Marsden, Gordon
 Martin, Sandy
 Maskell, Rachael
 Masterton, Paul

Matheson, Christian
 May, rh Mrs Theresa
 Maynard, Paul
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonnell, rh John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McInnes, Liz
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick
 McMahon, Jim
 McMorrin, Anna
 McPartland, Stephen
 McVey, rh Ms Esther
 Mearns, Ian
 Menzies, Mark
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria
 Milling, Amanda
 Mills, Nigel
 Milton, rh Anne
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Moon, Mrs Madeleine
 Moore, Damien
 Moran, Layla
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, rh Nicky
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, Grahame
 Morris, James
 Morton, Wendy
 Mundell, rh David
 Murray, Ian
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll
 Murrison, Dr Andrew
 Nandy, Lisa
 Neill, Robert
 Newton, Sarah
 Nokes, rh Caroline
 Norman, Jesse
 Norris, Alex
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Onasanya, Fiona
 Onn, Melanie
 Onwurah, Chi
 Opperman, Guy
 Owen, Albert
 Parish, Neil
 Patel, rh Priti
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pearce, Teresa
 Penning, rh Sir Mike
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Perkins, Toby
 Perry, rh Claire
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Philp, Chris
 Pincher, Christopher
 Platt, Jo
 Pollard, Luke
 Poulter, Dr Dan
 Pound, Stephen
 Pow, Rebecca

Powell, Lucy
 Prisk, Mr Mark
 Pritchard, Mark
 Pursglove, Tom
 Quin, Jeremy
 Quince, Will
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Raab, rh Dominic
 Rashid, Faisal
 Rayner, Angela
 Redwood, rh John
 Reed, Mr Steve
 Rees, Christina
 Rees-Mogg, Mr Jacob
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reynolds, Jonathan
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Robinson, Gavin
 Robinson, Mary
 Rodda, Matt
 Rosindell, Andrew
 Ross, Douglas
 Rowley, Danielle
 Rowley, Lee
 Ruane, Chris
 Rudd, rh Amber
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
 Rutley, David
 Ryan, rh Joan
 Sandbach, Antoinette
 Scully, Paul
 Selous, Andrew
 Shah, Naz
 Shannon, Jim
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, Alok
 Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Shelbrooke, Alec
 Sherriff, Paula
 Simpson, David
 Simpson, rh Mr Keith
 Skidmore, Chris
 Skinner, Mr Dennis
 Slaughter, Andy
 Smeeth, Ruth
 Smith, Angela
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Eleanor
 Smith, Jeff
 Smith, rh Julian
 Smith, Laura
 Smith, Nick
 Smith, Owen
 Smith, Royston
 Smyth, Karin
 Snell, Gareth
 Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
 Soubry, rh Anna
 Spellar, rh John
 Spelman, rh Dame Caroline
 Spencer, Mark
 Starmer, rh Keir
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevens, Jo
 Stevenson, John

Stewart, Bob
 Stewart, Iain
 Stewart, Rory
 Stone, Jamie
 Streeter, Mr Gary
 Streeting, Wes
 Stride, rh Mel
 Stringer, Graham
 Stuart, Graham
 Sturdy, Julian
 Sunak, Rishi
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Sweeney, Mr Paul
 Swire, rh Sir Hugo
 Syms, Sir Robert
 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
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Stephen
 Twist, Liz
 Umunna, Chuka
 Vaizey, rh Mr Edward
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vaz, Valerie
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Walker, Mr Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Walker, Thelma
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben
 Warburton, David
 Warman, Matt
 Watling, Giles
 Watson, Tom
 West, Catherine
 Western, Matt
 Whately, Helen
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whitfield, Martin
 Whittaker, Craig
 Wiggin, Bill
 Williamson, Chris
 Williamson, rh Gavin
 Wilson, Phil
 Wilson, rh Sammy
 Wollaston, Dr Sarah
 Wood, Mike
 Wragg, Mr William
 Wright, rh Jeremy
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zahawi, Nadhim
 Zeichner, Daniel

NOES

Godsiff, Mr Roger
 Williams, Dr Paul

Woodcock, John

Question accordingly agreed to.

2. EUROPEAN UNION

That the draft European Union (Definition of Treaties) (Association Agreement) (Central America) Order 2018, which was laid before this House on 4 June, be approved.

The House divided: Ayes 534, Noes 3.

Division No. 226]**AYES**

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
 Adams, Nigel
 Afolami, Bim
 Afriyie, Adam
 Aldous, Peter
 Ali, Rushanara
 Allan, Lucy
 Allen, Heidi
 Amesbury, Mike
 Amess, Sir David
 Andrew, Stuart
 Antoniazzi, Tonia
 Argar, Edward
 Ashworth, Jonathan
 Atkins, Victoria
 Austin, Ian
 Bacon, Mr Richard
 Badenoch, Mrs Kemi
 Bailey, Mr Adrian
 Baker, Mr Steve
 Baldwin, Harriett
 Barron, rh Sir Kevin
 Beckett, rh Margaret
 Benn, rh Hilary
 Benyon, rh Richard
 Beresford, Sir Paul
 Berger, Luciana
 Berry, Jake
 Betts, Mr Clive
 Blackman, Bob
 Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta
 Blomfield, Paul
 Blunt, Crispin
 Boles, Nick
 Bone, Mr Peter
 Bottomley, Sir Peter
 Bowie, Andrew
 Brabin, Tracy
 Bradley, Ben
 Bradley, rh Karen
 Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
 Brady, Sir Graham
 Brake, rh Tom
 Braverman, Suella
 Brennan, Kevin
 Brereton, Jack
 Bridgen, Andrew
 Brine, Steve
 Brokenshire, rh James
 Brown, Lyn
 Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
 Bruce, Fiona
 Bryant, Chris
 Buck, Ms Karen
 Buckland, Robert
 Burden, Richard
 Burghart, Alex
 Burgon, Richard
 Burns, Conor
 Burt, rh Alistair

Butler, Dawn
 Byrne, rh Liam
 Cable, rh Sir Vince
 Cadbury, Ruth
 Cairns, rh Alun
 Campbell, rh Mr Alan
 Campbell, Mr Gregory
 Campbell, Mr Ronnie
 Carden, Dan
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Cartledge, James
 Cash, Sir William
 Caulfield, Maria
 Chalk, Alex
 Champion, Sarah
 Chapman, Jenny
 Charalambous, Bambos
 Chishti, Rehman
 Churchill, Jo
 Clark, Colin
 Clark, rh Greg
 Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth
 Clarke, Mr Simon
 Cleverly, James
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
 Coffey, Dr Thérèse
 Collins, Damian
 Cooper, Julie
 Cooper, Rosie
 Cooper, rh Yvette
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy
 Costa, Alberto
 Courts, Robert
 Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey
 Coyle, Neil
 Crabb, rh Stephen
 Crausby, Sir David
 Creagh, Mary
 Creasy, Stella
 Crouch, Tracey
 Cruddas, Jon
 Cummins, Judith
 Cunningham, Alex
 Cunningham, Mr Jim
 Daby, Janet
 Dakin, Nic
 Davey, rh Sir Edward
 David, Wayne
 Davies, Chris
 Davies, David T. C.
 Davies, Glyn
 Davies, Mims
 Davies, Philip
 Davis, rh Mr David
 De Cordova, Marsha
 De Piero, Gloria
 Debbonaire, Thangam
 Dent Coad, Emma
 Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
 Dinanage, Caroline

Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
 Docherty, Leo
 Dodds, rh Nigel
 Donelan, Michelle
 Dorries, Ms Nadine
 Double, Steve
 Doughty, Stephen
 Dowd, Peter
 Dowden, Oliver
 Doyle-Price, Jackie
 Drax, Richard
 Drew, Dr David
 Dromey, Jack
 Duffield, Rosie
 Duguid, David
 Duncan, rh Sir Alan
 Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
 Dunne, Mr Philip
 Eagle, Ms Angela
 Eagle, Maria
 Efford, Clive
 Elliott, Julie
 Ellis, Michael
 Ellman, Dame Louise
 Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
 Elmore, Chris
 Elphicke, Charlie
 Esterson, Bill
 Eustice, George
 Evans, Chris
 Evans, Mr Nigel
 Evennett, rh Sir David
 Fabricant, Michael
 Fallon, rh Sir Michael
 Farrelly, Paul
 Farron, Tim
 Field, rh Mark
 Fitzpatrick, Jim
 Flint, rh Caroline
 Ford, Vicky
 Foster, Kevin
 Fovargue, Yvonne
 Fox, rh Dr Liam
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Francois, rh Mr Mark
 Frazer, Lucy
 Freer, Mike
 Frith, James
 Furniss, Gill
 Fysh, Mr Marcus
 Gaffney, Hugh
 Gale, Sir Roger
 Gapes, Mike
 Gardiner, Barry
 Garnier, Mark
 Gauke, rh Mr David
 Ghani, Ms Nusrat
 Gibb, rh Nick
 Gill, Preet Kaur
 Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl
 Girvan, Paul
 Glen, John
 Glendon, Mary
 Goldsmith, Zac
 Goodman, Helen
 Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
 Gove, rh Michael
 Graham, Luke
 Graham, Richard
 Grant, Bill
 Grant, Mrs Helen
 Gray, James

Green, Chris
 Green, rh Damian
 Green, Kate
 Greening, rh Justine
 Greenwood, Lilian
 Greenwood, Margaret
 Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
 Griffith, Nia
 Griffiths, Andrew
 Grogan, John
 Gwynne, Andrew
 Gyimah, Mr Sam
 Haigh, Louise
 Hair, Kirstene
 Halfon, rh Robert
 Hall, Luke
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hammond, rh Mr Philip
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, rh Matt
 Hands, rh Greg
 Hanson, rh David
 Hardy, Emma
 Harman, rh Ms Harriet
 Harper, rh Mr Mark
 Harrington, Richard
 Harris, Carolyn
 Harris, Rebecca
 Harrison, Trudy
 Hart, Simon
 Hayes, Helen
 Hayes, rh Mr John
 Hayman, Sue
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver
 Healey, rh John
 Heapey, James
 Heaton-Harris, Chris
 Heaton-Jones, Peter
 Henderson, Gordon
 Hepburn, Mr Stephen
 Herbert, rh Nick
 Hermon, Lady
 Hill, Mike
 Hillier, Meg
 Hinds, rh Damian
 Hoare, Simon
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hoey, Kate
 Hollern, Kate
 Hollingbery, George
 Hollinrake, Kevin
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holloway, Adam
 Hopkins, Kelvin
 Howarth, rh Mr George
 Howell, John
 Huddleston, Nigel
 Hughes, Eddie
 Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Hurd, rh Mr Nick
 Hussain, Imran
 Jack, Mr Alister
 James, Margot
 Jardine, Christine
 Jarvis, Dan
 Javid, rh Sajid
 Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard

Jenkyns, Andrea
 Jenrick, Robert
 Johnson, rh Boris
 Johnson, Dr Caroline
 Johnson, Diana
 Johnson, Gareth
 Johnson, Joseph
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, Darren
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Jones, Gerald
 Jones, Graham P.
 Jones, Helen
 Jones, rh Mr Kevan
 Jones, Mr Marcus
 Jones, Sarah
 Jones, Susan Elan
 Kane, Mike
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Keegan, Gillian
 Keeley, Barbara
 Kendall, Liz
 Kennedy, Seema
 Kerr, Stephen
 Khan, Afzal
 Killen, Ged
 Kinnock, Stephen
 Knight, rh Sir Greg
 Knight, Julian
 Kwarteng, Kwasi
 Laird, Lesley
 Lamont, John
 Lancaster, rh Mark
 Latham, Mrs Pauline
 Leadsom, rh Andrea
 Lee, Dr Phillip
 Lefroy, Jeremy
 Leigh, Sir Edward
 Leslie, Mr Chris
 Letwin, rh Sir Oliver
 Lowell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Lewer, Andrew
 Lewis, rh Brandon
 Lewis, Clive
 Lewis, Mr Ivan
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Lidington, rh Mr David
 Little Pengelly, Emma
 Lloyd, Stephen
 Lloyd, Tony
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 Lopez, Julia
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lord, Mr Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lynch, Holly
 Mackinlay, Craig
 Maclean, Rachel
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Main, Mrs Anne
 Mak, Alan
 Malhotra, Seema
 Malthouse, Kit
 Mann, John
 Mann, Scott
 Marsden, Gordon
 Martin, Sandy
 Maskell, Rachael
 Masterton, Paul

Matheson, Christian
 May, rh Mrs Theresa
 Maynard, Paul
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonnell, rh John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McInnes, Liz
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick
 McMahon, Jim
 McMorrin, Anna
 McPartland, Stephen
 McVey, rh Ms Esther
 Mearns, Ian
 Menzies, Mark
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria
 Milling, Amanda
 Mills, Nigel
 Milton, rh Anne
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Moon, Mrs Madeleine
 Moore, Damien
 Moran, Layla
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, rh Nicky
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, Grahame
 Morris, James
 Morton, Wendy
 Mundell, rh David
 Murray, Ian
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll
 Murrison, Dr Andrew
 Nandy, Lisa
 Neill, Robert
 Newton, Sarah
 Nokes, rh Caroline
 Norman, Jesse
 Norris, Alex
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Onasanya, Fiona
 Onn, Melanie
 Onwurah, Chi
 Opperman, Guy
 Owen, Albert
 Parish, Neil
 Patel, rh Priti
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pearce, Teresa
 Penning, rh Sir Mike
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Perkins, Toby
 Perry, rh Claire
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Philp, Chris
 Pincher, Christopher
 Platt, Jo
 Pollard, Luke
 Poulter, Dr Dan
 Pound, Stephen
 Pow, Rebecca

Powell, Lucy
 Prisk, Mr Mark
 Pritchard, Mark
 Pursglove, Tom
 Quin, Jeremy
 Quince, Will
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Raab, rh Dominic
 Rashid, Faisal
 Rayner, Angela
 Redwood, rh John
 Reed, Mr Steve
 Rees, Christina
 Rees-Mogg, Mr Jacob
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reynolds, Jonathan
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Robinson, Gavin
 Robinson, Mary
 Rodda, Matt
 Rosindell, Andrew
 Ross, Douglas
 Rowley, Danielle
 Rowley, Lee
 Ruane, Chris
 Rudd, rh Amber
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
 Rutley, David
 Ryan, rh Joan
 Sandbach, Antoinette
 Scully, Paul
 Selous, Andrew
 Shah, Naz
 Shannon, Jim
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, Alok
 Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Shelbrooke, Alec
 Sherriff, Paula
 Simpson, David
 Simpson, rh Mr Keith
 Skidmore, Chris
 Skinner, Mr Dennis
 Slaughter, Andy
 Smeeth, Ruth
 Smith, Angela
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Eleanor
 Smith, Jeff
 Smith, rh Julian
 Smith, Laura
 Smith, Nick
 Smith, Owen
 Smith, Royston
 Smyth, Karin
 Snell, Gareth
 Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
 Soubry, rh Anna
 Spellar, rh John
 Spelman, rh Dame
 Caroline
 Spencer, Mark
 Starmer, rh Keir
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevens, Jo

Stevenson, John
 Stewart, Bob
 Stewart, Iain
 Stewart, Rory
 Stone, Jamie
 Streeter, Mr Gary
 Streeting, Wes
 Stride, rh Mel
 Stringer, Graham
 Stuart, Graham
 Sturdy, Julian
 Sunak, Rishi
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Sweeney, Mr Paul
 Swire, rh Sir Hugo
 Syms, Sir Robert
 Tami, Mark
 Thomas, Derek
 Thomas, Gareth
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick
 Thomson, Ross
 Throup, Maggie
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Tolhurst, Kelly
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Treddinick, David
 Trevelyan, Mrs Anne-Marie
 Truss, rh Elizabeth
 Tugendhat, Tom
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Stephen
 Twist, Liz
 Umunna, Chuka
 Vaizey, rh Mr Edward
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vaz, Valerie
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Walker, Mr Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Walker, Thelma
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben
 Warburton, David
 Warman, Matt
 Watling, Giles
 Watson, Tom
 West, Catherine
 Western, Matt
 Whately, Helen
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whitfield, Martin
 Whittaker, Craig
 Wiggin, Bill
 Williamson, Chris
 Williamson, rh Gavin
 Wilson, Phil
 Wilson, rh Sammy
 Wood, Mike
 Wragg, Mr William
 Wright, rh Jeremy
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zahawi, Nadhim
 Zeichner, Daniel

NOES

Godsiff, Mr Roger
 Williams, Dr Paul

Woodcock, John

Question accordingly agreed to.

3. EUROPEAN UNION

That the draft European Union (Definition of Treaties) (Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement) (Cuba) Order 2018, which was laid before this House on 4 June, be approved.

The House divided: Ayes 534, Noes 3.

Division No. 227]**AYES**

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
 Adams, Nigel
 Afolami, Bim
 Afriyie, Adam
 Aldous, Peter
 Ali, Rushanara
 Allan, Lucy
 Allen, Heidi
 Amess, Sir David
 Andrew, Stuart
 Antoniazzi, Tonia
 Argar, Edward
 Ashworth, Jonathan
 Atkins, Victoria
 Austin, Ian
 Bacon, Mr Richard
 Badenoch, Mrs Kemi
 Bailey, Mr Adrian
 Baker, Mr Steve
 Baldwin, Harriett
 Barron, rh Sir Kevin
 Beckett, rh Margaret
 Benn, rh Hilary
 Benyon, rh Richard
 Beresford, Sir Paul
 Berger, Luciana
 Berry, Jake
 Betts, Mr Clive
 Blackman, Bob
 Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta
 Blomfield, Paul
 Blunt, Crispin
 Boles, Nick
 Bone, Mr Peter
 Bottomley, Sir Peter
 Bowie, Andrew
 Brabin, Tracy
 Bradley, Ben
 Bradley, rh Karen
 Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
 Brady, Sir Graham
 Brake, rh Tom
 Braverman, Suella
 Brennan, Kevin
 Brereton, Jack
 Bridgen, Andrew
 Brine, Steve
 Brokenshire, rh James
 Brown, Lyn
 Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
 Bruce, Fiona
 Bryant, Chris
 Buck, Ms Karen
 Buckland, Robert
 Burden, Richard
 Burghart, Alex
 Burgon, Richard
 Burns, Conor
 Burt, rh Alistair

Butler, Dawn
 Byrne, rh Liam
 Cable, rh Sir Vince
 Cadbury, Ruth
 Cairns, rh Alun
 Campbell, rh Mr Alan
 Campbell, Mr Gregory
 Campbell, Mr Ronnie
 Carden, Dan
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Cartledge, James
 Cash, Sir William
 Caulfield, Maria
 Chalk, Alex
 Champion, Sarah
 Chapman, Jenny
 Charalambous, Bambos
 Chishty, Rehman
 Churchill, Jo
 Clark, Colin
 Clark, rh Greg
 Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth
 Clarke, Mr Simon
 Cleverly, James
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
 Coffey, Dr Thérèse
 Collins, Damian
 Cooper, Julie
 Cooper, Rosie
 Cooper, rh Yvette
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy
 Costa, Alberto
 Courts, Robert
 Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey
 Coyle, Neil
 Crabb, rh Stephen
 Crausby, Sir David
 Creagh, Mary
 Creasy, Stella
 Crouch, Tracey
 Cruddas, Jon
 Cummins, Judith
 Cunningham, Alex
 Cunningham, Mr Jim
 Daby, Janet
 Dakin, Nic
 Davey, rh Sir Edward
 David, Wayne
 Davies, Chris
 Davies, David T. C.
 Davies, Glyn
 Davies, Mims
 Davies, Philip
 Davis, rh Mr David
 De Cordova, Marsha
 De Piero, Gloria
 Debbonaire, Thangam
 Dent Coad, Emma
 Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
 Dinenage, Caroline
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
 Docherty, Leo
 Dodds, rh Nigel

Donelan, Michelle
 Dorries, Ms Nadine
 Double, Steve
 Doughty, Stephen
 Dowd, Peter
 Dowden, Oliver
 Doyle-Price, Jackie
 Drax, Richard
 Drew, Dr David
 Dromey, Jack
 Duffield, Rosie
 Duguid, David
 Duncan, rh Sir Alan
 Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
 Dunne, Mr Philip
 Eagle, Ms Angela
 Eagle, Maria
 Efford, Clive
 Elliott, Julie
 Ellis, Michael
 Ellman, Dame Louise
 Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
 Elmore, Chris
 Elphicke, Charlie
 Esterson, Bill
 Eustice, George
 Evans, Chris
 Evans, Mr Nigel
 Evennett, rh Sir David
 Fabricant, Michael
 Fallon, rh Sir Michael
 Farrelly, Paul
 Farron, Tim
 Field, rh Mark
 Fitzpatrick, Jim
 Flint, rh Caroline
 Ford, Vicky
 Foster, Kevin
 Fovargue, Yvonne
 Fox, rh Dr Liam
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Francois, rh Mr Mark
 Frazer, Lucy
 Freer, Mike
 Frith, James
 Furniss, Gill
 Fysh, Mr Marcus
 Gaffney, Hugh
 Gale, Sir Roger
 Gapes, Mike
 Gardiner, Barry
 Garnier, Mark
 Gauke, rh Mr David
 Ghani, Ms Nusrat
 Gibb, rh Nick
 Gill, Preet Kaur
 Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl
 Girvan, Paul
 Glen, John
 Glindon, Mary
 Goldsmith, Zac
 Goodman, Helen
 Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
 Gove, rh Michael
 Graham, Luke
 Graham, Richard
 Grant, Bill
 Grant, Mrs Helen
 Gray, James
 Green, Chris
 Green, rh Damian
 Green, Kate
 Greening, rh Justine
 Greenwood, Lilian
 Greenwood, Margaret
 Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
 Griffith, Nia
 Griffiths, Andrew
 Grogan, John
 Gwynne, Andrew
 Gyimah, Mr Sam
 Haigh, Louise
 Hair, Kirstene
 Halfon, rh Robert
 Hall, Luke
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hammond, rh Mr Philip
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, rh Matt
 Hands, rh Greg
 Hanson, rh David
 Hardy, Emma
 Harman, rh Ms Harriet
 Harper, rh Mr Mark
 Harrington, Richard
 Harris, Carolyn
 Harris, Rebecca
 Harrison, Trudy
 Hart, Simon
 Hayes, Helen
 Hayes, rh Mr John
 Hayman, Sue
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver
 Healey, rh John
 Heapey, James
 Heaton-Harris, Chris
 Heaton-Jones, Peter
 Henderson, Gordon
 Hepburn, Mr Stephen
 Herbert, rh Nick
 Hermon, Lady
 Hill, Mike
 Hillier, Meg
 Hinds, rh Damian
 Hoare, Simon
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hoey, Kate
 Hollern, Kate
 Hollingbery, George
 Hollinrake, Kevin
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holloway, Adam
 Hopkins, Kelvin
 Howarth, rh Mr George
 Howell, John
 Huddleston, Nigel
 Hughes, Eddie
 Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Hurd, rh Mr Nick
 Hussain, Imran
 Jack, Mr Alister
 James, Margot
 Jardine, Christine
 Jarvis, Dan
 Javid, rh Sajid
 Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard
 Jenkyns, Andrea
 Jenrick, Robert

Johnson, rh Boris
 Johnson, Dr Caroline
 Johnson, Diana
 Johnson, Gareth
 Johnson, Joseph
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, Darren
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Jones, Gerald
 Jones, Graham P.
 Jones, Helen
 Jones, rh Mr Kevan
 Jones, Mr Marcus
 Jones, Sarah
 Jones, Susan Elan
 Kane, Mike
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Keegan, Gillian
 Keeley, Barbara
 Kendall, Liz
 Kennedy, Seema
 Kerr, Stephen
 Khan, Afzal
 Killen, Ged
 Kinnock, Stephen
 Knight, rh Sir Greg
 Knight, Julian
 Kwarteng, Kwasi
 Laird, Lesley
 Lamont, John
 Lancaster, rh Mark
 Latham, Mrs Pauline
 Leadsom, rh Andrea
 Lee, Dr Phillip
 Lefroy, Jeremy
 Leigh, Sir Edward
 Leslie, Mr Chris
 Letwin, rh Sir Oliver
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Lewer, Andrew
 Lewis, rh Brandon
 Lewis, Clive
 Lewis, Mr Ivan
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Lidington, rh Mr David
 Little Pengelly, Emma
 Lloyd, Stephen
 Lloyd, Tony
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 Lopez, Julia
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lord, Mr Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lynch, Holly
 Mackinlay, Craig
 Maclean, Rachel
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Main, Mrs Anne
 Mak, Alan
 Malhotra, Seema
 Malthouse, Kit
 Mann, John
 Mann, Scott
 Marsden, Gordon
 Martin, Sandy
 Maskell, Rachael
 Masterton, Paul
 Matheson, Christian
 May, rh Mrs Theresa

Maynard, Paul
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonnell, rh John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McInnes, Liz
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick
 McMahon, Jim
 McMorrin, Anna
 McPartland, Stephen
 McVey, rh Ms Esther
 Mearns, Ian
 Menzies, Mark
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria
 Milling, Amanda
 Mills, Nigel
 Milton, rh Anne
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Moon, Mrs Madeleine
 Moore, Damien
 Moran, Layla
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, rh Nicky
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, Grahame
 Morris, James
 Morton, Wendy
 Mundell, rh David
 Murray, Ian
 Murray, Mrs Sheryl
 Murrison, Dr Andrew
 Nandy, Lisa
 Neill, Robert
 Newton, Sarah
 Nokes, rh Caroline
 Norman, Jesse
 Norris, Alex
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Onasanya, Fiona
 Onn, Melanie
 Onwurah, Chi
 Opperman, Guy
 Owen, Albert
 Parish, Neil
 Patel, rh Priti
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pearce, Teresa
 Penning, rh Sir Mike
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Perkins, Toby
 Perry, rh Claire
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Philp, Chris
 Pincher, Christopher
 Platt, Jo
 Pollard, Luke
 Poulter, Dr Dan
 Pound, Stephen
 Pow, Rebecca
 Powell, Lucy
 Prisk, Mr Mark

Pritchard, Mark
 Pursglove, Tom
 Quin, Jeremy
 Quince, Will
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Raab, rh Dominic
 Rashid, Faisal
 Rayner, Angela
 Redwood, rh John
 Reed, Mr Steve
 Rees, Christina
 Rees-Mogg, Mr Jacob
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reynolds, Jonathan
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Robinson, Gavin
 Robinson, Mary
 Rodda, Matt
 Rosindell, Andrew
 Ross, Douglas
 Rowley, Danielle
 Rowley, Lee
 Ruane, Chris
 Rudd, rh Amber
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
 Rutley, David
 Ryan, rh Joan
 Sandbach, Antoinette
 Scully, Paul
 Selous, Andrew
 Shah, Naz
 Shannon, Jim
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, Alok
 Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Shelbrooke, Alec
 Sherriff, Paula
 Simpson, David
 Simpson, rh Mr Keith
 Skidmore, Chris
 Skinner, Mr Dennis
 Slaughter, Andy
 Smeeth, Ruth
 Smith, Angela
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Eleanor
 Smith, Jeff
 Smith, rh Julian
 Smith, Laura
 Smith, Nick
 Smith, Owen
 Smith, Royston
 Smyth, Karin
 Snell, Gareth
 Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
 Soubry, rh Anna
 Spellar, rh John
 Spelman, rh Dame
 Caroline
 Spencer, Mark
 Starmer, rh Keir
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevens, Jo
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, Bob

Stewart, Iain
 Stewart, Rory
 Stone, Jamie
 Streeter, Mr Gary
 Streeting, Wes
 Stride, rh Mel
 Stringer, Graham
 Stuart, Graham
 Sturdy, Julian
 Sunak, Rishi
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Sweeney, Mr Paul
 Swire, rh Sir Hugo
 Syms, Sir Robert
 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
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Stephen
 Twist, Liz
 Umunna, Chuka
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vaz, Valerie
 Vickers, Martin
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Walker, Mr Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Walker, Thelma
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben
 Warburton, David
 Warman, Matt
 Watling, Giles
 Watson, Tom
 West, Catherine
 Western, Matt
 Whately, Helen
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whitfield, Martin
 Whittaker, Craig
 Wiggin, Bill
 Williamson, Chris
 Williamson, rh Gavin
 Wilson, Phil
 Wilson, rh Sammy
 Wollaston, Dr Sarah
 Wood, Mike
 Wragg, Mr William
 Wright, rh Jeremy
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zahawi, Nadhim
 Zeichner, Daniel

NOES

Godsiff, Mr Roger
 Williams, Dr Paul
 Woodcock, John

Question accordingly agreed to.

4. EUROPEAN UNION

That the draft European Union (Definition of Treaties) (Strategic Partnership Agreement) (Canada) Order 2018, which was laid before this House on 4 June, be approved.

The House divided: Ayes 534, Noes 3.

Division No. 228]**AYES**

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
 Adams, Nigel
 Afolami, Bim
 Afriyie, Adam
 Aldous, Peter
 Ali, Rushanara
 Allan, Lucy
 Allen, Heidi
 Amess, Sir David
 Andrew, Stuart
 Antoniazzi, Tonia
 Argar, Edward
 Ashworth, Jonathan
 Atkins, Victoria
 Austin, Ian
 Bacon, Mr Richard
 Badenoch, Mrs Kemi
 Bailey, Mr Adrian
 Baker, Mr Steve
 Baldwin, Harriett
 Barron, rh Sir Kevin
 Beckett, rh Margaret
 Bellingham, Sir Henry
 Benn, rh Hilary
 Benyon, rh Richard
 Beresford, Sir Paul
 Berger, Luciana
 Berry, Jake
 Betts, Mr Clive
 Blackman, Bob
 Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta
 Blomfield, Paul
 Blunt, Crispin
 Boles, Nick
 Bone, Mr Peter
 Bottomley, Sir Peter
 Bowie, Andrew
 Brabin, Tracy
 Bradley, Ben
 Bradley, rh Karen
 Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
 Brady, Sir Graham
 Brake, rh Tom
 Braverman, Suella
 Brennan, Kevin
 Brereton, Jack
 Bridgen, Andrew
 Brine, Steve
 Brokenshire, rh James
 Brown, Lyn
 Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
 Bruce, Fiona
 Bryant, Chris
 Buck, Ms Karen
 Buckland, Robert
 Burden, Richard
 Burghart, Alex
 Burgon, Richard
 Burns, Conor
 Burt, rh Alistair

Butler, Dawn
 Byrne, rh Liam
 Cable, rh Sir Vince
 Cadbury, Ruth
 Cairns, rh Alun
 Campbell, rh Mr Alan
 Campbell, Mr Gregory
 Campbell, Mr Ronnie
 Carden, Dan
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Cartledge, James
 Cash, Sir William
 Caulfield, Maria
 Chalk, Alex
 Champion, Sarah
 Chapman, Jenny
 Charalambous, Bambos
 Chishty, Rehman
 Churchill, Jo
 Clark, Colin
 Clark, rh Greg
 Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth
 Clarke, Mr Simon
 Cleverly, James
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
 Coffey, Dr Thérèse
 Collins, Damian
 Cooper, Julie
 Cooper, Rosie
 Cooper, rh Yvette
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy
 Costa, Alberto
 Courts, Robert
 Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey
 Coyle, Neil
 Crabb, rh Stephen
 Crausby, Sir David
 Creagh, Mary
 Creasy, Stella
 Crouch, Tracey
 Cruddas, Jon
 Cummins, Judith
 Cunningham, Alex
 Cunningham, Mr Jim
 Daby, Janet
 Dakin, Nic
 Davey, rh Sir Edward
 David, Wayne
 Davies, Chris
 Davies, David T. C.
 Davies, Glyn
 Davies, Mims
 Davies, Philip
 Davis, rh Mr David
 De Cordova, Marsha
 De Piero, Gloria
 Debbonaire, Thangam
 Dent Coad, Emma
 Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
 Dinenage, Caroline
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan

Docherty, Leo
 Dodds, rh Nigel
 Donelan, Michelle
 Dorries, Ms Nadine
 Double, Steve
 Doughty, Stephen
 Dowd, Peter
 Dowden, Oliver
 Doyle-Price, Jackie
 Drax, Richard
 Drew, Dr David
 Dromey, Jack
 Duffield, Rosie
 Duguid, David
 Duncan, rh Sir Alan
 Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
 Dunne, Mr Philip
 Eagle, Ms Angela
 Eagle, Maria
 Efford, Clive
 Elliott, Julie
 Ellis, Michael
 Ellman, Dame Louise
 Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
 Elmore, Chris
 Elphicke, Charlie
 Esterson, Bill
 Eustice, George
 Evans, Chris
 Evans, Mr Nigel
 Evennett, rh Sir David
 Fabricant, Michael
 Fallon, rh Sir Michael
 Farrelly, Paul
 Farron, Tim
 Field, rh Mark
 Fitzpatrick, Jim
 Flint, rh Caroline
 Ford, Vicky
 Foster, Kevin
 Fovargue, Yvonne
 Fox, rh Dr Liam
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Francois, rh Mr Mark
 Frazer, Lucy
 Freer, Mike
 Frith, James
 Furniss, Gill
 Fysh, Mr Marcus
 Gaffney, Hugh
 Gale, Sir Roger
 Gapes, Mike
 Gardiner, Barry
 Garnier, Mark
 Gauke, rh Mr David
 Ghani, Ms Nusrat
 Gibb, rh Nick
 Gill, Preet Kaur
 Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl
 Girvan, Paul
 Glen, John
 Glindon, Mary
 Goldsmith, Zac
 Goodman, Helen
 Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
 Gove, rh Michael
 Graham, Luke
 Graham, Richard
 Grant, Bill
 Grant, Mrs Helen
 Gray, James
 Green, Chris
 Green, rh Damian
 Green, Kate
 Greening, rh Justine
 Greenwood, Lilian
 Greenwood, Margaret
 Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
 Griffith, Nia
 Griffiths, Andrew
 Grogan, John
 Gwynne, Andrew
 Gyimah, Mr Sam
 Haigh, Louise
 Hair, Kirstene
 Halfon, rh Robert
 Hall, Luke
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hammond, rh Mr Philip
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, rh Matt
 Hands, rh Greg
 Hanson, rh David
 Hardy, Emma
 Harman, rh Ms Harriet
 Harper, rh Mr Mark
 Harrington, Richard
 Harris, Carolyn
 Harris, Rebecca
 Harrison, Trudy
 Hart, Simon
 Hayes, Helen
 Hayes, rh Mr John
 Hayman, Sue
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver
 Healey, rh John
 Heapey, James
 Heaton-Harris, Chris
 Heaton-Jones, Peter
 Henderson, Gordon
 Hepburn, Mr Stephen
 Herbert, rh Nick
 Hermon, Lady
 Hill, Mike
 Hillier, Meg
 Hinds, rh Damian
 Hoare, Simon
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hoey, Kate
 Hollern, Kate
 Hollingbery, George
 Hollinrake, Kevin
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holloway, Adam
 Hopkins, Kelvin
 Howarth, rh Mr George
 Howell, John
 Huddleston, Nigel
 Hughes, Eddie
 Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Hurd, rh Mr Nick
 Hussain, Imran
 Jack, Mr Alistair
 James, Margot
 Jardine, Christine
 Jarvis, Dan
 Javid, rh Sajid
 Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard
 Jenkyns, Andrea

Jenrick, Robert
 Johnson, rh Boris
 Johnson, Dr Caroline
 Johnson, Diana
 Johnson, Gareth
 Johnson, Joseph
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, Darren
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Jones, Gerald
 Jones, Graham P.
 Jones, Helen
 Jones, rh Mr Kevan
 Jones, Mr Marcus
 Jones, Sarah
 Jones, Susan Elan
 Kane, Mike
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Keegan, Gillian
 Keeley, Barbara
 Kendall, Liz
 Kennedy, Seema
 Kerr, Stephen
 Khan, Afzal
 Killen, Ged
 Kinnock, Stephen
 Knight, rh Sir Greg
 Knight, Julian
 Kwarteng, Kwasi
 Laird, Lesley
 Lamont, John
 Lancaster, rh Mark
 Latham, Mrs Pauline
 Leadsom, rh Andrea
 Lee, Dr Phillip
 Lefroy, Jeremy
 Leigh, Sir Edward
 Leslie, Mr Chris
 Letwin, rh Sir Oliver
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Lewer, Andrew
 Lewis, rh Brandon
 Lewis, Clive
 Lewis, Mr Ivan
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Lidington, rh Mr David
 Little Pengelly, Emma
 Lloyd, Stephen
 Lloyd, Tony
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 Lopez, Julia
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lord, Mr Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lynch, Holly
 Mackinlay, Craig
 Maclean, Rachel
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Main, Mrs Anne
 Mak, Alan
 Malhotra, Seema
 Malthouse, Kit
 Mann, John
 Mann, Scott
 Marsden, Gordon
 Martin, Sandy
 Maskell, Rachael
 Masterton, Paul
 Matheson, Christian

May, rh Mrs Theresa
 Maynard, Paul
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonnell, rh John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McInnes, Liz
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick
 McMahon, Jim
 McMorris, Anna
 McPartland, Stephen
 McVey, rh Ms Esther
 Mearns, Ian
 Menzies, Mark
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria
 Milling, Amanda
 Mills, Nigel
 Milton, rh Anne
 Moon, Mrs Madeleine
 Moore, Damien
 Moran, Layla
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, rh Nicky
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, Grahame
 Morris, James
 Morton, Wendy
 Mundell, rh David
 Murray, Ian
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll
 Murrison, Dr Andrew
 Nandy, Lisa
 Neill, Robert
 Newton, Sarah
 Nokes, rh Caroline
 Norman, Jesse
 Norris, Alex
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Onasanya, Fiona
 Onn, Melanie
 Onwurah, Chi
 Opperman, Guy
 Owen, Albert
 Parish, Neil
 Patel, rh Priti
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pearce, Teresa
 Penning, rh Sir Mike
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Perkins, Toby
 Perry, rh Claire
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Philp, Chris
 Pincher, Christopher
 Platt, Jo
 Pollard, Luke
 Poulter, Dr Dan
 Pound, Stephen
 Pow, Rebecca
 Powell, Lucy
 Prisk, Mr Mark

Pritchard, Mark
 Pursglove, Tom
 Quin, Jeremy
 Quince, Will
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Raab, rh Dominic
 Rashid, Faisal
 Rayner, Angela
 Redwood, rh John
 Reed, Mr Steve
 Rees, Christina
 Rees-Mogg, Mr Jacob
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reynolds, Jonathan
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Robinson, Gavin
 Robinson, Mary
 Rodda, Matt
 Rosindell, Andrew
 Ross, Douglas
 Rowley, Danielle
 Rowley, Lee
 Ruane, Chris
 Rudd, rh Amber
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
 Rutley, David
 Ryan, rh Joan
 Sandbach, Antoinette
 Scully, Paul
 Selous, Andrew
 Shah, Naz
 Shannon, Jim
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, Alok
 Sherman, Mr Barry
 Shelbrooke, Alec
 Sherriff, Paula
 Simpson, David
 Simpson, rh Mr Keith
 Skidmore, Chris
 Skinner, Mr Dennis
 Slaughter, Andy
 Smeeth, Ruth
 Smith, Angela
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Eleanor
 Smith, Jeff
 Smith, rh Julian
 Smith, Laura
 Smith, Nick
 Smith, Owen
 Smith, Royston
 Smyth, Karin
 Snell, Gareth
 Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
 Soubry, rh Anna
 Spellar, rh John
 Spelman, rh Dame
 Caroline
 Spencer, Mark
 Starmer, rh Keir
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevens, Jo
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, Bob

Stewart, Iain
 Stewart, Rory
 Stone, Jamie
 Streeter, Mr Gary
 Streeting, Wes
 Stride, rh Mel
 Stringer, Graham
 Stuart, Graham
 Sturdy, Julian
 Sunak, Rishi
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Sweeney, Mr Paul
 Swire, rh Sir Hugo
 Syms, Sir Robert
 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
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Stephen
 Twist, Liz
 Umunna, Chuka
 Vaizey, rh Mr Edward
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vaz, Valerie
 Vickers, Martin
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Walker, Mr Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Walker, Thelma
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben
 Warburton, David
 Warman, Matt
 Watling, Giles
 Watson, Tom
 West, Catherine
 Western, Matt
 Whately, Helen
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whitfield, Martin
 Whittaker, Craig
 Wiggin, Bill
 Williamson, Chris
 Williamson, rh Gavin
 Wilson, Phil
 Wilson, rh Sammy
 Wood, Mike
 Wragg, Mr William
 Wright, rh Jeremy
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zahawi, Nadhim
 Zeichner, Daniel

NOES

Godsiff, Mr Roger
 Williams, Dr Paul

Woodcock, John

Question accordingly agreed to.

5. EUROPEAN UNION

That the draft European Union (Definition of Treaties) (Framework Agreement) (Australia) Order 2018, which was laid before this House on 4 June, be approved.

The House divided: Ayes 534, Noes 3.

Division No. 229]**AYES**

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
 Adams, Nigel
 Afolami, Bim
 Afriyie, Adam
 Aldous, Peter
 Ali, Rushanara
 Allan, Lucy
 Allen, Heidi
 Amesbury, Mike
 Andrew, Stuart
 Antoniazzi, Tonia
 Argar, Edward
 Ashworth, Jonathan
 Atkins, Victoria
 Austin, Ian
 Bacon, Mr Richard
 Badenoch, Mrs Kemi
 Bailey, Mr Adrian
 Baker, Mr Steve
 Baldwin, Harriett
 Barron, rh Sir Kevin
 Beckett, rh Margaret
 Bellingham, Sir Henry
 Benn, rh Hilary
 Benyon, rh Richard
 Beresford, Sir Paul
 Berger, Luciana
 Berry, Jake
 Betts, Mr Clive
 Blackman, Bob
 Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta
 Blomfield, Paul
 Blunt, Crispin
 Boles, Nick
 Bone, Mr Peter
 Bottomley, Sir Peter
 Bowie, Andrew
 Brabin, Tracy
 Bradley, Ben
 Bradley, rh Karen
 Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
 Brady, Sir Graham
 Brake, rh Tom
 Braverman, Suella
 Brennan, Kevin
 Brereton, Jack
 Bridgen, Andrew
 Brine, Steve
 Brokenshire, rh James
 Brown, Lyn
 Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
 Bruce, Fiona
 Bryant, Chris
 Buck, Ms Karen
 Buckland, Robert
 Burden, Richard
 Burghart, Alex
 Burgon, Richard
 Burns, Conor
 Burt, rh Alistair
 Butler, Dawn

Byrne, rh Liam
 Cable, rh Sir Vince
 Cadbury, Ruth
 Cairns, rh Alun
 Campbell, rh Mr Alan
 Campbell, Mr Gregory
 Campbell, Mr Ronnie
 Carden, Dan
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Cartlidge, James
 Cash, Sir William
 Caulfield, Maria
 Chalk, Alex
 Champion, Sarah
 Chapman, Jenny
 Charalambous, Bambos
 Chishti, Rehman
 Churchill, Jo
 Clark, Colin
 Clark, rh Greg
 Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth
 Clarke, Mr Simon
 Cleverly, James
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
 Coffey, Dr Thérèse
 Collins, Damian
 Cooper, Julie
 Cooper, Rosie
 Cooper, rh Yvette
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy
 Costa, Alberto
 Courts, Robert
 Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey
 Coyle, Neil
 Crabb, rh Stephen
 Crausby, Sir David
 Creagh, Mary
 Creasy, Stella
 Crouch, Tracey
 Cruddas, Jon
 Cummins, Judith
 Cunningham, Alex
 Cunningham, Mr Jim
 Daby, Janet
 Dakin, Nic
 Davey, rh Sir Edward
 David, Wayne
 Davies, Chris
 Davies, David T. C.
 Davies, Glyn
 Davies, Mims
 Davies, Philip
 Davis, rh Mr David
 De Cordova, Marsha
 De Piero, Gloria
 Debbonaire, Thangam
 Dent Coad, Emma
 Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
 Dinenage, Caroline
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
 Docherty, Leo

Dodds, rh Nigel
 Donelan, Michelle
 Dorries, Ms Nadine
 Double, Steve
 Doughty, Stephen
 Dowd, Peter
 Dowden, Oliver
 Doyle-Price, Jackie
 Drax, Richard
 Drew, Dr David
 Dromey, Jack
 Duffield, Rosie
 Duguid, David
 Duncan, rh Sir Alan
 Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
 Dunne, Mr Philip
 Eagle, Ms Angela
 Eagle, Maria
 Efford, Clive
 Elliott, Julie
 Ellis, Michael
 Ellman, Dame Louise
 Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
 Elmore, Chris
 Elphicke, Charlie
 Esterson, Bill
 Eustice, George
 Evans, Chris
 Evans, Mr Nigel
 Evennett, rh Sir David
 Fabricant, Michael
 Fallon, rh Sir Michael
 Farrelly, Paul
 Farron, Tim
 Field, rh Mark
 Fitzpatrick, Jim
 Flint, rh Caroline
 Ford, Vicky
 Foster, Kevin
 Fovargue, Yvonne
 Fox, rh Dr Liam
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Francois, rh Mr Mark
 Frazer, Lucy
 Freer, Mike
 Frith, James
 Furniss, Gill
 Fysh, Mr Marcus
 Gaffney, Hugh
 Gale, Sir Roger
 Gapes, Mike
 Gardiner, Barry
 Garnier, Mark
 Gauke, rh Mr David
 Ghani, Ms Nusrat
 Gibb, rh Nick
 Gill, Preet Kaur
 Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl
 Girvan, Paul
 Glen, John
 Glindon, Mary
 Goldsmith, Zac
 Goodman, Helen
 Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
 Gove, rh Michael
 Graham, Luke
 Graham, Richard
 Grant, Bill
 Grant, Mrs Helen
 Gray, James

Green, Chris
 Green, rh Damian
 Green, Kate
 Greening, rh Justine
 Greenwood, Lilian
 Greenwood, Margaret
 Griffith, Nia
 Griffiths, Andrew
 Grogan, John
 Gwynne, Andrew
 Gyimah, Mr Sam
 Haigh, Louise
 Hair, Kirstene
 Halfon, rh Robert
 Hall, Luke
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hammond, rh Mr Philip
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, rh Matt
 Hands, rh Greg
 Hanson, rh David
 Hardy, Emma
 Harman, rh Ms Harriet
 Harper, rh Mr Mark
 Harrington, Richard
 Harris, Carolyn
 Harris, Rebecca
 Harrison, Trudy
 Hart, Simon
 Hayes, Helen
 Hayes, rh Mr John
 Hayman, Sue
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver
 Healey, rh John
 Heapey, James
 Heaton-Harris, Chris
 Heaton-Jones, Peter
 Henderson, Gordon
 Hepburn, Mr Stephen
 Herbert, rh Nick
 Hermon, Lady
 Hill, Mike
 Hillier, Meg
 Hinds, rh Damian
 Hoare, Simon
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hoey, Kate
 Hollern, Kate
 Hollingbery, George
 Hollinrake, Kevin
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holloway, Adam
 Hopkins, Kelvin
 Howarth, rh Mr George
 Howell, John
 Huddleston, Nigel
 Hughes, Eddie
 Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Hurd, rh Mr Nick
 Hussain, Imran
 Jack, Mr Alister
 James, Margot
 Jardine, Christine
 Jarvis, Dan
 Javid, rh Sajid
 Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard
 Jenkyns, Andrea
 Jenrick, Robert
 Johnson, rh Boris

Johnson, Dr Caroline
 Johnson, Diana
 Johnson, Gareth
 Johnson, Joseph
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, Darren
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Jones, Gerald
 Jones, Graham P.
 Jones, Helen
 Jones, rh Mr Kevan
 Jones, Mr Marcus
 Jones, Sarah
 Jones, Susan Elan
 Kane, Mike
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Keegan, Gillian
 Keeley, Barbara
 Kendall, Liz
 Kennedy, Seema
 Kerr, Stephen
 Khan, Afzal
 Killen, Ged
 Kinnock, Stephen
 Knight, rh Sir Greg
 Knight, Julian
 Kwarteng, Kwasi
 Laird, Lesley
 Lamont, John
 Lancaster, rh Mark
 Latham, Mrs Pauline
 Leadsom, rh Andrea
 Lee, Dr Phillip
 Lefroy, Jeremy
 Leigh, Sir Edward
 Leslie, Mr Chris
 Letwin, rh Sir Oliver
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Lewer, Andrew
 Lewis, rh Brandon
 Lewis, Clive
 Lewis, Mr Ivan
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Lidington, rh Mr David
 Little Pengelly, Emma
 Lloyd, Stephen
 Lloyd, Tony
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 Lopez, Julia
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lord, Mr Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lynch, Holly
 Mackinlay, Craig
 Maclean, Rachel
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Main, Mrs Anne
 Mak, Alan
 Malhotra, Seema
 Malthouse, Kit
 Mann, John
 Mann, Scott
 Marsden, Gordon
 Martin, Sandy
 Maskell, Rachael
 Masterton, Paul
 Matheson, Christian
 May, rh Mrs Theresa
 Maynard, Paul

McCarthy, Kerry
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonnell, rh John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McInnes, Liz
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick
 McMahan, Jim
 McMorrin, Anna
 McPartland, Stephen
 McVey, rh Ms Esther
 Mearns, Ian
 Menzies, Mark
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria
 Milling, Amanda
 Mills, Nigel
 Milton, rh Anne
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Moon, Mrs Madeleine
 Moore, Damien
 Moran, Layla
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, rh Nicky
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, Grahame
 Morris, James
 Morton, Wendy
 Mundell, rh David
 Murray, Ian
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll
 Murrison, Dr Andrew
 Nandy, Lisa
 Neill, Robert
 Newton, Sarah
 Nokes, rh Caroline
 Norman, Jesse
 Norris, Alex
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Onasanya, Fiona
 Onn, Melanie
 Onwurah, Chi
 Opperman, Guy
 Owen, Albert
 Parish, Neil
 Patel, rh Priti
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pearce, Teresa
 Penning, rh Sir Mike
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Perkins, Toby
 Perry, rh Claire
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Philp, Chris
 Pincher, Christopher
 Platt, Jo
 Pollard, Luke
 Poulter, Dr Dan
 Pound, Stephen
 Pow, Rebecca
 Powell, Lucy
 Prisk, Mr Mark

Pritchard, Mark
 Pursglove, Tom
 Quin, Jeremy
 Quince, Will
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Raab, rh Dominic
 Rashid, Faisal
 Rayner, Angela
 Redwood, rh John
 Reed, Mr Steve
 Rees, Christina
 Rees-Mogg, Mr Jacob
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reynolds, Jonathan
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Robinson, Gavin
 Robinson, Mary
 Rodda, Matt
 Rosindell, Andrew
 Ross, Douglas
 Rowley, Danielle
 Rowley, Lee
 Ruane, Chris
 Rudd, rh Amber
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
 Rutley, David
 Ryan, rh Joan
 Sandbach, Antoinette
 Scully, Paul
 Selous, Andrew
 Shah, Naz
 Shannon, Jim
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, Alok
 Sherman, Mr Barry
 Shelbrooke, Alec
 Sherriff, Paula
 Simpson, David
 Simpson, rh Mr Keith
 Skidmore, Chris
 Skinner, Mr Dennis
 Slaughter, Andy
 Smeeth, Ruth
 Smith, Angela
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Eleanor
 Smith, Jeff
 Smith, rh Julian
 Smith, Laura
 Smith, Nick
 Smith, Owen
 Smith, Royston
 Smyth, Karin
 Snell, Gareth
 Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
 Soubry, rh Anna
 Spellar, rh John
 Spelman, rh Dame Caroline
 Spencer, Mark
 Starmer, rh Keir
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevens, Jo
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, Bob

Stewart, Iain
 Stewart, Rory
 Stone, Jamie
 Streeter, Mr Gary
 Streeting, Wes
 Stride, rh Mel
 Stringer, Graham
 Stuart, Graham
 Sturdy, Julian
 Sunak, Rishi
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Sweeney, Mr Paul
 Swire, rh Sir Hugo
 Syms, Sir Robert
 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
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Stephen
 Twist, Liz
 Umunna, Chuka
 Vaizey, rh Mr Edward
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vaz, Valerie
 Vickers, Martin
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Walker, Mr Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Walker, Thelma
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben
 Warburton, David
 Warman, Matt
 Watling, Giles
 Watson, Tom
 West, Catherine
 Western, Matt
 Whately, Helen
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whitfield, Martin
 Whittaker, Craig
 Wiggins, Bill
 Williamson, Chris
 Williamson, rh Gavin
 Wilson, Phil
 Wilson, rh Sammy
 Wood, Mike
 Wragg, Mr William
 Wright, rh Jeremy
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zahawi, Nadhim
 Zeichner, Daniel

NOES

Godsiff, Mr Roger
 Williams, Dr Paul

Woodcock, John

Question accordingly agreed to.

6. EUROPEAN UNION

That the draft European Union (Definition of Treaties) (Partnership Agreement on Relations and Cooperation) (New Zealand) Order 2018, which was laid before this House on 4 June, be approved.

The House divided: Ayes 536, Noes 3.

Division No. 230]**AYES**

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
 Adams, Nigel
 Afolami, Bim
 Afriyie, Adam
 Aldous, Peter
 Ali, Rushanara
 Allan, Lucy
 Allen, Heidi
 Amesbury, Mike
 Amess, Sir David
 Andrew, Stuart
 Antoniazzi, Tonia
 Argar, Edward
 Ashworth, Jonathan
 Atkins, Victoria
 Austin, Ian
 Bacon, Mr Richard
 Badenoch, Mrs Kemi
 Bailey, Mr Adrian
 Baker, Mr Steve
 Baldwin, Harriett
 Barron, rh Sir Kevin
 Beckett, rh Margaret
 Bellingham, Sir Henry
 Benn, rh Hilary
 Benyon, rh Richard
 Beresford, Sir Paul
 Berger, Luciana
 Berry, Jake
 Betts, Mr Clive
 Blackman, Bob
 Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta
 Blomfield, Paul
 Blunt, Crispin
 Boles, Nick
 Bone, Mr Peter
 Bottomley, Sir Peter
 Bowie, Andrew
 Brabin, Tracy
 Bradley, Ben
 Bradley, rh Karen
 Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
 Brady, Sir Graham
 Brake, rh Tom
 Braverman, Suella
 Brennan, Kevin
 Brereton, Jack
 Bridgen, Andrew
 Brine, Steve
 Brokenshire, rh James
 Brown, Lyn
 Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
 Bruce, Fiona
 Bryant, Chris
 Buck, Ms Karen
 Buckland, Robert
 Burden, Richard
 Burghart, Alex
 Burgon, Richard
 Burns, Conor

Burt, rh Alistair
 Butler, Dawn
 Byrne, rh Liam
 Cable, rh Sir Vince
 Cadbury, Ruth
 Cairns, rh Alun
 Campbell, rh Mr Alan
 Campbell, Mr Gregory
 Campbell, Mr Ronnie
 Carden, Dan
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Cartledge, James
 Cash, Sir William
 Caulfield, Maria
 Chalk, Alex
 Champion, Sarah
 Chapman, Jenny
 Charalambous, Bambos
 Chishty, Rehman
 Churchill, Jo
 Clark, Colin
 Clark, rh Greg
 Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth
 Clarke, Mr Simon
 Cleverly, James
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
 Coffey, Dr Thérèse
 Collins, Damian
 Cooper, Julie
 Cooper, Rosie
 Cooper, rh Yvette
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy
 Costa, Alberto
 Courts, Robert
 Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey
 Coyle, Neil
 Crabb, rh Stephen
 Crausby, Sir David
 Creagh, Mary
 Creasy, Stella
 Crouch, Tracey
 Cruddas, Jon
 Cummins, Judith
 Cunningham, Alex
 Cunningham, Mr Jim
 Daby, Janet
 Dakin, Nic
 Davey, rh Sir Edward
 David, Wayne
 Davies, Chris
 Davies, David T. C.
 Davies, Glyn
 Davies, Mims
 Davies, Philip
 Davis, rh Mr David
 De Cordova, Marsha
 De Piero, Gloria
 Debbonaire, Thangam
 Dent Coad, Emma
 Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh

Dinenage, Caroline
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
 Docherty, Leo
 Dodds, rh Nigel
 Donelan, Michelle
 Dorries, Ms Nadine
 Double, Steve
 Doughty, Stephen
 Dowd, Peter
 Dowden, Oliver
 Doyle-Price, Jackie
 Drax, Richard
 Drew, Dr David
 Dromey, Jack
 Duffield, Rosie
 Duguid, David
 Duncan, rh Sir Alan
 Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
 Dunne, Mr Philip
 Eagle, Ms Angela
 Eagle, Maria
 Efford, Clive
 Elliott, Julie
 Ellis, Michael
 Ellman, Dame Louise
 Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
 Elmore, Chris
 Elphicke, Charlie
 Esterson, Bill
 Eustice, George
 Evans, Chris
 Evans, Mr Nigel
 Evennett, rh Sir David
 Fabricant, Michael
 Fallon, rh Sir Michael
 Farrelly, Paul
 Farron, Tim
 Field, rh Mark
 Fitzpatrick, Jim
 Flint, rh Caroline
 Ford, Vicky
 Foster, Kevin
 Fovargue, Yvonne
 Fox, rh Dr Liam
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Francois, rh Mr Mark
 Frazer, Lucy
 Freer, Mike
 Frith, James
 Furniss, Gill
 Fysh, Mr Marcus
 Gaffney, Hugh
 Gale, Sir Roger
 Gapes, Mike
 Gardiner, Barry
 Garnier, Mark
 Gauke, rh Mr David
 Ghani, Ms Nusrat
 Gibb, rh Nick
 Gill, Preet Kaur
 Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl
 Girvan, Paul
 Glen, John
 Glendon, Mary
 Goldsmith, Zac
 Goodman, Helen
 Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
 Gove, rh Michael
 Graham, Luke
 Graham, Richard
 Grant, Bill
 Grant, Mrs Helen
 Gray, James
 Green, Chris
 Green, rh Damian
 Green, Kate
 Greening, rh Justine
 Greenwood, Lilian
 Greenwood, Margaret
 Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
 Griffith, Nia
 Griffiths, Andrew
 Grogan, John
 Gwynne, Andrew
 Gyimah, Mr Sam
 Haigh, Louise
 Hair, Kirstene
 Halfon, rh Robert
 Hall, Luke
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hammond, rh Mr Philip
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, rh Matt
 Hands, rh Greg
 Hanson, rh David
 Hardy, Emma
 Harman, rh Ms Harriet
 Harper, rh Mr Mark
 Harrington, Richard
 Harris, Carolyn
 Harris, Rebecca
 Harrison, Trudy
 Hart, Simon
 Hayes, Helen
 Hayes, rh Mr John
 Hayman, Sue
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver
 Healey, rh John
 Heapey, James
 Heaton-Harris, Chris
 Heaton-Jones, Peter
 Henderson, Gordon
 Hepburn, Mr Stephen
 Herbert, rh Nick
 Hermon, Lady
 Hill, Mike
 Hillier, Meg
 Hinds, rh Damian
 Hoare, Simon
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hoey, Kate
 Hollern, Kate
 Hollingbery, George
 Hollinrake, Kevin
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holloway, Adam
 Hopkins, Kelvin
 Howarth, rh Mr George
 Howell, John
 Huddleston, Nigel
 Hughes, Eddie
 Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Hurd, rh Mr Nick
 Hussain, Imran
 Jack, Mr Alister
 James, Margot
 Jardine, Christine
 Jarvis, Dan
 Javid, rh Sajid
 Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard

Jenkyns, Andrea
 Jenrick, Robert
 Johnson, rh Boris
 Johnson, Dr Caroline
 Johnson, Diana
 Johnson, Gareth
 Johnson, Joseph
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, Darren
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Jones, Gerald
 Jones, Graham P.
 Jones, Helen
 Jones, rh Mr Kevan
 Jones, Mr Marcus
 Jones, Sarah
 Jones, Susan Elan
 Kane, Mike
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Keegan, Gillian
 Keeley, Barbara
 Kendall, Liz
 Kennedy, Seema
 Kerr, Stephen
 Khan, Afzal
 Killen, Ged
 Kinnock, Stephen
 Knight, rh Sir Greg
 Knight, Julian
 Kwarteng, Kwasi
 Laird, Lesley
 Lamont, John
 Lancaster, rh Mark
 Latham, Mrs Pauline
 Leadsom, rh Andrea
 Lee, Dr Phillip
 Lefroy, Jeremy
 Leigh, Sir Edward
 Leslie, Mr Chris
 Letwin, rh Sir Oliver
 Lowell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Lewer, Andrew
 Lewis, rh Brandon
 Lewis, Clive
 Lewis, Mr Ivan
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Lidington, rh Mr David
 Little Pengelly, Emma
 Lloyd, Stephen
 Lloyd, Tony
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 Lopez, Julia
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lord, Mr Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lynch, Holly
 Mackinlay, Craig
 Maclean, Rachel
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Main, Mrs Anne
 Mak, Alan
 Malhotra, Seema
 Malthouse, Kit
 Mann, John
 Mann, Scott
 Marsden, Gordon
 Martin, Sandy
 Maskell, Rachael
 Masterton, Paul

Matheson, Christian
 May, rh Mrs Theresa
 Maynard, Paul
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonnell, rh John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McInnes, Liz
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick
 McMahon, Jim
 McMorris, Anna
 McPartland, Stephen
 McVey, rh Ms Esther
 Mearns, Ian
 Menzies, Mark
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria
 Milling, Amanda
 Mills, Nigel
 Milton, rh Anne
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Moon, Mrs Madeleine
 Moore, Damien
 Moran, Layla
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, rh Nicky
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, Grahame
 Morris, James
 Morton, Wendy
 Mundell, rh David
 Murray, Ian
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll
 Murrison, Dr Andrew
 Nandy, Lisa
 Neill, Robert
 Newton, Sarah
 Nokes, rh Caroline
 Norman, Jesse
 Norris, Alex
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Onasanya, Fiona
 Onn, Melanie
 Onwurah, Chi
 Opperman, Guy
 Owen, Albert
 Parish, Neil
 Patel, rh Priti
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pearce, Teresa
 Penning, rh Sir Mike
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Perkins, Toby
 Perry, rh Claire
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Philp, Chris
 Pincher, Christopher
 Platt, Jo
 Pollard, Luke
 Poulter, Dr Dan
 Pound, Stephen
 Pow, Rebecca

Powell, Lucy
 Prisk, Mr Mark
 Pritchard, Mark
 Pursglove, Tom
 Quin, Jeremy
 Quince, Will
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Raab, rh Dominic
 Rashid, Faisal
 Rayner, Angela
 Redwood, rh John
 Reed, Mr Steve
 Rees, Christina
 Rees-Mogg, Mr Jacob
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reynolds, Jonathan
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Robinson, Gavin
 Robinson, Mary
 Rodda, Matt
 Rosindell, Andrew
 Ross, Douglas
 Rowley, Danielle
 Rowley, Lee
 Ruane, Chris
 Rudd, rh Amber
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
 Rutley, David
 Ryan, rh Joan
 Sandbach, Antoinette
 Scully, Paul
 Selous, Andrew
 Shah, Naz
 Shannon, Jim
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, Alok
 Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Shelbrooke, Alec
 Sherriff, Paula
 Simpson, David
 Simpson, rh Mr Keith
 Skidmore, Chris
 Skinner, Mr Dennis
 Slaughter, Andy
 Smeeth, Ruth
 Smith, Angela
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Eleanor
 Smith, Jeff
 Smith, rh Julian
 Smith, Laura
 Smith, Nick
 Smith, Owen
 Smith, Royston
 Smyth, Karin
 Snell, Gareth
 Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
 Soubry, rh Anna
 Spellar, rh John
 Spelman, rh Dame Caroline
 Spencer, Mark
 Starmer, rh Keir
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevens, Jo

Stevenson, John
 Stewart, Bob
 Stewart, Iain
 Stewart, Rory
 Stone, Jamie
 Streeter, Mr Gary
 Streeting, Wes
 Stride, rh Mel
 Stringer, Graham
 Stuart, Graham
 Sturdy, Julian
 Sunak, Rishi
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Sweeney, Mr Paul
 Swire, rh Sir Hugo
 Syms, Sir Robert
 Tami, Mark
 Thomas, Derek
 Thomas, Gareth
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick
 Thomson, Ross
 Throup, Maggie
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Tolhurst, Kelly
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Treddinick, David
 Trevelyan, Mrs Anne-Marie
 Truss, rh Elizabeth
 Tugendhat, Tom
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Stephen
 Twist, Liz
 Umunna, Chuka
 Vaizey, rh Mr Edward
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vaz, Valerie
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Walker, Mr Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Walker, Thelma
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben
 Warburton, David
 Warman, Matt
 Watling, Giles
 Watson, Tom
 West, Catherine
 Western, Matt
 Whately, Helen
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whitfield, Martin
 Whittaker, Craig
 Wiggin, Bill
 Williamson, Chris
 Williamson, rh Gavin
 Wilson, Phil
 Wilson, rh Sammy
 Wollaston, Dr Sarah
 Wood, Mike
 Wragg, Mr William
 Wright, rh Jeremy
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zahawi, Nadhim
 Zeichner, Daniel

NOES

Godsiff, Mr Roger
 Williams, Dr Paul

Woodcock, John

Question accordingly agreed to.

7. EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION

That the draft Immigration (Provision of Physical Data) (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2018, which were laid before this House on 3 July, be approved.

The House divided: Ayes 311, Noes 262.

Division No. 231]**AYES**

Adams, Nigel
Afolami, Bim
Afriyie, Adam
Aldous, Peter
Allan, Lucy
Allen, Heidi
Amess, Sir David
Andrew, Stuart
Argar, Edward
Atkins, Victoria
Bacon, Mr Richard
Badenoch, Mrs Kemi
Baker, Mr Steve
Baldwin, Harriett
Bellingham, Sir Henry
Benyon, rh Richard
Beresford, Sir Paul
Berry, Jake
Blackman, Bob
Blunt, Crispin
Boles, Nick
Bone, Mr Peter
Bottomley, Sir Peter
Bowie, Andrew
Bradley, Ben
Bradley, rh Karen
Brady, Sir Graham
Braverman, Suella
Brereton, Jack
Bridgen, Andrew
Brine, Steve
Brokenshire, rh James
Bruce, Fiona
Buckland, Robert
Burghart, Alex
Burns, Conor
Burt, rh Alistair
Cairns, rh Alun
Campbell, Mr Gregory
Cartlidge, James
Cash, Sir William
Caulfield, Maria
Chalk, Alex
Chishti, Rehman
Churchill, Jo
Clark, Colin
Clark, rh Greg
Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth
Clarke, Mr Simon
Cleverly, James
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
Coffey, Dr Thérèse
Collins, Damian
Costa, Alberto
Courts, Robert
Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey
Crabb, rh Stephen
Crouch, Tracey
Davies, Chris
Davies, David T. C.
Davies, Glyn
Davies, Mims
Davies, Philip

Davis, rh Mr David
Dinenage, Caroline
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
Docherty, Leo
Dodds, rh Nigel
Donelan, Michelle
Dorries, Ms Nadine
Double, Steve
Dowden, Oliver
Doyle-Price, Jackie
Drax, Richard
Duddridge, James
Duguid, David
Duncan, rh Sir Alan
Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
Dunne, Mr Philip
Ellis, Michael
Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
Elphicke, Charlie
Eustice, George
Evans, Mr Nigel
Evennett, rh Sir David
Fabricant, Michael
Fallon, rh Sir Michael
Field, rh Mark
Ford, Vicky
Foster, Kevin
Fox, rh Dr Liam
Francois, rh Mr Mark
Frazer, Lucy
Freer, Mike
Fysh, Mr Marcus
Gale, Sir Roger
Garnier, Mark
Gauke, rh Mr David
Ghani, Ms Nusrat
Gibb, rh Nick
Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl
Girvan, Paul
Glen, John
Goldsmith, Zac
Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
Gove, rh Michael
Graham, Luke
Graham, Richard
Grant, Bill
Grant, Mrs Helen
Gray, James
Green, Chris
Green, rh Damian
Greening, rh Justine
Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
Griffiths, Andrew
Gyimah, Mr Sam
Hair, Kirstene
Halfon, rh Robert
Hall, Luke
Hammond, rh Mr Philip
Hammond, Stephen
Hancock, rh Matt
Hands, rh Greg
Harper, rh Mr Mark
Harrington, Richard

Harris, Rebecca
Harrison, Trudy
Hart, Simon
Hayes, rh Mr John
Heald, rh Sir Oliver
Heapey, James
Heaton-Harris, Chris
Heaton-Jones, Peter
Henderson, Gordon
Herbert, rh Nick
Hermon, Lady
Hinds, rh Damian
Hoare, Simon
Hollingbery, George
Hollinrake, Kevin
Hollobone, Mr Philip
Holloway, Adam
Howell, John
Huddleston, Nigel
Hughes, Eddie
Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
Hurd, rh Mr Nick
Jack, Mr Alister
James, Margot
Javid, rh Sajid
Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
Jenkin, Sir Bernard
Jenkyns, Andrea
Jenrick, Robert
Johnson, rh Boris
Johnson, Dr Caroline
Johnson, Gareth
Johnson, Joseph
Jones, Andrew
Jones, rh Mr David
Jones, Mr Marcus
Kawczynski, Daniel
Keegan, Gillian
Kennedy, Seema
Kerr, Stephen
Knight, rh Sir Greg
Knight, Julian
Kwarteng, Kwasi
Lamont, John
Lancaster, rh Mark
Latham, Mrs Pauline
Leadsom, rh Andrea
Lee, Dr Phillip
Lefroy, Jeremy
Leigh, Sir Edward
Letwin, rh Sir Oliver
Lewer, Andrew
Lewis, rh Brandon
Lewis, rh Dr Julian
Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
Lidington, rh Mr David
Little Pengelly, Emma
Lopez, Julia
Lopresti, Jack
Lord, Mr Jonathan
Loughton, Tim
Mackinlay, Craig
Maclean, Rachel
Main, Mrs Anne
Mak, Alan
Malthouse, Kit
Mann, Scott
Masterton, Paul
May, rh Mrs Theresa
Maynard, Paul
McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick
McPartland, Stephen
McVey, rh Ms Esther
Menzies, Mark
Merriman, Huw
Metcalfe, Stephen
Miller, rh Mrs Maria
Milling, Amanda
Mills, Nigel
Milton, rh Anne
Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
Moore, Damien
Mordaunt, rh Penny
Morgan, rh Nicky
Morris, Anne Marie
Morris, David
Morris, James
Morton, Wendy
Mundell, rh David
Murray, Mrs Sheryll
Murrison, Dr Andrew
Neill, Robert
Newton, Sarah
Nokes, rh Caroline
Norman, Jesse
Offord, Dr Matthew
Opperman, Guy
Parish, Neil
Patel, rh Priti
Paterson, rh Mr Owen
Penning, rh Sir Mike
Penrose, John
Percy, Andrew
Perry, rh Claire
Philp, Chris
Pincher, Christopher
Poulter, Dr Dan
Pow, Rebecca
Prisk, Mr Mark
Pritchard, Mark
Pursglove, Tom
Quin, Jeremy
Quince, Will
Raab, rh Dominic
Redwood, rh John
Rees-Mogg, Mr Jacob
Robertson, Mr Laurence
Robinson, Gavin
Robinson, Mary
Rosindell, Andrew
Ross, Douglas
Rowley, Lee
Rudd, rh Amber
Rutley, David
Sandbach, Antoinette
Scully, Paul
Selous, Andrew
Shannon, Jim
Shapps, rh Grant
Sharma, Alok
Shelbrooke, Alec
Simpson, David
Simpson, rh Mr Keith
Skidmore, Chris
Smith, Chloe
Smith, rh Julian
Smith, Royston
Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
Soubry, rh Anna
Spelman, rh Dame Caroline
Spencer, Mark
Stephenson, Andrew
Stevenson, John
Stewart, Bob

Stewart, Iain
 Stewart, Rory
 Streeter, Mr Gary
 Stride, rh Mel
 Stuart, Graham
 Sturdy, Julian
 Sunak, Rishi
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Swire, rh Sir Hugo
 Syms, Sir Robert
 Thomas, Derek
 Thomson, Ross
 Throup, Maggie
 Tolhurst, Kelly
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Tredinnick, David
 Trevelyan, Mrs Anne-Marie
 Truss, rh Elizabeth
 Tugendhat, Tom

Vaizey, rh Mr Edward
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Walker, Mr Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben
 Warburton, David
 Warman, Matt
 Watling, Giles
 Whately, Helen
 Whittaker, Craig
 Wiggin, Bill
 Williams, Dr Paul
 Williamson, rh Gavin
 Wilson, rh Sammy
 Wood, Mike
 Woodcock, John
 Wragg, Mr William
 Wright, rh Jeremy
 Zahawi, Nadhim

Gapes, Mike
 Gardiner, Barry
 Gethins, Stephen
 Gibson, Patricia
 Gill, Preet Kaur
 Glindon, Mary
 Godsiff, Mr Roger
 Goodman, Helen
 Grady, Patrick
 Grant, Peter
 Grayling, rh Chris
 Green, Kate
 Greenwood, Lillian
 Greenwood, Margaret
 Griffith, Nia
 Grogan, John
 Gwynne, Andrew
 Haigh, Louise
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hanson, rh David
 Hardy, Emma
 Harman, rh Ms Harriet
 Harris, Carolyn
 Hayes, Helen
 Hayman, Sue
 Healey, rh John
 Hendry, Drew
 Hepburn, Mr Stephen
 Hill, Mike
 Hillier, Meg
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hollern, Kate
 Hopkins, Kelvin
 Hosie, Stewart
 Howarth, rh Mr George
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Hussain, Imran
 Jardine, Christine
 Jarvis, Dan
 Johnson, Diana
 Jones, Darren
 Jones, Gerald
 Jones, Graham P.
 Jones, Helen
 Jones, rh Mr Kevan
 Jones, Sarah
 Jones, Susan Elan
 Kane, Mike
 Keeley, Barbara
 Kendall, Liz
 Khan, Afzal
 Killen, Ged
 Kinnock, Stephen
 Laird, Lesley
 Lake, Ben
 Law, Chris
 Leslie, Mr Chris
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Lewis, Clive
 Lewis, Mr Ivan
 Linden, David
 Lloyd, Stephen
 Lloyd, Tony
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lynch, Holly
 MacNeil, Angus Brendan
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Malhotra, Seema
 Mann, John

Marsden, Gordon
 Martin, Sandy
 Maskell, Rachael
 Matheson, Christian
 Mc Nally, John
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
 McDonald, Stuart C.
 McDonnell, rh John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McInnes, Liz
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McMahan, Jim
 McMorris, Anna
 Mearns, Ian
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Monaghan, Carol
 Moon, Mrs Madeleine
 Moran, Layla
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, Grahame
 Murray, Ian
 Nandy, Lisa
 Norris, Alex
 O'Hara, Brendan
 Onasanya, Fiona
 Onn, Melanie
 Onwurah, Chi
 Owen, Albert
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pearce, Teresa
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Perkins, Toby
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Platt, Jo
 Pollard, Luke
 Pound, Stephen
 Powell, Lucy
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Rashid, Faisal
 Rayner, Angela
 Reed, Mr Steve
 Rees, Christina
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reynolds, Jonathan
 Rodda, Matt
 Rowley, Danielle
 Ruane, Chris
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
 Ryan, rh Joan
 Saville Roberts, Liz
 Shah, Naz
 Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Sheppard, Tommy
 Sherriff, Paula
 Skinner, Mr Dennis
 Slaughter, Andy
 Smeeth, Ruth
 Smith, Angela
 Smith, Eleanor
 Smith, Jeff
 Smith, Laura
 Smith, Nick
 Smith, Owen
 Smyth, Karin
 Snell, Gareth
 Spellar, rh John
 Starmer, rh Keir
 Stephens, Chris

NOES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
 Ali, Rushanara
 Amesbury, Mike
 Antoniazzi, Tonia
 Ashworth, Jonathan
 Austin, Ian
 Bailey, Mr Adrian
 Bardell, Hannah
 Barron, rh Sir Kevin
 Beckett, rh Margaret
 Benn, rh Hilary
 Berger, Luciana
 Betts, Mr Clive
 Blackford, rh Ian
 Blackman, Kirsty
 Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta
 Blomfield, Paul
 Brabin, Tracy
 Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
 Brake, rh Tom
 Brennan, Kevin
 Brock, Deidre
 Brown, Alan
 Brown, Lyn
 Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
 Bryant, Chris
 Buck, Ms Karen
 Burden, Richard
 Burgon, Richard
 Butler, Dawn
 Byrne, rh Liam
 Cable, rh Sir Vince
 Cadbury, Ruth
 Cameron, Dr Lisa
 Campbell, rh Mr Alan
 Campbell, Mr Ronnie
 Carden, Dan
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Champion, Sarah
 Chapman, Douglas
 Chapman, Jenny
 Charalambous, Bambos
 Cherry, Joanna
 Cooper, Julie
 Cooper, Rosie

Cooper, rh Yvette
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy
 Cowan, Ronnie
 Coyle, Neil
 Crausby, Sir David
 Crawley, Angela
 Creagh, Mary
 Creasy, Stella
 Cruddas, Jon
 Cummins, Judith
 Cunningham, Alex
 Cunningham, Mr Jim
 Daby, Janet
 Dakin, Nic
 Davey, rh Sir Edward
 David, Wayne
 Day, Martyn
 De Cordova, Marsha
 De Piero, Gloria
 Debbonaire, Thangam
 Dent Coad, Emma
 Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
 Doughty, Stephen
 Dowd, Peter
 Drew, Dr David
 Dromey, Jack
 Duffield, Rosie
 Eagle, Ms Angela
 Eagle, Maria
 Edwards, Jonathan
 Efford, Clive
 Elliott, Julie
 Ellman, Dame Louise
 Elmore, Chris
 Esterson, Bill
 Evans, Chris
 Farrelly, Paul
 Farron, Tim
 Fellows, Marion
 Fitzpatrick, Jim
 Flint, rh Caroline
 Fovargue, Yvonne
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Frith, James
 Furniss, Gill
 Gaffney, Hugh

Stevens, Jo
Stone, Jamie
Streeting, Wes
Stringer, Graham
Sweeney, Mr Paul
Tami, Mark
Thewliss, Alison
Thomas, Gareth

Thomas-Symonds, Nick
Timms, rh Stephen
Turner, Karl
Twigg, Stephen
Twist, Liz
Umunna, Chuka
Vaz, Valerie
Walker, Thelma

Watson, Tom
West, Catherine
Western, Matt
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Whitfield, Martin

Whitford, Dr Philippa
Williamson, Chris
Wilson, Phil
Wishart, Pete
Yasin, Mohammad
Zeichner, Daniel

Question accordingly agreed to.

Westminster Hall

Wednesday 18 July 2018

[MR GEORGE HOWARTH *in the Chair*]

Russia and the Council of Europe

9.30 am

John Howell (Henley) (Con): I beg to move,

That this House has considered Russia and the Council of Europe.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Howarth. I thank the many members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe who have joined me to discuss this issue. It is a great pleasure to see them, and I am grateful to them for turning up to speak.

I start the debate by making two declarations. Neither is required for financial reasons, but they will offer some context to the debate. First, I am a member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. To set the scene a little, the Council was established to promote the rule of law, democracy and human rights throughout post-war Europe. It is no less relevant today than it was 70 years ago. It has become the premier human rights forum in Europe for its now 47 member states. That will be important when we discuss Russia.

The Council is a bicameral institution, with member countries from across the wider Europe—not just the European Union—including Turkey and countries from the former Soviet Union, such as Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia, some of which I will mention during my speech. It also includes a number of partners in democracy and other observers, including Japan, the US, Mexico, Canada, as well as other important countries, such as Israel, and the representatives of the Palestinians.

The Council also has a relationship with a number of other institutions, including the European Court of Human Rights. It is important to remember that the Assembly elects judges to the European Court of Human Rights, which gives the judges, and therefore the whole Court, significant democratic legitimacy. That will also be relevant when we discuss Russia.

If the United Kingdom is to be part of the wider Europe, the Council offers a tailor-made vehicle for doing so. Rather than seeking to reinvent the wheel, we need to strengthen and to maximise the UK's unique status within the Council, including on matters relating to Russia.

The second thing I wish to declare is that, before entering Parliament, I was the principal private adviser on matters eastern European, including the former USSR, for successive UK Governments of both colours. In that role, I helped to set up and steer the technical assistance programmes that helped those countries to develop. We worked on a range of activities, including on privatisation throughout the region.

Russia is also a member of the Council, but it has chosen not to put its delegation forward to the Assembly for approval. That is worth repeating: Russia has chosen to absent itself from the Assembly by not allowing its delegation to be questioned and approved, presumably

for fear of the reaction to its continued occupation of large parts of Ukraine—not only Crimea, but eastern Ukraine, including Donbass.

Russia subsequently chose not to pay the Council its annual dues, which, as a grand payeur, were originally set at €33 million, so the Council is running short by €33 million. The Council is now under tremendous pressure to readmit Russia so that it will start paying again. In other words, we are being asked to sacrifice principle for cash.

Sir Edward Leigh (Gainsborough) (Con): To be absolutely fair, we took away Russia's voting rights.

John Howell: The Council took away Russia's voting rights because of the invasion of Ukraine. That was not the first time Russia had done something like that; we are dealing with a serial offender. It has now also lost its right to elect judges to the European Court of Human Rights, following its annexation of Crimea and its action in eastern Ukraine. The Russian ambassador to the Council wrote that it was the "free choice" of the people of Crimea to become part of Russia and that the Assembly had so restricted the rights of its representatives that they could not continue. The first part of that is, frankly, laughable.

It is possible to argue, with the benefit of hindsight, that when the USSR broke up, we should not simply have accepted the countries based on the former component states of the USSR. However, to do otherwise would have complicated an already complex situation and would have delayed the emergence of independent nation states. I remember discussing this issue at the time and passing it by.

Russian activity in the Donbass and in Crimea has badly affected the human rights of Ukrainians there, some of whom are held as political prisoners. Members may recall our opportunity to meet Nadiya Savchenko—an Assembly member and Ukrainian air force pilot who had been imprisoned by the Russians. She addressed the Council after her release. Whether one agrees with Nadiya Savchenko's politics is irrelevant; the fact is that she gave a moving account of her imprisonment by the Russians.

Mr Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley) (Con): My hon. Friend is making a powerful speech. Does he agree that the invasion of Crimea was the tipping point? Russia's taking of two enclaves in Georgia—South Ossetia and Abkhazia—was when the international community should have acted. The invasion of Crimea followed because of our supine response when Russia invaded those parts of Georgia: we refused to do anything.

John Howell: My hon. Friend anticipates what I will say in a moment. I agree that we are dealing with a serial offender, as I said in answer to the earlier intervention. We should have taken a strong stance when Russia attacked Georgia. It came as no surprise that it then attacked bits of Ukraine.

Dame Cheryl Gillan (Chesham and Amersham) (Con): My hon. Friend is indeed making a powerful speech. Does he welcome Georgia's being at the forefront of some of the discussions at the recent NATO conference

[*Dame Cheryl Gillan*]

and of a report from the special committee? Does he also agree that we ought to get on with allowing Georgia into NATO?

John Howell: I agree that Georgia is fit for NATO membership. I look forward—along with my right hon. Friend—to monitoring the elections there later in the year. I have no idea what I will find on the ground there, but Assembly members play an important role in monitoring elections in newly emerged democracies.

Many might also recall the motion at the last part-session of the Council of Europe, which took up the case of Ukrainian prisoners of war—as I said in the Parliamentary Assembly, the issue of political prisoners goes right to the heart of what the Council of Europe is about. However, like many resolutions that the Council of Europe has passed to condemn the actions of Russia, that motion will almost certainly be ignored. Indeed, the Council of Europe has passed so many resolutions about occupied Ukrainian territory, the rights of the people there and political prisoners, that Russia's non-compliance can be seen only as a gesture of ill will towards the Council of Europe.

Christine Jardine (Edinburgh West) (LD): Given that a British citizen has now died as a result of the Novichok incident, does the hon. Gentleman think that we should perhaps reconsider Russia's position in the Council of Europe?

John Howell: I will come on to that, but I wonder whether the hon. Lady means that we should consider admitting Russia or excluding it. I put the Novichok case to the Croatian Prime Minister during the last public session of the Assembly, and I asked whether he thought that his decision to send away a Russian member of the Foreign Office based there was justifiable. His response was that the evidence Britain had produced was so strong that he would do it again. That is important.

Crimea is not the only source of disagreement. The Council of Europe has passed a resolution about the serious, systematic and widespread persecution, discrimination and harassment of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in Chechnya, which has caused more than 100 people to flee that country. The Council of Europe called on Russia to conduct an independent national investigation, and for the extreme discrimination to end, but Russia has done nothing.

We have already mentioned Georgia, and the Council of Europe has criticised Russia for the abuse of human rights in the occupied regions. That abuse effectively extends to the use of war in that country, Russia's non-recognition of the borders of Georgia and its treatment of people who live there, whose human rights have been abused. As the Georgian ambassador to the UK recently wrote, after 10 years of Russian aggression, Russia continues its occupation of regions of Georgia, undermining international law and the rules-based system, with massive infringements of human rights.

Another issue is the Smolensk plane crash, which killed the Polish President, Lech Kaczyński, and the Russian refusal to return the wreckage. The Russians claim that the return of the wreckage will simply fuel Polish conspiracy theories. They may be right, but

returning the wreckage would also prove beyond doubt what happened in that plane crash, so the Russians should do it.

Ukraine has become the cause célèbre of this debate. A paper produced at the last meeting of the Council of Europe stated that 64 Ukrainians have received politically motivated convictions and are effectively prisoners of war whose human rights have been killed off.

The secretary-general of the Council of Europe said that the continued absence of Russia from the Council affects the rights of ordinary people in Russia to access the European Court of Human Rights. Perhaps that statement can be believed, but I think it is so far from the truth that it is difficult to justify in terms of what can occur. The number of cases involving Russia that have been brought before the European Court of Human Rights is large, but is also worth considering Russia's total disregard for the ECHR's judgments, and the claim by the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation that Russia should not be bound by those judgments. We know from the judgment in the Yukos oil company case that following the rules of the ECHR and putting right a case on which it has already opined will be expensive. I am afraid, however, that I regard that as a fair price to pay for the wild west nature of Russia that we helped to create after the fall of communism.

Sir Edward Leigh: No one doubts that Russia's human rights record is egregious, and one can go on listing its faults forever—it has as many faults as countries such as Azerbaijan, which is in the Council of Europe. Surely, however, my hon. Friend is not suggesting that the Foreign Office should stop talking to or engaging with Russia. Similarly, in the Inter-Parliamentary Union, if one engages with the Russians, despite their faults, one might at least have some chance of persuading them or informing them of our point of view.

John Howell: My hon. Friend makes an interesting point, but we are not simply engaging with Russia as a third party. We are talking about Russia's inclusion in, or readmission into, the very body of which we are part, and for which we were, in 1949, an inspiration. Those are completely different circumstances to the description that my hon. Friend gives, whereby we should talk continually to Russia. This is about admitting Russia into our family home, as it were, and about it being part of that. In that situation, I think different rules apply.

I was speaking about our role in the fall of communism. We got it right in Poland and in the Czech Republic, but I fully acknowledge my part in getting it wrong in Russia. We await with bated breath the promise to amend the Russian constitution to allow judgments to be implemented.

So what do we do? The first thing that is not going to happen is the lifting of sanctions that we imposed against Russia's voting rights at the Council of Europe or the restoration of those voting rights. The second thing that I do not believe will happen is the sudden withdrawal of Russia from the Donbass or Crimea.

Can it be right for a member of the Council of Europe to invade another's territory, to conduct hateful campaigns elsewhere in the region, to have a casual attitude to human rights and to suffer no consequences? Are we simply to roll over and readmit Russia to the Council of Europe without any effects? Is the cost of

keeping Russia out of the Council of Europe completely out of kilter with the benefits of bringing it back in? I think the answer to all these questions is no. Is it true that the Council of Europe cannot survive without the presence of Russia? Again, the answer is no.

The Russian Ambassador to the Council of Europe said:

“in seeking to ‘punish’ the delegation of the Russian parliament in 2014-2015 for the free choice by the people of Crimea to become part of Russia, the Assembly restricted the rights of Russian parliamentarians to such an extent that it made it impossible for them to continue their work in PACE.”

Nothing could be further from the truth. The Russians have chosen to exclude themselves. The ambassador goes on to describe the actions of the Parliamentary Assembly as “thoughtless”, but they were not. Those actions were a deliberate reaction to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which the Council of Europe can hopefully help to reverse.

Depriving the Council of Europe of €33 million is a serious matter, but it should not stand in the way of the wholesale reform for which many of us have argued. It cannot be right to simply sit and plan for nothing to happen at the end of next year—that is not a realistic option, and neither is it realistic for the Council of Europe to have no contingency plan for what will happen if the Russians continue in this way.

Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger (Bridgwater and West Somerset) (Con): My hon Friend is making a powerful point. At the moment, it looks as though the Council of Europe is being held hostage by means of a concerted effort by the Russians, through friends in the Council of Europe, to get themselves back into the Council. That is happening, as far as I can see, under the secretary-general, because he feels that the money is more important than the political will to say no. Does my hon. Friend agree?

John Howell: I agree. The point I would make is that the Council of Europe is all about political will. It was set up with that background. If we give in to that political will, we have nowhere to go. What is required is a proper plan to reduce the waste and inefficiency of the Council. I am sure we can take out enough expenditure to replace the Russian contribution. I believe, overall, that we are right to maintain our position of principle and to reject this choice of cash.

9.50 am

Angela Smith (Penistone and Stocksbridge) (Lab): Once again, it is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Howarth. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak in this debate. I thank the hon. Member for Henley (John Howell) for securing the debate; it is important that we discuss in this House the situation in the Council of Europe as it relates to Russia.

As the leader of the Labour delegation to the Council of Europe and someone who has seen at first hand the turbulence that Russia is causing there, I believe this debate is critical. Russia’s relationship with the Council of Europe is fraught with difficulty. How we approach it over the coming months and years will have a profound effect—not only on the Council, but on the integrity of UK foreign policy and the security of the UK and other member states.

I begin by reminding hon. Members of Russia’s accession to the Council, as the points made in the debate at that time are being replayed to some extent today. Russian membership was given in 1996—a decision based on pragmatism and democratic hope. Its human rights record was a long way from spotless—indeed, its initial membership bid was suspended because of its actions in Chechnya. On balance, it was agreed that Russia and the Council would mutually benefit from Russia’s membership. Over time, it was hoped, Russia’s record of human rights under the rule of law would improve. The *Moscow Times* said that the Council and Russian citizens would get

“some small degree of leverage over Moscow and its justice system.”

To an extent, Russia’s record did improve. It ratified the European convention on human rights, acceded to various Council conventions and made reforms to its judicial and penal system. However, the list of human rights abuses and the occasions on which it has floundered in the face of Council of Europe conventions is so long that it would be impossible to fully recount them within the constraints of this debate. Its record in Chechnya is horrific, as is its aggression in Transnistria. At home, its treatment of minority religious groups and LGBT people—particularly in Chechnya, as the hon. Member for Henley mentioned so eloquently—and the restrictions it imposes on journalists clearly deride the principles the Council of Europe was founded on.

Human Rights Watch says that under Putin, human rights standards have fallen, and Amnesty International’s report on human rights in Russia over the past year records that there were,

“further restrictions to the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly. Harassment and intimidation of human rights defenders and independent NGOs continued... Religious minorities continued to face harassment and persecution. The right to a fair trial was frequently violated. Torture and other ill-treatment persisted”.

That is the analysis of Amnesty International. In 2017, Russia had 370 registered cases at the European Court of Human Rights—almost triple the number for Turkey. If I am honest, we have allowed Russia to get away with a lot up to now—too much—but we must draw a line somewhere. If the invasion of another member state’s sovereign territory does not represent that line, what on earth does?

It is absolutely right that the Council of Europe should have condemned and sanctioned the Russian Federation for its actions in Crimea and the Donbass. The hon. Gentleman—my hon. Friend, in this context—was absolutely right to say that Russia excluded itself from the Assembly. I will say this: Russia may suspend its contributions to the Council, it may threaten not to resume them and it may risk its position on the Committee of Ministers, but we cannot allow ourselves to be blackmailed into accepting such brazen disregard for the common principles on which the Council was founded.

The Council of Europe’s job is to promote human rights, democracy and the rule of law. In that context, we must ask ourselves why Russia is so keen to reinstate its membership on its own terms. Does its membership enable the Council’s mission? Does it help us to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law, or does its role complement its approach elsewhere on the

[Angela Smith]

international stage? In other words, is the Russian Federation's membership primarily related to an attempt simply to disrupt and to divide western democracy?

I acknowledge Secretary-General Jagland's position on all of this. He argues:

"It would be a big step back for Europe"

if Russia withdrew its participation in the Council. In my view, however, Jagland's position is also deeply worrying. A report in the *Financial Times* in November made it clear that Jagland was,

"touring European capitals warning of a serious risk that Moscow could withdraw or crash out of the 47-member body unless its demands are met."

He said:

"It would really be very, very bad if Russia was to leave...because the convention and court has been so important for Russian citizens...It will be a negative development for Europe, because we will have a Europe without Russia. It would be a big step back for Europe."

I do not accept that. Two days ago, Jagland tweeted:

"President Trump is right, 'The World wants a better relationship between USA and Russia'. The first step has been taken, hopefully".

Then again, a few hours later, he tweeted:

"Good that Presidents Trump and Putin meet. Better than the opposite. Congratulations to the Finnish Government...an outstanding statesman"—

referring to the President of Finland.

Mr Liddell-Grainger: The hon. Lady has made a very powerful point about Mr Jagland, and I think she needs to go a little further. I suggest this: he wants a legacy from what has been a failure of his tenure. This is his legacy. He wants the Russians back. The hon. Lady is right that we are being blackmailed in a very simple way by the secretary-general to allow him to have some kudos. Her point is absolutely forthright, and she is right.

Angela Smith: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. Indeed, it is quite clear that the secretary-general is more than sympathetic to the Russian cause. Those tweets about the meeting between Trump and Putin earlier this week showed a lack of real judgment. For someone who is leading an important, international European body that defends human rights, I found those tweets astonishingly disturbing.

I do not think either that the argument that Russian citizens need to maintain access to the European Court of Human Rights is correct. My understanding is that, if Russia is suspended from the Committee of Ministers, it is exactly that—suspended. It is not expelled from the Council of Europe; its membership is suspended. On that basis, Russian citizens would still have access to the European Court.

The issue needs to be bottomed out, because the view being propagated around the Council of Europe and among the delegates to the Assembly is exactly that we cannot afford to let Russian citizens lose access to the European Court. In any case, my response to that is, "What about the human rights of the Ukrainians, the Crimeans and the Crimean Tatars, which have been

deeply compromised by the actions of the Russian Federation?" Jagland does not seem to want to acknowledge that.

I genuinely look forward to a time when we can welcome Russia back to the Council of Europe on the right terms, but so far Russia has done nothing to reverse its annexation of Crimea. It continues in a "totally unacceptable" manner—those are the words of Secretary-General Jagland—to block the Council's human rights commissioner from visiting the region. It continues to undermine the most fundamental pillars of the European convention.

In recent years, Russia has ramped up its aggression on the global stage. It defends President Assad and his use of chemical weapons, meddled in the US election and is now under investigation for its ties to the Brexit campaign. Let us not forget that it was responsible for poisoning a former intelligence officer, Sergei Skripal, and his daughter, Yulia, right here in the UK. While we fight among ourselves in the west, Russia is of course busy building out its strategic capacity and its influence in the Black sea and the eastern Mediterranean.

A careful balancing act was being played out when Russia was given membership of the Council of Europe. At that time, there was genuine hope. There was a belief that Russian membership would help Russia and Europe to integrate and move towards a shared moral code. But to lift sanctions now, based on the same assumption, would be wrong. In the words of one Ukrainian official:

"It would be the first hole in the wall."

This is a matter of principle over expediency, as my hon. Friend the Member for Henley said. We cannot permit a member state to behave aggressively and hold the Council to ransom over its membership. What message does that give to Russia, Ukraine and the people of Crimea? What does it say about the standards that we apply to other countries or to future applicants? It is blackmail, and it cannot be tolerated.

I make it clear that my feelings do not come from a place of dislike for the Russian people or the Russian state. They come from an honest and sincere belief in the work of the Council of Europe. The principles on which it was founded we must all, as citizens of a liberal democracy, hold dear. We need only to reflect on the grounds on which the Council was founded to be reminded that we must never take those values for granted, and at a time of increasing instability at home, in Europe and beyond, we must robustly defend that which keeps us safe and at liberty.

10.1 am

Dame Cheryl Gillan (Chesham and Amersham) (Con): It is a pleasure to speak under your chairmanship, Mr Howarth. It is also a great pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Penistone and Stocksbridge (Angela Smith), who leads the Labour delegation in the Council of Europe in an exemplary fashion. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Henley (John Howell) on obtaining this timely debate. I am looking forward to hearing what my right hon. Friend the Minister from the Foreign Office has to say about this subject, because he is an accomplished Minister, but he must realise that this is a very difficult situation. My speech will be in accordance with the two speeches that went before; I have a similar perspective.

I serve on the Council of Europe alongside many of my colleagues in this Chamber. It is very ably led by the hon. Member for North Thanet (Sir Roger Gale), and my political group is led by my hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater and West Somerset (Mr Liddell-Grainger). However, I can honestly say that the group of Members of Parliament and Members of the other place who go there to represent the United Kingdom work together as a team—a very comprehensive team and one whose members complement one another. Very little politics is played in the UK delegation to the Council of Europe; we see ourselves representing the United Kingdom, rather than our independent political positions, which gives us great strength as a delegation.

As a former colleague of my hon. Friend the Member for Henley, I, too, worked behind what was then the iron curtain. We suffered similar deprivations when we went into that territory in the name of capitalism and bringing private companies into the newly emerging markets after glasnost and perestroika. I commend him for the sterling work that he did and the advice that he gave to successive UK Governments.

I think that it is useful to remind those listening in to the debate that the Council of Europe is Europe's oldest political body. It emerged from the ashes of world war two and has been described as the "democratic conscience of Greater Europe".

Its commitment to upholding human rights, democracy and the rule of law across, now, 47 member states and 820 million people is remarkable.

I think my colleagues would agree that we sometimes see the dead hand of the European Union trying to take over and dominate the Council of Europe, but fortunately it fights and maintains its independence, which is absolutely right. I think that it is in many ways a more important body than the European Union, because the people who go to the Council to represent their countries are directly elected Members of the Assemblies in their countries. Also, it has a very proud history, which includes eliminating the death penalty across the 47 countries. We should all be proud of that.

As I have said before in this Chamber, I think that we should have an annual debate on the Floor of the House in Government time on the work of the Council of Europe. I hope that by reiterating the proposal—I know I have cross-party support for it—we could achieve that. At the end of every year, to be able to do a summary of what the Council has been up to would be very important.

On Monday, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said in the House of Commons that we needed to be

"clear and unwavering about where Russia needs to change its behaviour, and for as long as Russia persists in its efforts to undermine our interests and values, we must continue to deter...them."—[*Official Report*, 16 July 2018; Vol. 645, c. 24.]

That is exactly what we have been seeing in the Council of Europe. As hon. Members have said, following the annexation of Crimea, the Council enforced sanctions on the Russian Federation. Six years on from the military aggression that we witnessed from Russia in Georgia, it continues illegally to occupy territory there.

We ought to be clear: there has been some confusion about this, but the Russian Federation has not been suspended from participating in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. It has taken the

decision to remove its delegation from representing its credentials on the floor of the Hemicycle, following our unwavering support for the sovereignty of Ukraine, which is to the credit of all our colleagues in the Council of Europe—those from other countries as well as our own delegation.

Mr Liddell-Grainger: My right hon. Friend is completely correct to put it on the record that the Russians suspended themselves, but they are, irritatingly, still coming to the ad hoc committee, which my hon. Friend the Member for North Thanet (Sir Roger Gale) and I attend as well. They are coming back to the Council of Europe regularly in that guise.

Dame Cheryl Gillan: That is one of the confusions that has arisen, because the rules and regulations about what happens to a country that is in Russia's position are unclear. I think that Secretary-General Jagland has a great deal of work to do to clarify the position, because the Russians coming back to the ad hoc committee has caused a great deal of consternation among many of our colleagues and not least to myself, because we cannot understand why they still have the right to sit at the table when we are in this hiatus where the money has been withheld and they have removed the rest of their delegation from participation in any of our committees and activities.

It is widely agreed that the violation of the sovereignty of states arose from an illegal referendum. I want to dwell on that for a moment, because I serve as the vice-president of the committee on political affairs and democracy and am also the rapporteur for the new rules on referendums. We have just completed a large report in this country, under the auspices of the constitution unit at University College London, looking at the rules in the United Kingdom on referendums. The independent commission on which I have served for the past nine months has come up with a series of recommendations for changes to legislation in this country. I am working with Dr Alan Renwick, who is now the international adviser to the Council of Europe's political affairs committee on this matter, and I am working with the Venice Commission as it updates its rules on referendums, which is badly needed after 10 years, to try to bring more clarity to the situation.

That we have Russia in the Council of Europe at all is one of the key achievements of the post-cold war period. When it ratified its membership of the European convention on human rights in 1998, there was a real welcome for its inclusion, but in December 2015 it passed a law to allow Russian courts to overrule the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights, because it disliked those decisions. Russia was particularly exercised, as my hon. Friend the Member for Henley mentioned, by being told to pay \$2 billion to shareholders of Yukos, but there have been many judgments that have irked both President Putin and the ruling party, and some of their behaviour has resulted from that. More than one third of the cases that come before the European Court concern Russia. To put that in perspective, in 2017 the Court dealt with 8,042 applications concerning Russia. Even though 6,886 of those were declared inadmissible, it delivered 305 judgments concerning 1,156 applications, and in 293 of those there was a finding of at least one violation of the European convention

[*Dame Cheryl Gillan*]

on human rights. Before I arrived in the Chamber I looked up the figures for 2018, and already 5,975 applications have been allocated to a judicial formation, of which 579 have been decided by judgment. There are currently a further 9,191 applications pending a judicial formation. That is a heavy workload, and is a reflection of the human rights situation.

The Council of Europe is no stranger to the practice of bringing together representatives of countries that have political and diplomatic tensions, and it acts as an important partner in the soft diplomacy required to bring resolution to intractable problems. What we are discussing is probably one such problem. We need to seek a remedy for the situation because at the moment 140 million Russians will be denied access to the European Court of Human Rights, and that is not something to be taken lightly. We should not capitulate and accept an unconditional deal, as that would set a precedent for those countries that are often accused of backsliding on democracy. It is important that the founding principles of the Council of Europe should not be held to ransom as it faces complicated financial issues.

Sir Edward Leigh: My right hon. Friend makes a good point. However imperfect the Russian Government's attitude towards the Court, at least there is a chance that the 144 million Russians will continue to have access to a genuinely independent human rights court. That is why Russia must maintain its place on the Committee of Ministers—so that at least there is a chance of ordinary Russians getting access to the Court.

Dame Cheryl Gillan: The unilateral withdrawal of the funds that are important for running the Council of Europe and the Court is to be deprecated, and I should like those funds to come back, but I do not believe we should give in to the current blackmail. We need to stiffen the resolve of the Council of Europe and of Secretary-General Jagland. Money should not be more important than the democratic principles by which we all want to live. I hope for a resolution to the problem that does not involve rolling over and giving in to the Russians.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr George Howarth (in the Chair): Order. I am not going to impose a time limit, but there are four Members remaining to speak, and I have to call the Front Benchers at 10.30. If Members can confine their remarks to between four and five minutes, we should be able to get everyone in.

10.14 am

Phil Wilson (Sedgefield) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Howarth. I thank the hon. Member for Henley (John Howell) for securing this timely debate. It is important that the subject is being discussed in the House.

Our argument is not with the Russian people, but with the Russian Government and—dare I say it—the elite. It will be the Russian people who end up suffering—in fact, they are suffering—because of Russia's self-imposed suspension from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. Let us not forget that it is the

Russians who do not present their credentials at the Council on an annual basis. Russia has also suspended its €33 million payment to the Council and has threatened to withdraw from it entirely. If it did that, access to the European Court of Human Rights would be denied to Russian citizens, whose cases take up a disproportionate amount of its time: about one third of the cases brought concern Russia.

The hon. Member for Gainsborough (Sir Edward Leigh) said that we could go on forever listing the types of cases, but there are a few that we need to mention: the imprisonment of children, phone tapping of journalists, holding prisoners in cages, failing to investigate high-profile murders, torture and detaining lawyers and judges. The Russian Constitutional Court has ruled that Russia should not be bound by all international human rights obligations. In June 2016 the Venice Commission for democracy—a body of the Council of Europe—issued a final opinion on the legal changes in Russia. The commission stressed that the

“execution of the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights is unequivocal and an imperative legal obligation.”

It would seem that the relationship between the Russians and the Council of Europe is tense in any case, but it can be resolved over time. I am sure that if Russia remained a member of the Council of Europe, matters would have the opportunity to resolve themselves amicably in the years to come. However, although dialogue is important, so are the principles by which the Council of Europe is governed.

There are also the issues that the Parliamentary Assembly has criticised Russia for in the past, including the persecution of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in Chechnya; the Smolensk plane crash in 2010, which killed the Polish President; the refusal to send back the wreckage of the plane, which raises more questions than it answers; the politically motivated conviction of Ukrainians; and the condemnation of Jehovah's Witnesses as an extremist organisation. The Russian Government say that their failure to implement the ECHR's rulings is because of the fact that without Russian representation they do not have right to select ECHR judges and therefore they should not abide by the Court's decisions.

The Russian people are the victims—but not the only victims. They are denied human rights protection at the highest level in Europe because their Government have taken the decision to invade another member state, so sanctions are imposed. Still, the Russian Government insist that it is not their fault that the Russian people are denied their human rights—those that any civilised society would want its people to enjoy. For the Russians, it is always someone else's fault.

The sanctions on Russia should not be lifted. Countries cannot go around invading other member states of the Council of Europe and think they can get away with it. The financial hit on the Council of Europe must be endured, I suppose. This is about principle and we need to seek a way through that does not deny principles. We can consider the human rights issues of the Russian people but we should also consider the rights of the Ukrainians as well. Russia—a country prepared to flout international norms—cannot get away with it.

I do not believe that we can view Russia's relationship with the Council of Europe in isolation. Russia's relationship with the Council is disruptive, disconcerting and

manipulative, and is part of a pattern that is intended to sow discontent and division on the European continent. That pattern includes the Council of Europe, Crimea, Ukraine, incursions into democratic institutions of other European states—and, indeed, in America—and the use of chemical weapons on the streets of Salisbury. It is part of a strategy to divide and rule—to disregard human rights, international rule-based order and the rule of law.

A populist nationalist Russian leadership believes it can make itself strong only by ensuring Europe is weak, and it will go to any length to secure that objective. Populist movements in Hungary, Germany, France, Spain and Italy, as well as Brexit itself, and President Trump in the White House all play into Putin's hands. We must take that backdrop into consideration when we think about how we deal with Russia's relationship with the Council of Europe.

10.18 am

Sir Roger Gale (North Thanet) (Con): I understand the time constraint, Mr Howarth, but because I am the leader of the UK delegation there are certain things that I need to say. I shall do my best to stick to five minutes, as you asked.

First, I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Henley (John Howell). I want immediately to express my appreciation for the collegiate attitude taken by the entire United Kingdom delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and for the cross-party basis on which we work in the interest of the United Kingdom.

I am particularly grateful for the support of my friend the hon. Member for Penistone and Stocksbridge (Angela Smith), who recently accompanied me to the Struthof concentration camp to lay a wreath. That was a stark reminder, in Alsace, of why the Council of Europe was founded and the principles on which it was founded by Winston Churchill and nine other countries after the war.

There is no doubt in my mind that Russia is in flagrant breach of the principles of the Council of Europe by its actions in Crimea, Ukraine and the Donbass; by shooting down a civilian passenger aircraft; by the invasion of Georgia and Moldova; by the poisoning of the Skripals; and, as has been mentioned by hon. Members, by its breaches of human rights across the piece. The list is almost endless.

I must underscore the fact that in 2014, following the annexation of Crimea, the Parliamentary Assembly suspended the voting rights of the Russian delegation, but they were not expelled. Aleksey Pushkov, the leader of the Russian delegation, stage-managed a press conference, walked out of the Hemicycle and led his delegation out of the Parliamentary Assembly. Since that time, it is the Russians who have declined to present their credentials. The idea that they have somehow been excluded is a myth. As has been said, the Council of Europe is a bicameral body and the Russians still attend and contribute to the Committee of Ministers. For reasons that none of us really understand, they have also been allowed to participate in Michele Nicoletti's ad hoc committee.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough (Sir Edward Leigh) indicated that we took away the Russian voting rights, which is apparently why they are

allowed to suspend their payments. I suspect that if Spain were to annex Gibraltar, which is a fairly direct comparison, my hon. Friend might have something to say about it. If the Spanish then persecuted part of the population of the Rock and imprisoned some of them, he might have even more to say about it. That is precisely what has happened in Crimea. The Russian Federation is clearly in flagrant breach of the terms of the convention on human rights.

Another myth, which has been said by Secretary-General Jagland and propagated by others, is that if Russia were expelled from the Council of Europe, the Russian people would not have access to the European Court of Human Rights. That is, quite simply, wrong. The Committee of Ministers has no power to expel Russia; it can only suspend. If Russia does not pay next year, the Committee of Ministers will do precisely that. That suspension, however, will not deny the Russian people the right to take cases before the European Court of Human Rights.

We are facing a straightforward attempt at blackmail. The secretary-general of the Council of Europe has realised that money is more important to him than principle and that he is not prepared to make the necessary budget savings to accommodate the loss of funding from Russia. The delegation that I am proud to lead is united in saying that principle is more important than money, that the Council of Europe is not for sale and that we will fight the proposals to readmit Russia—on its own terms and nobody else's—in the presidential committee, the bureau, the rules committee and the next plenary session. Unless and until the Russians acknowledge the transgressions and make concessions themselves, they will not, for our money, come back into the Parliamentary Assembly.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr George Howarth (in the Chair): Order. I will call Sir Edward Leigh next. If he could bring his speech down to three minutes, I will be able to get in the hon. Member for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross (Jamie Stone), too.

10.24 am

Sir Edward Leigh (Gainsborough) (Con): I fear I will be the grit in this debate, but maybe it will produce a pearl of a speech from the Minister—like him, small, but perfectly formed. I will see what I can do to put an alternative point of view, at least for the sake of debate. I am not one of Lenin's useful idiots. I have no illusions about President Putin. Like everybody here, I could list all the appalling human rights abuses.

Mr George Howarth (in the Chair): Order. The three Front-Bench spokespeople have indicated that they are prepared to take a little less time, so we should have enough time for people to complete their speeches, although they will still have to be fairly brief.

Sir Edward Leigh: Thank you, Mr Howarth; I will try to make these points as quickly as I can. As I was saying, nobody doubts Russia's abuses. We did suspend their voting rights because of Crimea.

Without getting into all the history, I should say that the history of Crimea is complicated and somewhat different from that of Gibraltar. Nobody, as far as I

[*Sir Edward Leigh*]

know, in the Council of Europe, the House of Lords or the House of Commons objected when Khrushchev wrested Crimea from Russia in the 1950s and transferred it to Ukraine by decree, against the wishes of the people. I am just now repeating the common view among Russians—it is important that we understand it. No one doubts that the Russian community in Crimea is in the overwhelming majority. Despite all the doubts about the exactness of the referendum, nobody doubts, surely, that the people of Crimea, having been part of Russia for hundreds of years, wish to remain part of Russia. This history is complicated.

Were we right to suspend their voting rights? I do not know. The Russians are a proud people. Russia is not a developed democracy like France or Germany. We cannot expect instant success. As a proud people, it would surely be too much to expect them, having had their voting rights suspended, to say, “Fair enough. We will carry on turning up without voting rights.” None of us would do that here, would we? If we had our voting rights suspended, none of us would agree just to sit around. That is their point of view and we have to understand it.

What of the future? I believe it would be wrong to kick Russia out of the Council of Ministers. As has been said, it is a bicameral system. The delegation and our ambassador talk the whole time. He engages robustly with the Russians. He puts across our point of view. We engage robustly with the Russians through our Foreign Office and the Foreign Secretary.

The Council of Europe is not the European Parliament, nor is it this Parliament; it does not have executive authority. It is primarily, in my view, an inter-parliamentary union. When we admit people to that union, we accept that we have to take them warts and all. We know, for instance, that Azerbaijan has a bad human rights record and, although it has been found to be corrupting the Council of Europe, it is still a member. Surely it is better to engage—to have jaw-jaw not war-war—and at least make some effort to influence them. It would be a dangerous development if those 144 million Russians had no access at all to the European Court of Human Rights. It may be imperfect access, as I have said. The record of the Russian Government in obeying its judgments may not be up to standard, but at least it is some way forward.

I hope that, in those terms, we can view this in a moderate, middle-of-the-road way. We should constantly attack the Russians, stand up to them and condemn all their human rights abuse, but at least engage with them. I would be grateful if the Minister said whether he thinks that our ambassador, in doing all this work in the Committee of Ministers in the Council of Europe, is fulfilling a useful role.

10.29 am

Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Howarth. I congratulate the hon. Member for Henley (John Howell) on securing this debate. I am here as a bit of a fraud, really, because I am not an expert on the Council of Europe, although I am particularly interested in this subject. I am a history graduate and when I was a

Member of the Scottish Parliament, I chaired the cross-party group on Russia. What the hon. Member for Gainsborough (Sir Edward Leigh) has just said will be my theme as well.

As the hon. Member for Henley said, we got it wrong after the break-up of the Soviet Union when it came to Russia. We must remember two things about the Russians: first, as the hon. Member for Gainsborough said, their pride; and secondly, their respect for authority and deep fear of anarchy, which explain much of what Russia does. They have a tremendous fear of the great European plain, because Napoleon and Hitler swept in. We have to remember their defensive attitude and that of the Russian state; if we do not, we will make a big mistake. That is where the Russia of today comes from.

Equally, as other hon. Members have said, we should make no mistake about the fact that Russia is a serious issue for the UK—I am the defence spokesman for my party. The under-sea, covert warfare that is happening in the oceans, not least off the north coast of my constituency, is real and we have to be very careful. The Ministry of Defence must remember that. As we have heard again and again, there is also a cyber war. A former Member of this House is on Russian television for propaganda purposes—make no mistake.

This is a first-year essay compared with the very elegant tutorial that I have just heard—I have been learning a great deal—but surely it is correct to say that the UK must deal with Russia from a position of strength, because Russia respects strength in other countries. When we achieve that position of strength, however, we should seek to have a mature new relationship with Russia, because jaw-jaw is better than war-war, as the hon. Member for Gainsborough said. I, too, will listen with great interest to the Minister’s response.

Today’s debate has sparked my interest. I am sure that the House will return to the issue as the months and years go by, and I will keep track of it. One of the best things about this place is that we can have a thoughtful debate such as this one, from which a relatively new Member like me can learn something. It has got me thinking and taking a greater interest in what other hon. Members have said.

10.32 am

Douglas Chapman (Dunfermline and West Fife) (SNP): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Howarth. I start by putting a few things that have happened in the past 48 hours in context, regarding President Trump’s visit and discussions with President Putin. I thought the whole point of playing golf on a quiet Scottish golf course was to clear the mind and think about other things, but President Trump has left us in a much more confused and incoherent position than we were in at the end of last week. Many Republican party members have denounced not just his comments but his whole demeanour during that visit. Either way, it has destabilised the rules-based order and left us ill-prepared for future challenges.

I support and welcome the debate secured by the hon. Member for Henley (John Howell). The Scottish National party supports the pressure that the Council of Europe put on Russia following the annexation of Crimea. We are strongly committed to membership of the Council of Europe and recognise its pivotal place

and role in strengthening human rights across the world since its formation in 1949. We are concerned, however, about the UK's withdrawal from the European convention on human rights, which sends completely the wrong signal to Russia. We should try to enhance the recognition of human rights in Russia and abroad. I hope the Minister will comment on that.

On Ukraine, our defence team recently returned from a visit to Kiev and the Donbass region. Russia has absolutely no right to be in Crimea, by any measure of international recognition of the rule of law. It has created millions of displaced people. We spoke to many families on the frontline in the Donbass region who are subject to daily shelling—they can time it almost to the minute; the shelling starts at 7 o'clock. They cannot move from their houses or flats because there is nowhere for them to go. That affects millions. Russia is creating dreadful problems in that region.

In Kiev, it does not feel like the country is at war, but dealing with the incursions on the massive border that exists between Ukraine and the annexed area of Crimea takes up 90% of the Government's time and energy. Many citizens are in prison in Crimea and others are under daily attack because of their beliefs and sexual orientation, or for organising political resistance.

On human rights, repealing the Human Rights Act 1998 would be a retrograde step. The European convention on human rights was a considerable achievement for the whole of Europe after the atrocities of world war two. It is effective in defining the common principles and standards agreed by almost all the countries across the continent. As I said, the UK's withdrawal from the convention risks sending the wrong signal to Russia—that it could freely disregard international human rights norms at home and abroad—and undermines the work of human rights groups in Russia.

Many hon. Members present are hugely experienced in the politics, funding and fees of the Council of Europe, but I agree with those hon. Members who have said that retaining the principles of the Council should trump any issues around funding and maintaining as much dialogue with Russia as possible.

I started with President Trump, and I will end with him. It was important that during his visit he sat in Churchill's chair at Chartwell. Many hon. Members have said that there should be jaw-jaw instead of war-war, and we should consider that way forward more fully, even after Salisbury and Ukraine. I hope that hon. Members who are involved in the Council of Europe can involve Russia in future discussions to ensure that we can rely on it as a valuable partner in the future and that relations are cemented rather than broken.

10.37 am

Mr Khalid Mahmood (Birmingham, Perry Barr) (Lab): It is always a pleasure to serve under your stewardship, Mr Howarth. This important debate, secured by the hon. Member for Henley (John Howell), has roused strong passions and concerns about the significant issues of human rights and civil liberties.

The background is that, after the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, the Council imposed sanctions on Russia, and Russian delegates' voting rights to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe were suspended. That suspension has been renewed since.

In summer 2017, Russia suspended its annual payments of €33 million to the Council of Europe, as has been said. The Council of Europe rules state that member states that do not pay their contributions will also be denied representation in the selection of judges for the European Court of Human Rights.

In November 2017, Council of Europe Secretary-General Jagland toured European capitals warning of the risk that Moscow could withdraw completely from the organisation unless the sanctions were lifted. He argued that that would be a blow to Russian citizens, as they would lose access to the European Court of Human Rights. It has been mentioned that they would not necessarily lose their right to use the Court, but they would lose the ability to implement its decisions.

Russian cases take up a disproportionate amount of the time of the European Court of Human Rights, and that has been highlighted today by the right hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham (Dame Cheryl Gillan). In relation to what she said, the figures are quite significant, and we have to consider how we can try to influence that situation. Many aggressive stances have been taken over what Russia is doing, as there should be when it comes to human rights and civil liberties. Equally, however, a number of Members have said that we need to have more jaw-jaw rather than just war-war. So there is an issue here that we have to try to address in order to move forward. However, supporters of Ukraine and others argued against such a move, saying it would be a signal to other organisations, particularly the EU, that it was time to soften the position regarding the annexation of Crimea and Russia's backing of the Crimean rebels in the Donbass against the Ukraine Government.

In March 2018, Russia announced that it was again withholding its payment to the Council of Europe. Many Russian citizens have taken their cases to the ECHR, and the number of applications to the Court has increased recently, as has been mentioned. In 2017, Russia was the country with the highest number of cases registered at the Court, with 370 cases, which put it some way ahead of Turkey, which had 138 cases registered, and Romania, which had 110. Also, Russia has the highest number of awards by the Court against it. Notable cases can be found in the Court's Russia press country profile, which was updated in June 2018. However, despite what the Council of Europe regards as Russia's legally binding commitments, Russia has not complied with some judgments of the Court. All these issues are very important in terms of human rights, and we have to consider how we can get those judgments implemented.

A number of Members have mentioned that the principles are more important than the money, and I wholly agree. However, we also have to consider what Russia is currently doing to work with the European Union, and particularly with Germany, on the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline, which will bring in about 70% of the Russian gas exports that go to Germany. Currently, the Nord Stream 2 deal is not being negotiated, because of Denmark's refusal to give Russia permission to lay the pipeline through its territory.

There are significant issues we can negotiate with Russia about to support the Russian people, who suffer huge human rights abuses. That is the important issue here: how do we support them? A number of cases have been highlighted, including the Polish plane crash and a

[*Mr Khalid Mahmood*]

number of other issues relating to the LGBT community, particularly in Chechnya, where members of that community are completely ignored as a group of people and do not have a status. The only way that we can support such people is if we have some sort of discussion and ability to negotiate with Russia.

As far as I am concerned, that is the key here, and isolating Russia is not going to be a mechanism for moving forward. We have such a mechanism because of Russia's desire to trade with Germany; we have to look at that. That trade can also help Ukraine, even though there is an issue with Russia's Brotherhood pipeline, which comes through Ukraine. Actually, that pipeline earns Ukraine more than 2% of its GDP.

So there are significant issues that we can try to negotiate with Russia about in order to move forward and get Russia to honour its human rights obligations, its obligations to the Council of Europe and its obligations to the ECHR. Those are the significant issues we want to handle, and if we do not handle them and just completely isolate Russia, we will leave the Russian people completely to their own devices and without any international representation.

Mr Liddell-Grainger: The hon. Gentleman is making incredibly powerful points. However, having been a member of the Council of Europe for eight years, I gently say to him that Russia is determined to come in by the back door. It cannot come in through the front door because we, as western democracies, are saying, "No. We do not accept what you have been doing in Crimea and elsewhere." I also gently say to him that one of the things we are trying to do—through our ambassador, the Foreign Office and other routes—is to make sure that Russia lives up to its responsibilities. We want Russia back, but it has to understand that what has happened is not the way to do things. I gently say that to the hon. Gentleman and no more.

Mr Mahmood: I think the hon. Member for Henley, who secured this excellent debate, made the point—and it is the essential point that I am trying to make as well—that if we completely isolate Russia, we will not achieve some of those objectives.

So I leave this to the talents of the Minister, who is more than able to negotiate. He should particularly take into account the relationship Germany has with Russia at the moment, our continued support for Ukraine over Russia's Brotherhood pipeline, which goes through Ukraine, and the position that Denmark has taken in relation to pipelines. Those are the real issues that we should try to push Russia on, to get it to come to its senses and return to the table to negotiate an agreement with us.

Mr George Howarth (in the Chair): Before I call the Minister, let me say that I know he will need no reminding that it is customary to leave a short time for the Member who secured the debate to sum up. I call Sir Alan Duncan.

10.45 am

The Minister for Europe and the Americas (Sir Alan Duncan): Thank you, Mr Howarth, for calling me to speak and for your chairmanship of this debate.

I am very grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Henley (John Howell) for securing this debate, because I genuinely welcome this opportunity to put on the record my appreciation and the Government's appreciation of his contribution and that of all other hon. Members who are active members of the UK's delegation to the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly, many of whom are here today. As a rapporteur, my hon. Friend has been at the forefront of the Parliamentary Assembly's work on press freedom, and I know he was particularly active during the last session in highlighting Russia's failure to honour its human rights obligations, notably in illegally annexed Crimea. I am also grateful for the contributions from all the hon. Members of all parties who have spoken today, in what is a very cross-party and enlightened endeavour in relation to the Council of Europe.

The defence and promotion of human rights is a fundamental part of our foreign policy. That is why the Council of Europe is important, as a pan-European institution working to advance human rights, democracy and the rule of law across the whole of Europe.

Russia has signed up to Council of Europe standards relating to human rights, democracy and the rule of law, but the Russian Government routinely disregard them. The Council of Europe provides a means to hold Russia to account, both in the Committee of Ministers and in the Parliamentary Assembly. I should just put on the record, to clarify matters so that anyone watching our proceedings understands the situation, that Russia continues to play an active role in decision making in the Committee of Ministers—it is properly called the Committee of Ministers and not the Council of Ministers—including on the Council of Europe's budget, albeit that Russia is not paying towards that budget, and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe did not suspend Russia's rights to participate in debates, just its voting rights, as has been already explained.

I and ministerial colleagues regularly instruct the UK's permanent representative at the Council of Europe to condemn the Russian abuse of human rights and to do so in the Committee of Ministers, and our permanent representative has worked hard to secure language in Committee decisions that binds Russia to those decisions.

The Committee of Ministers also requires Russia to execute judgments of the European Court of Human Rights, yet Russia continues to have a woeful record, both in front of the Court and in terms of executing the Court's judgments. Most recently, the Committee of Ministers reaffirmed its stance on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex discrimination—a decision that binds the Russian Government to combat discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity.

Establishing and upholding internationally accepted standards in multilateral organisations is the absolutely fundamental starting point to improving the lives of the repressed and those who are discriminated against in countries where human rights are not routinely respected. Their failure to do so completely undermines the rules-based international order.

Europe's parliamentarians play a key role in the Council of Europe in upholding European values. In April 2014, in response to the illegal annexation of Crimea, the Parliamentary Assembly decided to restrict the Russian delegation's participation in the Assembly

by suspending their voting rights. Ever since, the Russian delegation has chosen not to participate in the Parliamentary Assembly.

My predecessor at the Foreign Office welcomed that action by the Parliamentary Assembly and the strong stance taken by the UK delegation at the time. I am grateful to UK parliamentarians for their efforts to maintain sanctions on the Russian delegation in the Parliamentary Assembly and for their continued work to shine a spotlight on Russia's transgressions.

The Russian Federation's decision in July 2017 to withhold its budget contribution to the Council of Europe was particularly egregious. The figure mentioned earlier today was €33 million, but I am advised that the figure is now higher, because Russia has missed three payments. The amount that Russia now owes is about €54 million. Its absence from the Parliamentary Assembly is entirely self-imposed, and its failure to meet its financial obligations also undermines the rules-based international system.

I have made it clear to Secretary-General Jagland that the UK wants Russia to address the reasons that led to the suspension of its voting rights in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in the first place before its delegation can enjoy all the rights that other delegations enjoy. Regardless of the sanctions applied in the Parliamentary Assembly, Russia must make all outstanding payments, including interest, in line with its obligations. If it does not, it will face further sanctions in the Committee of Ministers in July 2019 under the Council of Europe statute.

The international community has shown increasing resolve in dealing with Russian aggression and belligerence, and to reward Russia's blackmail tactics in the Council of Europe would undermine that institution and the wider purpose of global foreign policy. Of course, the Council of Europe is not alone when it comes to being subjected to Russian pressure. We have all seen the actions that Russia has taken to undermine countries and other international institutions—institutions that have kept us safe since the end of the second world war. Russia flouts international law—most egregiously in Crimea, eastern Ukraine and Georgia. It interferes in other countries, whether that is the botched coup in Montenegro, the repeated cyber-attacks on other states or seeking in a malign way to influence others' democratic processes.

Sir Edward Leigh: Those are warm words, which is absolutely fine, but what is the substance? Is it the view of Her Majesty's Government that Russia should be expelled from the Committee of Ministers in the Council of Europe?

Sir Alan Duncan: It is not for me to make a judgment of that sort, and if I might say so, the words I have been uttering have not been—and should not be—particularly warm. We see it as the intention of Russia to exploit instability wherever it sees it. Whenever it sees a problem, instead of trying to solve it—as we would in our foreign policy—it tries to make it worse in order to divide. It seems to be the widespread policy of Russia to try to drive a wedge between the core alliances that protect the UK and our partners.

Sir Edward Leigh: Will the Minister now reply to my question, please?

Sir Alan Duncan: I consider that I have replied to that question. It is not for me to dictate to the Council of Europe exactly what it should do, and that is why we are having today's debate. I work with representatives in this room; I do not stand here to instruct them.

As we have heard, the sanctions against the Russian delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe were in response to the illegal annexation of Crimea, and Russia continues to take actions to destabilise its neighbourhood. At the Council of Europe ministerial meeting in May, my noble friend Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon called on Russia to support regional stability by recognising the independence and territorial integrity of its neighbours Ukraine and Georgia. Crimea is Ukrainian territory; the UK Government remain fully committed to upholding the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders. If Russia hopes that, sooner or later, the world will forgive or forget about what it did in Crimea and that Crimea-related sanctions will be lifted, it is wrong. The UK will not allow Crimea to be forgotten.

We have used our membership of other multilateral institutions to demonstrate our support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, as I myself did last December at the Vienna ministerial meeting of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe. In June 2017, the UK supported a UN resolution on human rights violations in Crimea and eastern Ukraine, and at the UN Third Committee, the UK was in the core group supporting a resolution tabled by Ukraine on human rights in Crimea. Those resolutions continue to hold Russia to account for its illegal annexation.

I reiterate the UK's commitment to the Council of Europe. We will continue to engage actively and help to find solutions to the challenges that the Council of Europe faces. In that light, I reiterate the UK Government's firm commitment to ensuring the territorial integrity of Ukraine: Crimea is Ukraine, and Russia must be held accountable for its actions. Her Majesty's Government look forward to continuing their strong working relationship with all right hon. and hon. Members who work so dutifully on the Council of Europe.

10.54 am

John Howell: I thank the Minister for his excellent reply. Can I make one point on behalf of all of us who serve on the Council of Europe? We not only enjoy it, but play an important part in what we think is a very important organisation, and it is a shame that the UK seems to be the only place in Europe that does not take it as seriously as others do. If there were one change that I would advocate, it would be for the UK to start to take the organisation seriously.

We have raised an important issue, but more important than that has been the quality of the debate that we have had. A number of people have already commented that we operate across parties, and this is a brilliant example of how we do so. I am so grateful for the contributions that others have made to the debate.

This issue is not going to go away; this issue is important to us. My reason for bringing the debate was that we had an opportunity here in Parliament to collectively make a statement about what is happening in relation to Russia before the next part-session of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, where we will have to

[John Howell]

fight for this cause—we will have to fight for it again and again. If there is one thing that the debate shows, it is that we are united in what we want. We are united in our stand to make sure that human rights continue to be upheld in Russia by the Russian Government, and I look forward to our continued involvement in fighting that fight.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House has considered Russia and the Council of Europe.

10.57 am

Sitting suspended.

Swaminarayan School Closure

11 am

Mr Virendra Sharma (Ealing, Southall) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House has considered the closure of the Swaminarayan School.

I am delighted to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Howarth, and I welcome the Minister to his place. We are all deeply saddened by the news of the Swaminarayan School's closure after what will have been 28 years of academic, social and faith-based achievements. The school has consistently provided west London's Hindu community with a space for gathering, education and growth. That is why so many parents have been in touch with me—concerned that they were not consulted, concerned that they have not had a chance to reply, and concerned for their children's futures.

Pupils have flourished at the school since its founding in 1992, and it has turned out great leaders and thinkers from its fold. The Swaminarayan School has provided an invaluable service to the youth of our country, adding deeper meaning and purpose to their studies. It has nurtured an ethos of cultural diversity, and to this day adds richness and options to the breadth of British education. That diversity is part of what gives our country its reputation for being home to so many top-quality schools.

This academy in particular has met and exceeded the expected standards of a faith-based educational institution. No community, especially this one, could ever delight in the closure of such an institution. The Swaminarayan School has allowed students to receive a uniquely Hindu and British education, which grants them the opportunity to remain in touch with their heritage while getting a top-tier academic experience. There are no other schools in London that are the same, and we are losing an important part of our community's culture.

As the school moves towards closure, perhaps it is time to recognise what it brought to the community. The students and their families deserve access to an education with the same ethos that Swaminarayan offered. The school had three main aims in its time. First, to provide a high-quality education, which parents are pleased to agree it did. Secondly, the school promoted Hindu values—values that I am proud chime with British values, but are uniquely diverse and tolerant. Thirdly, as an independent school, Swaminarayan was there to make a profit, and I am worried that the closure addresses that rather than the other two aims. There has, I believe, been a failure of communication, and the trustees and governors running the school have failed to fully explain why it is closing. Profit should be the last thing on the minds of those running any school, much less one with such an honourable mission as that of the Swaminarayan School.

I am pleased that on Monday the school publicly appealed to parents, and demonstrated a commitment to helping the children to complete their education. I am concerned about the details of the offer, and that the commitments being requested are unrealistic for many parents, but it represents a positive step forward. The failure to keep families properly informed of their plans

to close the school has left dozens scrambling to find a new place for their Hindu children to receive a faith-based education.

Education is not meant for profit, and any organisation that fails to share that sentiment is not fit to run an educational institution. I sincerely hope that after this event, organisations such as the Akshar Educational Trust will prioritise the impact of its decisions on families over monetary considerations. The Akshar Educational Trust has stated that the reason for closing the school relates to regulations introduced by the Government, though I must express my disappointment in the revelation that money may have been a driving factor in the decision.

Closure has left many families and pupils disappointed and feeling left behind by those who should be fighting for them. My colleague, Councillor Ketan Sheth, and my constituent, school parent Parag Bhargava, have been vocal about their disappointment in the handling of Swaminarayan School's closure. Parag rightly states that the school can and should remain open. Knowing that the future of one's child's education is unclear creates great stress for parents and families. Regardless of the dissatisfaction that those connected to Swaminarayan School have been feeling lately, they continue to fight for their children's education.

I applaud the parents of students and all others who are campaigning to keep the school alive. My hon. Friend the Member for Brent Central (Dawn Butler) has for many years been a fervent supporter of the school. She has taken great effort to work with the community—first, to oppose the closure and now to mitigate the worst effects. My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow West (Gareth Thomas) has also gone to great pains to work with parents and the community to seek a resolution.

The hon. Member for Harrow East (Bob Blackman) has long been a firm supporter of the Swaminarayan School, and I thank him for his interest in the debate. As leader of the council, he was instrumental in securing the site on which the school sits today. Without him we would not have the Swaminarayan School that we do today. Other councillors in Brent and from across west London have contributed time and effort to the cause of the school and trying to secure its future. I cannot name them all, but I would like to thank them all. I also thank the trustee Dr Mayank Shah, who kindly gave a briefing to me lately.

Parents have taken a stand too, and many have bravely agreed to take on the responsibility of running the school and finding a solution to keep it from closing. That spirit of dedication and community reflects the great respect that people in the local area have for the school. Parents from my seat of Ealing, Southall and as far as Hounslow want to keep the school open. It is worth fighting to keep its doors open. Even though the future seems unsteady for the institution, those who care about the cause press forward.

Whatever happens, we will not forget the achievements of the Swaminarayan School. Its legacy will have a lasting impact on the Hindu community in Europe. As a Hindu school, it was the first and only one of its kind in Europe for many years. Although we welcome the success of other Hindu schools, the Swaminarayan School has offered a unique learning environment apart from the mainstream.

Stephen Pound (Ealing North) (Lab): I am sorry that I missed the beginning of my hon. Friend's well-informed and interesting peroration. He talked about other parts of west London supporting the Swaminarayan School. Certainly in my constituency of Ealing North there are many supporters. The Swaminarayan School was the first school that I am aware of to incorporate yoga as part of its teaching curriculum, and also to be a completely vegetarian school. Does he agree that we can learn much from the Swaminarayan School?

Mr Sharma: I thank my hon. Friend for that contribution, which speaks for itself. I fully agree with him that the contribution that the school has made to society in general is great.

I will fight to ensure that the Hindu community of west London continues to have its needs met, despite the closure of an essential part of that community. The end of the Swaminarayan School is a great loss, but we are not lost. The community will continue to call for what it needs, and the Hindu community in west London is stronger than ever.

Mr George Howarth (in the Chair): Before I call the hon. Member for Harrow East (Bob Blackman), by leave of the mover of the motion and the Minister, I strongly remind him that the Minister has to have adequate time to reply. Bob Blackman.

11.10 am

Bob Blackman (Harrow East) (Con): I congratulate my honourable friend, the hon. Member for Ealing, Southall (Mr Sharma), on securing this important debate. I, too, made a request to the Deputy Speaker to have a debate on the subject. As the hon. Gentleman mentioned, I was leader of the council when the Swaminarayan School was created, and a large number of my constituents have children educated in the school, so there is a twin aspect to my interest.

We also need to remember the history of the site. Before the school became the Swaminarayan School, it was Sladebrook High School—a notorious school, which was state run. By the time it closed, there were more teachers in the school than children. It had failed dismally as a state school and had to be closed by Brent Council. It was then sold to the Swaminarayan Hindu Mission as a means to provide what was required at the time—as the hon. Member for Ealing, Southall mentioned, the first Hindu secondary school in the area and, I believe, in the country. Unfortunately, successive Governments failed to make the school state-aided, and it has been a fee-paying school ever since.

Parents demanded a Hindu ethos to their children's education—and quite rightly, too. Other Hindu schools have been set up in north-west London, and I am delighted that we will very shortly be celebrating the opening of the first state-funded Hindu secondary school in my constituency, in September, when that site formally opens. Parents now face a choice: they can send their children to state-run schools with no fees at all or send their children to a fee-paying school.

Swaminarayan School has been an outstanding school and has had the best results at public examinations of any school in Brent. It has been an outstanding success. However, in these times, parents find it very difficult to

[*Bob Blackman*]

afford the fees and that has led to the need to make decisions. The school buildings are in a relatively poor state of repair and need substantial moneys to bring them up to modern standards.

I have a number of questions for the Minister that I hope he will deal with in his reply. The Swaminarayan School has made a decision to close. It could have closed this month, which would have been a disaster: more than 377 children would have no place in education and their education would be completely disrupted. The governors have made a decision to close the school over a period of time; they are not allowing new admissions and are running the school down.

What help can the Minister offer the parents of those children who want a school place elsewhere—not necessarily in Brent, but in the wider area—in a school that will have a Hindu ethos? How can the Minister work with the Avanti Schools Trust, the trust that runs the state-funded Hindu schools? What can the Minister offer to enable those parents and children to get places in schools?

The site has been a school site forever. I mentioned Sladebrook, which was set up a very long time ago when the Stonebridge estate was built, and it has been a school site ever since. What protection can my hon. Friend the Minister offer to ensure that the site is preserved for educational use? There have been all sorts of rumours about the intentions. My understanding from the trustees is that they wish to retain the site for general use related to the Swaminarayan Hindu Mission and they are not in the position of wanting to profit or make money from the site, but I would ask nevertheless what protections we can ensure are offered. What advice might the Minister be able to give to the local authority in that respect?

Thirdly, various rumours have reached me about the Avanti Schools Trust wanting to set up a Hindu school in Brent. That has been welcomed by parents in Brent who want a Hindu ethos for their children's education and it would give more parental choice across north-west London. However, it is suggested that there is a surplus of places in Brent schools at the moment and therefore setting up such a school would be resisted. I understand that there is a potential proposal for a school to be set up on what is loosely called the Northwick Park site. That is an opportunity for the matter to be advanced, which would help residents of Ealing, Harrow and Brent to get a Hindu-ethos education, if they so wish.

The governors have made the decision. I ask the Minister what comfort can be given to the parents of children in the school who are asking whether they could advance the idea of a free school run by parents. What would the process be for that?

With that, I will sit down. I hope the Minister will kindly answer those points, which the hon. Member for Ealing, Southall has also raised, so we can give parents some answers at a crucial time for their children's education.

11.17 am

The Minister for School Standards (Nick Gibb): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Howarth. I congratulate the hon. Member for Ealing, Southall (Mr Sharma) on securing this important debate and on his opening comments.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow East (Bob Blackman) is, of course, right that the Government's academies and free schools programme has enabled a number of Hindu faith schools to be established in the state sector for the first time, as free schools set up by organisations such as the Avanti Schools Trust. He pointed to a new school opening this September under the free schools programme. There is also the Avanti House Primary School in Harrow and the Avanti House Secondary School, which were opened under the free school programme—the secondary was rated good by Ofsted in May 2018. There is the Krishna Avanti Primary School in Croydon and the Krishna Avanti Primary School in Leicester, again set up under the free school programme.

There are more than 2,300 independent schools in England, and between them they provide an enormous variety of educational experiences for our young people. Around 7% of children are educated in the independent sector, which is a significant contribution to our education system. Some schools in the independent sector will close and some will open. The independent sector also has a number of faith schools, which bring their own distinctive flavour. Schools with a religious character also play a strong and positive role in the state-funded sector, making up a third of all schools. They are some of our highest performing schools and are often popular with parents, giving them greater choice and the opportunity to pass on their ethos to their children.

Although the independent school sector as a whole is flourishing, with broadly constant numbers of schools and pupils over the past few years, it is inevitable that there will be changes. Every year, a number of independent schools close—usually about 70 or 80. Other schools open their doors in broadly the same numbers, but the profile of the sector tends to change over time in response to a number of factors, including market pressures. We should not forget that independent schools, whether run by charities or as businesses, operate in the marketplace. The decision to close an independent school is a matter for the owner or proprietor alone, except for the small number of cases when the Government seek to close a school because of a serious and extended failure to meet the independent school standards; that has not been the case for the Swaminarayan School.

Unlike state-funded schools, independent schools do not have to go through an approval process before they close. Although the owner or proprietor is asked as a matter of courtesy to inform the Department for Education that the school can be removed from the register of independent schools, there is no obligation to give the Department any details of the reason for closure. The Department passes what it knows to the relevant local authority, in case the closure results in demand for state-funded school places.

It is, of course, always a priority, whenever an independent or state school closes, to ensure that alternative schools are found for the pupils. My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow East is absolutely right to raise that important issue. It can be a very difficult time for families, and sometimes there are added time pressures. Families were told about the closure of the Swaminarayan School well in advance. That is not often the case, and it will assist parents who are currently sending their children to the school.

I turn to the closure. Although the school is not in the constituency of the hon. Member for Ealing, Southall, it is likely that many children from families in his constituency attend it. Naturally, those families will have found the announcement of the closure disappointing. It is a reasonably sized school: in January 2018, it had 420 pupils, although only 377 are expected to be there this September, and it caters for an age range of between two and 18 years. When it was inspected in 2014, the Independent Schools Inspectorate found that the provision was excellent. The October 2014 report says the school

“enables pupils to obtain excellent standards in their work and to develop outstanding qualities as young people”.

It also says:

“Both at GCSE and in the sixth form, pupils benefit from first class curricular arrangements, and from a wide-ranging programme of activities”.

That reflects what the hon. Gentleman said. As I said, there is no requirement to give the Department specific reasons for closure, but our understanding from statements supplied by the trustees is that the reasons are primarily financial, and that falling pupil numbers are the driver. The closure of all parts of the school is now planned to take place in 2020, to give parents the maximum amount of time to find alternative schools.

The school has a designation as a school of religious character and a declared religious ethos of Hinduism, although not all the pupils who attend are of that religion. It is right to acknowledge that the closure of a school with a specifically Hindu ethos is a matter of regret, simply because at present there are relatively few other schools of that nature in England. There are two primary academies, four free schools and an independent school. Most Hindu children attend schools in the state or independent sectors.

As I have suggested, there is nothing the Government can do to stop the closure now that the trustees have taken the decision. We do not fund independent schools, and nor do we come to arrangements that are designed to help them overcome financial difficulties. That is

what being independent is about; it is not just about giving schools greater freedom to operate in the way they want.

I am sure the school will work closely with the local authority and parents to ensure that alternative schools can be found for the children who are still at the school in 2020. I will write to my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow East about the site. If it had been a state school, there are particular provisions to ensure that the first option is for it to open as a free school. As it is an independent school, I will write to my hon. Friend in technical terms about whether there are provisions in statute that can enable the site to continue to be used for educational purposes, or whether it is free for the owners to dispose of as they wish. I will write to him to confirm that position.

I have listened very carefully to what the hon. Member for Ealing, Southall said. The priority over the next two years must be to ensure that the pupils who would have been at the school in 2020, had it remained open, are found alternative places.

Bob Blackman: One of the questions I asked—I apologise to the Minister, because they were not necessarily expected—was: what assistance can the Department give to parents who wish to set up a free school, if they wish to pursue that route? There are 377 pupils in the school at the moment.

Nick Gibb: We give a lot of help to groups that wish to set up free schools. The New Schools Network is the starting point of that help; once a proposal is in play, we will allocate an official in the Department to help it come forth. A number of Hindu free schools have already been established through that process, and I am happy to work with my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow East and the hon. Members for Ealing, Southall and for Ealing North (Stephen Pound), if they want to meet to discuss particular proposals for a Hindu free school to replace the Swaminarayan School.

Question put and agreed to.

11.26 am

Sitting suspended.

Domestic Abuse Victims and Family Courts

[JOAN RYAN *in the Chair*]

2.30 pm

Jess Phillips (Birmingham, Yardley) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House has considered progress on protecting victims of domestic abuse in the family courts.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairship, Ms Ryan. We are here, for what seems like the millionth time, to talk about any progress on and the still numerous problems in the family court. We have been here before. We sought approval from the Government, and made gains with them, on issues presented by the all-party group parliamentary group on domestic violence. Unfortunately, a general election then got in the way, so all the progress that could have been made was lost. It is important to mention that, because that lost progress is not just one of those things; it means that, during this intervening period, hundreds and hundreds more women are being treated poorly while we do not get our act together.

I must say a massive thank you to the right hon. Member for Basingstoke (Mrs Miller) and my hon. Friends the Members for Hove (Peter Kyle), for Great Grimsby (Melanie Onn) and, especially, for Penistone and Stocksbridge (Angela Smith). Together, as a cross-party collective, we have been fighting for an improved family court system for victims of domestic abuse for a very long time. It is a pleasure to fight alongside them.

I must also thank the previous Secretary of State for Justice, the right hon. Member for South West Norfolk (Elizabeth Truss), who took a huge amount of flak from some quarters, some of which I think was because she was a woman. She was the only person in a ministerial post who ever really listened to us about this subject. She broke the deadlock and got the Government to agree with us, and I cannot but think that having a woman in such a position was the reason that that happened.

I thank Women's Aid, which has done so much campaigning in the area, and many others: this week I have received briefings from all over the place, including the Law Society, the Magistrates Association, Barnardo's and SafeLives. There is often friction among specialist women's organisations, the judiciary and lawyers with regard to issues to do with violence against women and girls, and the court system. Often the problem is that we do not all sing from the same hymn sheet. Every single one of the briefings, however, whether from the Magistrates Association, the Law Society or one of the specialist organisations, makes at least one of three recommendations to Government. I will therefore focus on those specific recommendations and ask the Government to do something about them.

The first relates to perpetrators being able to cross-examine victims in the family court. If the general public had any real sense that that was happening, they would be absolutely horrified. Members of Parliament have come up to me in this place to say, "You'll never guess what about this case in my constituency, Jess—her perpetrator was allowed to cross-examine her in court." They are stunned to find that that is allowed to happen.

Melanie Onn (Great Grimsby) (Lab): My hon. Friend is making an incredibly powerful speech, and I congratulate her on securing the debate. Does she agree that that loophole in the system makes those—usually women—who have been victims of domestic violence victims twice over, not only in the attacks that they have sustained but in a court setting?

Jess Phillips: Absolutely. It is, fundamentally, revictimisation and—if the Minister cares to browse the Equality Act 2010—illegal. There is a very real case for a public sector equality duty on the basis of gender to be made against existing practice in the family court. If such practice does not change soon, that is absolutely the route that people such as me will take, because our public sector is not meeting that duty.

Wera Hobhouse (Bath) (LD): I thank the hon. Lady for securing this incredibly important debate. Does she also agree that one problem in this country is that, still, only about 30% of judges are female? In other European countries the average is much more likely to be about 50%. In this country women often feel that their voices are not heard in that environment, thereby adding insult to injury. Terrible stories are being judged in court, but sometimes the women feel that they are not getting justice, simply because people often do not understand as no one else is female.

Jess Phillips: I absolutely agree with the hon. Lady. We have to change the nature of our justice system from one that is fundamentally old fashioned and, at its very core, fundamentally male.

Every single one of the organisations that has been in touch with me has suggested specialist domestic abuse and sexual violence training for those involved in making judgments. Later, when I read out some of the victim testimonials, we will hear about the things that victims have put up with in court. It is as if some of those judges have never met another person, let alone know anything about domestic abuse.

The idea that in this country—still, today, right now, in the courts—a perpetrator is cross-examining a victim of domestic abuse, perhaps in order to gain access to their children, is absolutely harrowing. James Munby, the outgoing head of the family division of the High Court, made it very clear that he wished the practice to end. It is, of course, not something that happened by accident or that we ever saw when I was working in domestic abuse services; the practice is a direct consequence of the changes to the legal aid regime made by the coalition Government and this Conservative Government. As a result, it is now the case that not only perpetrators but—we must not forget this—victims must act as litigants in person. That practice would never be allowed in the criminal courts in our land. The Ministry of Justice, whose Ministers sit across from me today, rules out the use of that practice in a criminal setting on human rights grounds, but the very same Department allows it to happen in our family and civil courts every single day.

Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): The hon. Lady is making an incredibly powerful case. Does she agree that it is absolutely obscene that people who need help the most, at a time of such vulnerability, are denied

even the most basic support via legal aid to make their case? As others have said, that is revictimisation a hundred times over and it has to stop.

Jess Phillips: Absolutely. The Minister will no doubt respond by saying that the Government have made changes to legal aid in civil and family court cases involving domestic abuse, but every single day I am notified of at least one case of domestic abuse victims not being able to access legal aid in the family court. I am writing lots and lots of letters to the Legal Aid Agency to remind it of its duty to victims of domestic abuse and of the ruling on how long someone has to be free from violence or abuse. That limit was changed from two years to five years by the Government, but that was thanks once again to campaigners taking them to court—the Government did not make that change out of the kindness of their heart.

Melanie Onn: My hon. Friend is being very generous in giving way. Has there been any analysis of the long-term mental health impact on victims of cross-examination by their perpetrators? The justice system is facilitating and enabling such cross-examination.

Jess Phillips: I certainly do not know of any. I will mention the recent study by Queen Mary University of London, in partnership with Women's Aid, of how people are treated in the family courts. I am not aware of any Government reviews of the effect of litigants in person and, more broadly, of people being cross-examined by people who abused them, but I would certainly like to see one. If our courts and the Department are happy for that to go on, it is only right that they review whether it should continue.

Queen Mary University of London found that 24% of domestic violence victims who had gone through the family court system had been cross-examined by their perpetrator—someone who may have raped them, kept them prisoner or made them look on while they abused their children. We have the “achieving best evidence” standards in this country. I am not sure I can remember the bit in those standards that says the best way to get evidence in a justice environment is to allow someone who is utterly terrifying and has abused the victim to question them. I am not sure that we currently meet any sort of standard for achieving best evidence.

James Munby made it clear that the hands of family courts are tied—they simply cannot stop that cross-examination. Legislation is not in place to allow them to stop it. I know the Government want to stop it, too, and I am glad they heard our calls about that. I suggest that they do it. When the right honourable—I am not sure whether he is right honourable, and I am certainly not sure whether he is right or honourable—Member for Christchurch (Sir Christopher Chope) embarrassed them on upskirting, a Government Bill was suddenly introduced to address that. It has been widely publicised that the House will sit for two days next week. I would gladly come back then to see through a piece of legislation that has been passed once already—it has already gone through rigorous scrutiny by the Clerks and the House. I would gladly pop down on a train from Birmingham to stop the cross-examination of victims of domestic abuse by their abusers.

The second area that everyone who has been in touch with me has given a lot of attention is practice direction 12J and new practice direction 3AA. I believe practice direction 12J was reaffirmed for magistrates courts and our family court system because, frankly, it was not being followed. For those who are not as geeky as I am about the old practice directions in the family court system, practice direction 12J basically undoes the idea that someone who has been abusive has a right to see their children. That is not an automatic right, especially in cases where there is domestic abuse. Practice direction 12J gives that steer to people making such judgments. I handled hundreds of cases involving domestic abuse, and I cannot say I ever noticed that practice direction being used. I have great faith in the Magistrates Association, and I believe from what it wrote to me this week that that direction has been affirmed.

I wonder whether the Minister will join me in stressing the importance of this very simple message: “If you beat, coerce, humiliate and abuse your children’s mother, you waive your right to be their father until the moment the non-abusive parent decides otherwise.” I am not saying for one second that no one who commits domestic abuse should be able to see their children, but they should not have a right to demand to see them where the non-abusive parent does not wish those children—and the children do not wish—to be put in that situation.

Alison Thewliss (Glasgow Central) (SNP): I thank the hon. Lady for securing this debate and for the speech she is giving, and I send solidarity from all the women’s aid organisations in Scotland, which want this change to be made, too. I understand that in England there is a presumption that the welfare of the child is best served by the involvement of both parents. That is not the case in Scotland, where decisions are taken on the facts of the case. Does she agree that looking at each case individually—looking at the facts of the case, the situation and the risk—is a much better approach than an automatic presumption?

Jess Phillips: I totally agree. I can only praise Scotland for the progress it has made in this area. I very much would like the Minister to look at what happens there. I am sure it is by no means perfect, but it is a lot better than what we have here.

New practice direction 3AA requires courts to consider whether those involved in family proceedings are vulnerable and, if so, whether that is likely to diminish their participation in proceedings or—as I said—the quality of their evidence. What are the Minister and the Department doing to review the use of practice direction 12J following its reaffirmation? It has been around a long time. Can we conduct some sort of review of whether it is working or whether it needs updating, and of new practice direction 3AA? Both are key to ensuring that we can rebuild trust among victims of domestic abuse.

The third thing that every single person who has been in touch with me has raised is the issue of special measures in the family courts, which are woefully behind those in criminal justice proceedings. In some cases, the same woman may present at the same courthouse—literally the same building—and be offered different things. She would most likely be greeted at the door of the criminal court by an independent domestic violence adviser co-located in that courthouse, who would have arranged

[*Jess Phillips*]

different times for her and would explain the system and help her find the special area for her in the court. She may then walk around the back of the building and go through a different door into the family court, where someone may say, “Oh, there’s Larry—you can just sit next to him, regardless of the years of abuse you have suffered.”

There is absolutely no excuse for the tardiness with which we have reacted to something we have known about for a long time. At least since I came to this place, we have been raising the need for separate rooms, separate arrival times and better evidence-giving opportunities, so that people do not just have a curtain around them but can give evidence from elsewhere via video link. Those are well-trodden practices in our criminal court system, but for some reason in the family court we seem unable to recognise that there is a victim. The fact that family court proceedings are civil proceedings in which both parties are considered equal does not mean that both parties are equal.

Wera Hobhouse: The hon. Lady is being generous in giving way. A number of my constituents who have gone through traumatic and abusive divorces have raised concerns with me about the family court. Is it not terrible that women do not feel our legal system protects them at the time they are most vulnerable?

Jess Phillips: I agree entirely. The plain and simple fact is that currently it does not protect them. The family court system fails victims of domestic abuse more often than it succeeds. I say that with absolute confidence.

Melanie Onn: What does my hon. Friend consider the ramifications of that failure to be for those victims? Does she think a lack of confidence in the judicial system, and particularly in the family courts system, could give rise to people staying in a domestic violence situation, thereby prolonging their situation and perhaps causing greater damage to their health?

Jess Phillips: There are lots of case studies in the papers in front of me where the consequence of a lack of trust or of a lack of safe and free access to our justice system is that women return. Women are now convinced that they will not win in a family courts setting. I would stay with somebody who beat me black and blue every day if it meant that I got to watch over my children and did not have to leave them alone with him. If someone has a violent partner and the choice is, “Leave them with this man, who you know is violent, or take the beating on behalf of your children,” we would struggle to find a single parent in the land who would do anything other than return.

The worst ramifications are, of course, that we are leaving people in violent homes. My hon. Friend the Member for Penistone and Stocksbridge has handled one of the worst cases of failings in the family courts—the case of her constituent Claire Throssell, who is a personal hero to many of us in this House, and my hon. Friend will talk about that later. The ramifications are the deaths of women and the deaths of children. That can no longer go on.

I cannot understand why the special measures issue has not been sorted yet. It is not that hard to sort out. Every single court in the land has a robing room for the judges. How about putting the victims in there? I think the judges could put their robes on in the corridor. We manage it—I put my coat on just earlier. I have a fancy job, but I do not need a special room.

On the issue of special measures in courts, James Munby has said:

“In too many courts the only available special measure is a screen or curtains round the witness box. What, for example, about the safe waiting rooms for which the APPG has...called?”

I feel that he is personally talking to me in this quote. He goes on to say:

“The video links in too many family courts are a disgrace—prone to the link failing and with desperately poor sound and picture quality... The problem, of course, is one of resources, and responsibility lies, as I have said, with HMCTS and, ultimately with ministers.”

Those are the words of the outgoing president of the family division. Special measures are something we should invest in, and we should do so immediately. I welcome whatever the Minister can say today about any schemes currently in place to improve the situation, because 61% of the women surveyed by Women’s Aid and Queen Mary University of London were offered no special measures at all in the family courts.

Another issue that was raised was specialist support and advocacy for women going through the family justice system. I believe schemes are under way to pilot that issue up in the Northumberland area, where the brilliant Dame Vera Baird is the police and crime commissioner. There will be lots and lots of evidence of the value of the independent domestic violence adviser role in the criminal court and in community-based domestic violence services. With independent sexual violence advisers, the arguments are long ago won: having these advisers maintains victims within the process and means that they understand the process and can continue to try to get their rapists convicted.

There is no Government scheme or nationally recognised network for women facing civil issues through the civil courts, and I might argue that there is a far greater need there, not only because of the issue of litigants in person, but because—in an era when we have no representation for a lot of these women and many do not have any legal aid—having a system of advocacy in our family courts so that victims can understand exactly where they are meant to sit and what they are meant to present is something the Government should look at funding. Independent domestic violence advisers were launched under the last Labour Government, with match funding from local authorities and the Home Office, and I recommend that the Ministry of Justice creates a similar scheme, in partnership with the Home Office, for the family courts system. Certainly, every single one of the organisations that wrote to me called for that.

The next issue that everybody raised, which we have already touched on, is legal aid. Legal aid is currently available to victims of domestic abuse going through the family courts system, but that is still on a means-tested basis. There are all sorts of reasons why that system continues to fail victims of domestic abuse, meaning that they cannot access legal aid. The Law Society, which has written jointly with Women’s Aid to the Secretary of State for Justice, has called for a review

into all the things I am talking about, but it and the Magistrates Association wanted me to stress today that the capital element of means-testing for legal aid is massively disadvantaging women.

Yes, a woman may well have been left after her ex-partner has put her through the wringer and no doubt left his name on her property, and it has probably taken her two or three years to get it off. She has already been through all that process, and she has managed to maintain a home where she and her children live, and that home now means she cannot access legal aid. I am not talking about the people who buy houses around Westminster; these are people living in my constituency, where it is about £120,000 for a three-bed semi, with one car on the drive. They are not rich people, and their capital means nothing in terms of their ability to pay. We cannot for a second suggest that they should be selling their house to protect their children from a violent perpetrator, yet, seemingly, we do suggest that.

Everybody has called for an end to the capital means test, which in many circumstances means that the equity in someone's home should be used to fund legal costs. Of course, that is a double-edged sword, because if I were to use the equity in my home, I would then lose my home and would be much less financially secure—and when a woman is not so financially secure and has a precarious housing situation, it will be about 15 minutes before a social worker is saying to the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service that she should not be looking after her children, and we will end up in exactly the same situation we were in at the beginning. We are exacerbating things.

I am here to tell hon. Members from personal experience that, currently, victims of domestic abuse in the family courts system are, more often than not, unable to access legal aid. That has to change. The problem in the family courts with perpetrators, which I highlighted at the beginning, has been caused by this Government's policy on legal aid—let us not use these things to twist the knife.

Jessica Morden (Newport East) (Lab): May I also add the support of Welsh Women's Aid and campaigners such as Rachel Williams from Newport, whom my hon. Friend knows, for the debate? Is it not the case that such situations become more difficult because victims can be forced to return to family and civil courts time and again?

Jess Phillips: Absolutely. I will mention Rachel in closing. It gets lost that coercive control does not stop when a woman leaves her partner. Women's risks massively increase once they leave, and they are more likely to be murdered. In Rachel's case, this was when the most harrowing consequences played out for her and her children. Coercion does not all of a sudden go away, and we—the state—allow perpetrators to re-victimise women again and again by hearing the same case over and over.

There are judges who try to stop that pattern of abuse in courts, but they are not the norm. There are hundreds of cases in which the same woman will be taken through the wringer again and again. She will be told that she is mad, and things will be given to the court to show that she is mad. And, yes, she is mad: she has been driven mad by having to fight the same battle again and again.

There has to be some limitation. A line has to be drawn in cases where domestic abuse is evidenced. That is incredibly important.

Let me move on to CAFCASS. I may start forwarding all the complaints I receive about CAFCASS to the Minister. I have an entire folder in my email inbox called "Complaints about CAFCASS", which has around 800 emails in it. I get them from people from all over the country, and because I am standing up and saying this, I will get hundreds more. I create a file of all the problems that people have with CAFCASS.

There is a constant feeling that the children and the women are not listened to, that their experiences of domestic abuse are diminished, that they are considered to be in the wrong and that they have to constantly prove that they are telling the truth and have understood their own experiences. The main complaint I receive is that CAFCASS does not pay nearly enough attention to listening to children, which is a grave error. Barnardo's said exactly the same in a submission to me—that there is a barren wasteland in all of this when it comes to listening to the voice of the child. We must work much more closely with them.

SafeLives sent me a series of briefings on its concerns about CAFCASS's parental alienation models. We will all have heard about parental alienation from some idiot dressed as Spider-Man crawling up the side of a building—the idea that women purposefully alienate children from their fathers is well known.

Those people have won the war of rhetoric. If we ask anyone in the street whether they think family court proceedings are more likely to fall in favour of a man or a woman, every single one would say it was more likely to fall in favour of a woman. The reality is entirely different. In cases of the most severe domestic abuse, 38% of violent perpetrators—people who have been criminalised for abuse—are granted unsupervised access to their children. It is absolutely not the case that family courts are favourable to women. CAFCASS plays a severe role in marginalising women in that process.

Rachel, who has already been mentioned, sent me 199 pages of testimonials this morning, with about 10 to 13 testimonials on each page. That is thousands of testimonials about the situations that women face in the family courts. I will read a couple out:

"CAFCASS is not working in the best interests of the children, who are victims of domestic abuse themselves";

"CAFCASS is enabling the perpetrators of abuse to gain more control";

"CAFCASS did not talk to my children, who, too, are victims. Their voices were nowhere on the accounts";

"They think that abusive partners are good dads";

"They were incompetent, stupid, easily taken in by a manipulative perpetrator and aggressive towards me. One woman couldn't even be bothered to know my name. They called my 999 call a 'minor disagreement' in their official records. They are a complete disgrace"; and,

"I, too, have had a terrible time with CAFCASS and the family courts. They were more supportive of my abusive ex than actually listening to my kids. Also, when my son made a statement and showed signs of abusive behaviour, they continued to put him through the court and pooh-poohed and belittled everything that we had to say."

Those are just a few. Accounts were sent to me over the weekend from women who said that their perpetrators, some of whom had to be handcuffed, and who even

[Jess Phillips]

kicked off during the family court proceedings, were congratulated by judges for remaining calm.

There is testimonial after testimonial from women who have been stared down by their partner and have capitulated in front of judges, just to make it stop. It is our responsibility to make it stop, so will the Minister commit to a timetable for when it will? I know that the Government want to stop this, but when will we actually do it? If I were to review the Government's current policy, or this era in politics, I would write, "We did a review." I ask the Minister to actually do something.

3.7 pm

John Howell (Henley) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Ryan. I congratulate the hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Jess Phillips) on securing this important debate. I also pay my respects to organisations such as Women's Aid, which have raised many of the issues that have been discussed—specifically, judicial attitudes.

I know some of the difficulties with judicial attitudes because I did an Industry and Parliament Trust fellowship in the law courts, during which I spent almost three weeks sitting with judges. If she has the time, I urge the hon. Lady to undertake such a fellowship in the specific courts of interest to her, so that she can participate in how they work and see how they could change to achieve some of the aims that she holds so dear.

The one aspect of this issue that I raise above all others comes from my membership of the Council of Europe: the Istanbul convention. It is very important to the debate. [Interruption.] I see the hon. Lady nodding, so she knows of it. I mention it because it sets minimum standards for how domestic abuse and violence towards women and girls are treated in the member countries. Its primary aim is to protect victims. That is a very important point to bear in mind.

The convention ensures that domestic violence and rape crisis shelters are set up and that helplines and counselling are available for victims. Although the UK has signed the Istanbul convention, it has not yet fully ratified it because we still need a legal means of bringing elements of it into our legislation. Given that we are one of the countries that helped to produce the Istanbul convention, I hope that we move quickly to ratify it. If I may, I will read a brief quote from it:

"there can be no real equality between women and men if women experience gender-based violence on a large-scale and state agencies and institutions turn a blind eye."

That is an important point to bear in mind. I hope the Minister will take the Istanbul convention into account in her response, because it provides the necessary framework for people to be able to tackle the issue.

My second approach relates to my role as a member of the Justice Committee. That may not seem immediately relevant, but the Justice Committee is a statutory consultee of the Sentencing Council. We recently looked at draft sentencing guidelines on domestic abuse. The previous guidelines were, I am afraid, last produced in 2006 and are completely out of date, particularly with society's attitudes to domestic abuse and the standards that we

want to see. The starting point is the definition of domestic abuse. If I may quote again, the guidelines state that it is:

"any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass"—

this is the important point—

"but is not limited to: psychological...physical...sexual...financial...emotional"

issues. That range of different abuses shows that there is a great attitude among the judiciary: to change and try to incorporate a much broader spectrum of activities.

In our response to the Sentencing Council, we said that such offences need to be seen as particularly serious and not ranked on a par with other offences; they need to be sorted out as really important offences. Overall, we said that they needed to be condemned in the strongest possible terms. One of the paragraphs in the report stated:

"We recognise that recorded offences related to domestic abuse are largely, but not exclusively, perpetrated by men and boys against women and girls."

We understood

"the various contexts in which domestic abuse may occur and the forms that it may take...Accordingly, we recommend that comprehensive training on domestic abuse and intimidatory offences should be provided to magistrates and the judiciary to coincide with the launch of the guideline."

I was pleased to see that the judiciary has moved some way towards doing that and has begun the training required. The need for training has been recognised.

Wera Hobhouse: I heard the most heart-breaking story a year ago from a Bath constituent about a CAF/CASS worker. She felt that the social worker allocated to help her through the process was absolutely not sympathetic and seemed not to have had any of that training. Should the training not also include the social workers allocated to help women through the process? Should not women have the right to pick the social worker to work with them?

John Howell: I agree with the hon. Lady that the training can incorporate a large number of people, but we are dealing here with the courts and what we want to happen there. I am simply saying that the need for training has been recognised in the courts. It is also important to ensure that domestic abuse cases are flagged up properly as they pass through the court system so that everyone knows what is a domestic abuse case and can help to smooth it along the way.

To go back to the guidelines, they are overarching and recognise that a defining characteristic of domestic abuse is the harm caused. That harm goes to a violation of trust, which is a crucial element. Trust is a very important thing that we hold dear, and we should take that into account.

The third element that I want to touch on is the Government's domestic violence consultation, which came out recently. I hope the Minister will provide information about how the process is going and the sorts of questions that will tackle the important issues we have raised today. I do not have a vast array of case studies of my own to share, but I have my experience of dealing with the courts; I also have experience, as has

the hon. Member for Penistone and Stocksbridge (Angela Smith), of the Council of Europe and the Istanbul convention. I urge the Government to try to ratify the Istanbul convention as quickly as possible.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Joan Ryan (in the Chair): Order. I am sure everybody is aware of the time. I intend to start calling the Front Benchers at 3.40. If the three remaining speakers limit their remarks to about seven or eight minutes, everybody should be able to speak for a decent amount of time.

3.17 pm

Angela Smith (Penistone and Stocksbridge) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairship, Ms Ryan, as my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Jess Phillips) said. I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing the debate. At one point it looked as if I would have to step into her shoes, but I am really glad that she was able to lead the debate because under no circumstances could I have done the same job so well. She is a superb and brilliant advocate for women's rights on this particular issue. Where would we be without her?

I welcome the new Minister to her position. I know that the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, the hon. Member for Louth and Horncastle (Victoria Atkins), who has responsibility for this area of policy, would very much like to have attended the debate, but cannot because she is in a Bill Committee. I also want to put on the record my thanks to her for meeting my constituent, Claire Throssell, last Thursday morning. She was deeply touched and, indeed, disturbed by what she heard—not least the catalogue of errors and the dreadful handling of Claire's case by CAFCASS. The Minister is committed to tackling the issues. It is a difficult brief to hold because of the sensitive and emotionally stressful nature of the subject. Although I do not doubt the Government's integrity on this matter, or their commitment, I hope that the new Minister will pick up the reins and pursue the matter with diligence and speed.

In September 2016, I led a debate in the Chamber on domestic abuse victims in family law courts. I felt compelled to do so after Claire came to me for support.

"It took just 15 minutes for my life to end and my existence to begin,"

she said about the events that unfolded on 22 October 2014. On that day, her abusive ex-partner coaxed her two boys into the loft of the marital home, saying he had a new model railway for them to play with; but there was no railway. Instead, once the children were in, he locked the door, barricaded it and lit 16 separate fires around the home. On that day, Claire lost absolutely everything. Jack and Paul, her two beautiful boys, were brutally taken from her. Her "life and heart", in her words, were "broken completely beyond repair". The pain caused to Claire is unimaginable, but her strength and resilience is hugely impressive:

"If I can prevent one other mum going through the pain I've suffered, stop them having to question whether they could have prevented their child's death, hopefully my sons didn't die in vain."

Those are Claire's words and she has continued valiantly to confront her heartbreak every day and campaign to ensure that no one else ever feels her pain.

Claire is my constituent, but all parliamentarians have a collective responsibility to prevent such a tragedy ever happening again. The terrible thing is that what happened was totally avoidable. Claire warned the courts that Darren Sykes was a threat to her children. Social services, the family courts and CAFCASS failed Claire. It is two years since her story went into the parliamentary record, and what has changed? Practice direction 12J has been revised and a new practice direction 3AA has been introduced, which will help to protect vulnerable families in family courts. The Government have committed to banning the cross-examination of survivors by their perpetrators, but so far that has yet to be enacted, as my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Yardley pointed out. We need the special measures that she talked about to be introduced. Finally, a domestic abuse Bill is on the horizon; the consultation on the White Paper is complete.

The Bill will need to be substantial, thorough and comprehensive, but it will have to show breadth in the scope of its provisions. Women's Aid's most recent report "What about my right not to be abused?" gives a damning verdict on the treatment of domestic abuse survivors in the family courts. I encourage all Members to read it and I encourage the Minister, in particular, to meet with Women's Aid to discuss the recommendations in the report. It covers various aspects of the family courts, but I want to focus in particular on child contact, as it was the child contact policy that took Claire's boys from her.

The report makes it clear that the "culture of contact at any cost"

persists—something that my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Yardley pointed out earlier. There are several accounts of contact centre workers persuading terrified children to go and meet their fathers. One woman talks of a centre considering putting her daughter in a room and allowing her father to "ambush" her unexpectedly; those were their words, not mine. One woman said:

"They've taken away safety from my child and I pray nothing will ever happen. If it does I will always feel guilty but in the end there is nothing else I can do".

That is exactly what Claire has set out to change. She wants our family courts to put children first, and to recognise that a man who abuses a wife or partner is more likely than other men to abuse his children. Those accounts and many others paint a picture of a court system that does not protect women and children, but rather perpetuates abuse, makes vulnerable people feel intimidated and puts the lives and safety of women and children at risk.

With those considerations in mind, I want to ask the Minister directly to outline the scope of the domestic abuse Bill and the accompanying measures. Those measures will be very important—particularly, I hope, in relation to CAFCASS. Will she confirm that reform of the family courts is on the agenda? The distinction between criminal and family courts in this context seems totally arbitrary; it certainly is for survivors of domestic abuse. Will the Minister outline the timetable for ending cross-examination of domestic abuse survivors by their perpetrators as, again, my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Yardley has already asked?

So far two legislative opportunities have been missed. We cannot afford to delay any further. Will the Minister ensure that no parent who is awaiting trial, on bail, or

[Angela Smith]

facing ongoing criminal proceedings for domestic abuse will receive unsupervised contact with a child? Will she also set up a clear mechanism so that inappropriate referrals to contact centres can be challenged? There are many more questions I would like to ask, but I must begin wrapping up. It is clear from the report that the family court system as a whole is not fit for purpose. Will the Minister consider running an independent inquiry into the handling of domestic abuse by the family courts? It is clear to me that a root-and-branch policy review is needed.

I remind Members again of the 2016 debate. I said then that it showed the House “at its finest”. We agreed on the need to take action and broadly accepted the course that needed to be taken. However, I also said that

“all of this means nothing until we see effective change.”—[*Official Report*, 15 September 2016; Vol. 614, c. 1119.]

Here we are, two years on, and Claire is still campaigning. Her two boys are yet to see justice. Claire has been a great teacher for me and a true inspiration. She possesses a deep spirituality that has enabled her to refuse the temptation to pursue a path of vengeance and hate. She has chosen instead to believe that love can triumph over hate and that good can triumph over evil. In doing that she has taken with her the whole community where she lives in Penistone, as well as, I believe, the whole parliamentary community. Claire has taken us all by the hand and enabled us to believe that we can be better, that our society can be better, and that her sons’ deaths need not be in vain. We cannot afford to delay longer; to delay is to put lives at risk. With Jack and Paul in mind, I ask the Minister: please act quickly.

3.27 pm

Paul Scully (Sutton and Cheam) (Con): It is pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Ryan. I congratulate the hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Jess Phillips) on securing the debate and on her amazing and powerful speech. *Hansard* does not record blushes, but she has done a fantastic job, as ever, on an important subject.

When we talk about domestic abuse in this place, there is often a lot of commentary along the lines of, “What about the men?” Of course, we know that women are not the only victims of domestic abuse, but it is an unassailable truth that the vast majority are women, so I make no excuse for the fact that we are concentrating on women predominantly, and Women’s Aid has been an invaluable organisation in pushing the campaign on this issue.

I look forward to the introduction of the domestic abuse Bill. We have all been working towards it and pushing for it, and it will be welcome. I understand that one of the main reasons for the delay was that we were trying to get a good, rounded definition of domestic abuse and coercive control so that there can be legislation. In the 2016 debate, I raised a couple of examples of coercive control, one of which involved a family member of mine, to show that it is not something that just happens to other people. It can happen to people of any background, from any geographical area. The woman in question had a tracker put on her car—that was the level of control that the man wanted. That makes me

think, “Crikey, what would have happened if she was in court with him?” if she faced that level of coercive control. That level of control, which might start with a tracker, can mean a repeat of abuse in court, bringing up time and again the previous horrific instances.

Before we look at what we are pushing for in campaigning, it is important to acknowledge the good things the Government have done. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley correctly said that, in too many cases, there are still curtains and screens around certain areas. However, family procedure rules part 3A and practice direction 3AA came into effect only in November last year, and they will, unfortunately, take time to get through the court system—indeed, certain areas that require separate waiting rooms might even need new construction.

None the less, more can clearly be done, and I take the hon. Lady’s point about robing rooms—we have one of those here, so perhaps we can think about that as well. We must speed up action to ban perpetrators from cross-examining victims in court, because there cannot be anybody in this place who believes that that is right. Women’s Aid has said that a perpetrator can be seen as a violent criminal in a criminal court but as a good enough parent in a family court, which is patently ridiculous.

The hon. Lady mentioned the need for more female judges. Clearly, the numbers and percentages are too low, but that in itself is not necessarily the origin of bad judgments. Indeed, it was a female judge who sent Ellie Butler back to my constituents in Sutton, which resulted in her death shortly afterwards. We need judges who are not out of touch and who can relate to people—the hon. Lady referred to that. We need a judiciary that can take a rounded position, in the same way that anybody outside a court room might think, “My goodness. This is so obvious. Why are we not doing it?”

In conclusion—I know other Members want to speak—let me say to the Minister that I am looking forward to the domestic abuse Bill. If I can help in any way in formulating it and pushing it through this place, I would be more than happy to do so, because we have been waiting for this Bill for so long.

3.32 pm

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): It is always a pleasure to speak in these debates, and I congratulate the hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Jess Phillips) on setting the scene. She is obviously very passionate when it comes to this subject, and she tells her story straight from the heart. She does that well, and I appreciate the opportunity to contribute to this debate.

Statistics for domestic abuse throughout the UK are astounding. The prevalence of such abuse is difficult to measure, but the English, Welsh and Northern Irish police receive calls about domestic abuse-related incidents every 30 seconds, which gives an idea of the magnitude of what is happening across the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

In 2014, a report by Her Majesty’s inspectorate of constabulary, “Everyone’s business: Improving the police response to domestic abuse”, deemed the police response to domestic abuse “not good enough”. As the hon. Lady and other hon. Members have said, if that response is not good enough, what are we doing to improve it?

I always look to the Minister for a substantive response, which I know we will get, but I hope she understands that there is a bit of frustration about what has happened so far. A follow-up report by the HMIC was published on 15 December 2015. Entitled “Increasingly everyone’s business: A progress report on the police response to domestic abuse”, it found positive changes, which was good news, but concluded that there is still room for improvement. We must consider what further steps we can take.

Being the victim of, or witnessing, domestic abuse, can have serious long and short-term physical, psychological and social effects. Numerous police interventions that are victim-focused or perpetrator-focused are currently in use or being trialled. According to statistics published on the website of the Police Service of Northern Ireland, around 29,000 domestic abuse incidents were recorded in 2016-17—the most in more than a decade. I know this is a devolved matter, or at least it would be if we had a working Assembly, but at the end of the day we must address it.

The level of recorded domestic abuse crimes dropped for a while, but that was not enough. In 2016-17, 69% of domestic abuse crime victims were female and 31% were male. More than 50% of relationships between domestic abuse victims and offenders were categorised as being between current or ex-spouses or partners.

I have spoken several times on this issue in Westminster Hall and the main Chamber, and I have asked for support for people who are abused. I have also raised the lack of prosecutions, which I believe to be linked to fear of reprisal. We must hope for things to be different. A Women’s Aid worker once told me that these women go back to their abusers because they have no hope, and that is the story I hear as the elected representative for my constituency. When someone is hopeless, they are also helpless, which worries me greatly. We need to provide support that brings hope that things can and will change.

The Crown Prosecution Service’s 10th report on violence against women and girls outlined the huge increase in the number of convictions—48% for rape and 79% for other sexual offences—that we have witnessed since the first report was published in 2007-08. That report also showed large annual increases over the last year in prosecutions and convictions for rape, at 11.8% and 11.2% respectively, and for other sexual offences, at 12.5% and 14.7%. Along with domestic abuse, such offences now count for one fifth—19.3%—of the CPS’s case load, which is up from 7.1% just 10 years ago. That is a massive step. Domestic abuse prosecutions have risen by 47%, and convictions by 61%, over the last 10 years—again, a welcome indication of progress.

However, this year’s report shows a decrease in domestic abuse prosecutions and convictions compared with 2015-16, following a two-year fall in referrals for domestic abuse from the police to the CPS. There is clearly a breakdown that must be addressed if we are to have more successful prosecutions, and, to me, that is all about support. Support must be available when the call to the police is made and when the police leave, and there must be someone available for the victim to talk to so that they feel secure. Someone should be available through the CPS to sit alongside the victim and offer assistance, as well as to be a shoulder to lean on and perhaps sometimes to cry on. Support should be available during the trial and afterwards. Hope for a new future and a new life

must be given from that first phone call reporting the abuse until the person is settled in their new life. We must follow a process to ensure that happens. Anything less than that cannot be acceptable, and all Departments must accept their responsibility and duty.

On average, there are two domestic killings of women each week, which accounts for 40% of all female murders. If we are not shocked by that, there is something wrong. Some time ago, the hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley spoke on this issue in an Adjournment debate in the main Chamber—I was present for that as well—and we must all uphold our duty of seeing the number of these killings reduced to zero. The way to do that is to support the men and women who are abused, so they know there can be a different future—a future with hope and purpose, for which it is worth pushing through the emotional quagmire, and standing up and telling the abuser, “No more.” The police have a role to play in that, as do the courts. We in this House have a role to play, as does the Minister, in securing funding and appropriate legislation. So let us ensure today that we play our part.

3.38 pm

Gloria De Piero (Ashfield) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairship, Ms Ryan, and I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Jess Phillips) for securing this debate. Since entering Parliament, she has campaigned tirelessly on behalf of women in her constituency and across the country, and she has pushed domestic violence up the Government’s agenda. I am in awe of her work.

Even today, domestic violence remains one of the most under-reported crimes, and in Britain one woman is killed every three days by a partner or ex-partner. According to the Office for National Statistics, four in five victims of partner abuse did not report the incident to the police last year. Although some progress has been made in recent years, victims still talk of battling to be believed by a system designed to protect the perpetrator. Even worse, the process of reporting abuse can be re-traumatising in itself. Victims talk of having to re-live the experience over and over again—first with the police and then in court, all the while dealing with the fear of reprisal from the perpetrator.

If we want to eradicate domestic violence from this country and have a truly accessible justice system, we must make that system more open and supportive to survivors of domestic violence. Today, however, we are a long way from that goal. The Government’s removal of legal aid for family law cases in the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 had a catastrophic impact on access to justice for victims of domestic violence. Between 2012 and 2017, applications for civil legal aid in cases involving domestic violence fell by 20%. The imposition of a five-year limit on evidence and the restriction of evidence forms meant that 40% of female survivors were unable to meet the new requirements and were left without access to legal aid. According to Women’s Aid, the result was that victims were either prevented from fighting their cases or forced to represent themselves in person and risk being cross-examined by their partners.

In December, I uncovered figures showing that the number of domestic violence victims representing themselves in the family courts had increased by 147% since

[Gloria De Piero]

LASPO's introduction. Recent figures from the Ministry of Justice show that the number of people without representation in domestic violence proceedings reached record levels in 2017. Imagine facing the decision between representing yourself in court, without legal support, against an abusive partner, and risking their obtaining custody of your children.

I pay tribute to the organisations, such as the charity Rights of Women and the Legal Aid Practitioners Group, that ensured that last year the Government finally published reforms to the evidence requirements for accessing the DV gateway for civil legal aid. Those changes were long overdue. However, we have yet to see a significant impact. Just 56 applications for legal aid in other family proceedings such as custody cases were made to the DV gateway in 2017-18; the figure was down from 83 in 2013-14. Can the Minister tell us what steps the Government are taking to ensure that victims of domestic violence are aware of the changes to the evidence requirements for accessing legal aid in the family courts?

Legal aid is available to victims of domestic violence on paper, but in reality the wholesale removal of family law cases from its scope means that people are now hard-pressed to find someone to represent them. Recent figures published by the Ministry of Justice show that the number of family law cases started with the assistance of legal aid has fallen by 84% since LASPO's introduction. The figures also show that the number of legal aid providers giving support in family law cases has dropped by one third, with legal aid deserts opening up in parts of the country. The number of providers has fallen by 22% in London, but by 45% in the east of England and Wales. The devastating truth is that access to justice is simply not available for many victims up and down the country, because of this Government's changes to legal aid.

For victims who do make it to the family courts, the ordeal does not stop there. Survivors frequently report being re-traumatised in the family court room, with the perpetrator allowed to continue their abuse by manipulating the court process. Women are still routinely cross-examined in front of or even by the perpetrator in what can be a deeply traumatising process; and outside the courtroom, survivors can come face to face with the perpetrator.

Opposition Members welcome the Government's announcement of a new domestic abuse law, including the introduction of special protection measures for victims of domestic abuse. However, those protections must be available to victims in the family courts and not just the criminal courts.

A survey by Women's Aid of more than 100 survivors who had been through the family courts showed that more than half had no access to special measures, and more than one third were verbally or physically abused by their former partner, in the family courts. Measures such as video links, screens and separate entrances, and exit times can be life saving; they prevent victims from being followed home by their abuser or confronted outside the courtroom. I understand that the Government have just finished consulting on the domestic abuse Bill. However, they have no reason to leave us in any doubt about where they stand on this issue. Can the Minister confirm today that family courts will be included in

proposals to introduce special court measures for victims of domestic abuse, and will the Government set a deadline for when that right will become fully accessible to every victim of domestic abuse?

Of course, to support victims of domestic violence to have real access to justice, we have to do more than ensure that the courts are acting as a safe space. For survivors to come forward and access the justice process, they need security outside the court as well. We are extremely concerned about the proposals to remove refugees from the welfare system. The Government's plans to remove housing benefit as a means to pay for refuge accommodation would remove half of refuge funding overnight. Currently, more than 10% of these women are forced to sleep rough because a place in a refuge is not available. We are calling on the Government to take those dangerous proposals off the table.

Our justice system is designed to protect the perpetrator, not the victim. Important checks and balances ensure that a person is presumed innocent until proven guilty, but they also routinely leave victims feeling like an afterthought in the process or, worse, like the person on trial. The issues raised today demonstrate the urgent need for reforms. Will the Minister commit to a wholesale review of the culture, practice and outcomes of the family courts in child contact cases where there are allegations of domestic abuse?

More generally, Labour has been pushing since 2015 for a stand-alone victims law that would enshrine the rights of victims in primary legislation. We need a victims law, rather than piecemeal reform, if we are to transform the experience of victims in the criminal justice process. More than three years ago, the Government agreed, and pledged, to introduce a victims law, but victims are still waiting. Now, instead of legislation, Ministers speak of a victims strategy, so can this Minister confirm when the victims strategy will be published? Do the Government still plan to introduce a stand-alone victims law as they promised?

Today, we have heard passionate speeches from hon. Members on both sides of the House on the need to ensure that victims of domestic violence receive the protection, support and representation that they need in the family courts. Let me now use my position to pay my respects to Claire, about whom my hon. Friend the Member for Penistone and Stocksbridge (Angela Smith) spoke so heartbreakingly and movingly. I hope that the Minister has listened to Claire's story and the other stories raised today and realises that significant reform is urgently needed.

Joan Ryan (in the Chair): Could I ask the Minister to finish her speech a couple of minutes before our time is up to allow the mover of the motion to wind up the debate?

3.46 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice (Lucy Frazer): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Ryan. I thank the hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Jess Phillips) for securing the debate. Like other hon. Members, I pay tribute to the huge amount that she has done to protect victims of domestic abuse—not only the work that she has done as an MP, which includes chairing the all-party parliamentary

group on domestic violence, but what she did before she was elected, in working for a charity supporting victims of domestic and sexual abuse.

We all know, and have heard today, that domestic abuse has devastating effects. I heard about some of those when I attended a meeting of the APPG at which a victim gave evidence anonymously about her experience. Since I have been a Justice Minister, MPs have come to me to share their constituents' experiences of domestic abuse. I am pleased to have had the opportunity both to discuss those concerns with experts such as Katie Ghose from Women's Aid and Jo Todd from Respect and to hear about domestic abuse victims' experiences of court from professionals in the courts, such as Her Honour Judge Rachel Karp, and academics such as Rosemary Hunter.

The Government are committed to tackling domestic abuse—dealing with abusive behaviour and improving support for victims. We want to do more to protect and empower victims, communities and professionals to confront and challenge domestic abuse wherever they encounter it. As my hon. Friend the Member for Henley (John Howell) and other hon. Members mentioned, the Government have launched an extensive public consultation on domestic abuse to inform our approach to future reform. We have received more than 3,000 responses, which we are analysing now, ahead of publishing a Government response in the autumn. That will include a domestic abuse Bill, which we hope will further protect victims of domestic abuse.

As the hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley said, we need to ensure that the court experience supports victims of domestic abuse and is not a forum in which to continue abuse. The Government have already taken a number of measures, to which some hon. Members have referred, to improve the court process. We have made practical changes following work with the senior judiciary. Last November saw the introduction of new rules requiring the court to consider whether those involved in family proceedings are vulnerable and, if so, whether they need assistance, such as a video link or protective screen, to participate or give evidence.

I was disappointed to hear that the experience of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley is that those measures are not working well, because I recently met a family barrister who told me that her experience was that they were working. We do need to keep this under review. Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service is collecting data, so that we can see how it is operating. We will consider whether we can do more, as we examine consultation responses in due course.

We have also introduced fresh training for family court staff on how to support vulnerable court users—by ensuring that separate waiting rooms or secure entry into and exit from the building are available, for example. The training has now been rolled out across England and Wales. Courts are also preparing local protocols on vulnerable court users, in consultation with their designated family judges. The president of the family division and the Judicial College have also taken steps to improve domestic abuse training for family judges. Issues of domestic abuse continue to be addressed on an ongoing basis as part of the college's regular training for family judges. I recently visited the courts in Liverpool and was interested to hear from a family judge that he had found the training very helpful.

A further positive development came last October, when the president made changes to the guidance for family judges dealing with applications for child arrangements orders where domestic abuse is alleged. As hon. Members have mentioned, that is practice direction 12J. The revisions included a number of important changes, such as making it clear that family courts should have full regard to the harm caused by domestic abuse and the harm that can be caused to children from witnessing such abuse. The revised practice direction also includes an expanded definition of domestic abuse.

These changes are a positive development. At a roundtable on domestic abuse that I held recently, I heard from family judges and practitioners how they were working. I was asked during the course of this debate whether we can review the practice direction. That is primarily a matter for the judiciary, but I am happy to discuss it with the incoming president of the family court, whom I am meeting tomorrow. I should add that the current President, Sir James Munby, will be retiring shortly. As the hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley mentioned, he has been a strong advocate for improving support and protections for the vulnerable. I pay tribute to the significant action he has taken in this area.

Many hon. Members mentioned the provision of legal aid. As the hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley mentioned, we have changed the law to make it easier for victims of domestic abuse to access legal aid and support by reforming the evidence requirements for legal aid in private family cases. The changes included introducing new forms of evidence and removing the time limit previously placed on evidence. We are already seeing a positive effect on the number of victims accessing legal aid. The latest statistics for January to March show that 21% more victims applied for legal aid than in the same quarter last year and there was a record high number of grants. We will continue to monitor those figures.

We have made changes to support victims of domestic abuse, but we need to do more. The hon. Members for Birmingham, Yardley and for Great Grimsby (Melanie Onn) were right to highlight the importance of bringing forward legislation in relation to the cross-examination of domestic abuse victims by their perpetrators. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley has made a powerful case for this for some time and she made it again today. It is right that we get it on the statute book. She has already rightly identified that the Government want to see this legislation on the statute book. The Government remain committed to delivering this as soon as parliamentary time allows.

Jess Phillips: Will they introduce it before the recess?

Lucy Frazer: The hon. Lady knows that it takes some time to go through parliamentary procedure and it is not possible to do that on Monday or Tuesday next week.

I have also heard concerns about the issue of abusers making repeated applications to the family court, as a means of further abusing their former partners. I recently held a roundtable with judges, academics and others from the legal profession, to discuss this. I also met the hon. Member for Dwyfor Meirionnydd (Liz Saville Roberts) to discuss the private Member's Bill she proposed

[*Lucy Frazer*]

on the matter. The family court does have wide powers to manage such situations, but I am looking again at whether there is more we can do across the system to tackle this issue. We will be examining this as part of the next phase of work on the consultation.

Many hon. Members mentioned important points. My hon. Friend the Member for Henley made interesting points about the recognition society and Government have of the nature of abuse, and that it is not just physical abuse and violence that form domestic abuse. He also discussed the need to see how the courts are operating. I have visited a number of courts already and spoken to a number of judges on a variety of issues. He raised the Istanbul convention, which, he rightly said, the Government have signed and remain committed to ratifying. Some of our measures in the UK, however, go further than the convention requires in some areas.

The hon. Member for Bath (Wera Hobhouse) raised the need for CAFCASS workers to be trained. I should point out that CAFCASS workers do receive comprehensive training. My hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Paul Scully) made a variety of sensible points. He rightly observed that, in a number of areas, the Government have already taken measures, some of which I have referred to. It is important to see how those operate and keep them under review. The hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) raised the impact of domestic abuse on victims.

I have left to the end the hon. Member for Penistone and Stocksbridge (Angela Smith). She asked a number of questions, one of which was about the scope of the review and whether we will consider options for reform of the family justice system in the consultation that has just closed. I can tell her that that will form part of the consultation exercise. I left her to the end because she mentioned the terrible story of Claire, for whom we all must feel sympathy. I hope that this Government, with the support of hon. Members across the House, continue

to bring forward measures to protect women like her, to help support them and ensure that her story is not repeated.

In closing, I hope hon. Members will agree that we have taken positive steps to improve the family justice system and its response to domestic abuse. We need to build on that and deliver further improvements. The domestic abuse consultation and the programme of work that will flow from it provides one way of doing this. I look forward to working collaboratively with hon. Members to take this important work forward.

3.57 pm

Jess Phillips: Like the Minister and the Opposition spokesperson, I thank everybody who has spoken. My hon. Friend the Member for Penistone and Stocksbridge (Angela Smith) never fails to move me when she talks about Claire. I have known Claire for two years now and have heard her story a million times. It still moves me to tears every single time I hear it, because it could have been avoided.

I thank the Minister for her comments. At the latest, the timetable for changing these things must come in the domestic abuse Bill. If they are not in it, we will ensure that they are put into it. I look forward to working on the domestic abuse Bill. I am sure that we will be able to make some progress.

On the issue of CAFCASS workers receiving appropriate training, I say to the Minister that it is not working. There needs to be a Government review of CAFCASS and the way its workers are interacting with victims, as well as of settings where families go for visits. There needs to be a real look into that. Most importantly, I thank all the women who write to me every day to tell me about how we should make this system better. We should hear their voices.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House has considered progress on protecting victims of domestic abuse in the family courts.

Litter Strategy

[GERAINT DAVIES *in the Chair*]

4 pm

Theresa Villiers (Chipping Barnet) (Con): I beg to move,

That this House has considered the Government's 2017 litter strategy and roadside litter.

I am delighted to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Davies. I welcome the presence of the Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk Coastal (Dr Coffey), who takes litter-related matters very seriously.

In his foreword to the 2017 litter strategy, my right hon. Friend the Member for South Holland and The Deepings (Mr Hayes) stated that roadside litter

“harms our economic prospects and stifles communal wellbeing.” As well as damaging our quality of life, roadside litter and debris can put lives at risk if they blow into the road and damage the vision of passing drivers. Page 55 of the 2017 strategy acknowledged:

“The current situation is unacceptable. Our roads and highways are the gateways to our towns and cities, and yet verges, traffic islands, and roadside paths are often marred by unsightly litter. Local authorities will need to improve their own cleaning and work more effectively with neighbouring authorities and Highways England to keep such places consistently clean”.

Sir Greg Knight (East Yorkshire) (Con): Discarded litter is a scar on our countryside and more needs to be done to bring home to motorists how unacceptable the practice is. Does my right hon. Friend agree that deterrent sentencing is an answer, and that in the worst cases the court should have the power to endorse the licence of a littering motorist?

Theresa Villiers: I agree with my right hon. Friend. We need to ensure that people know that it is a criminal offence. The courts should be tough in imposing punishments on those who cause that scar on our countryside, as he describes it.

I applied for this debate after a similar conversation with my constituent Mr Nick Spall, who contacted me to complain about litter and debris piling up along the approach roads linking the M25 with the South Mimms turn-off. He had particular concerns about the connection with St Albans Road leading south towards High Barnet, which is just outside my constituency of Chipping Barnet. He pointed out:

“Visitors to the UK will be surprised and disappointed that this cannot be kept under control at such a visible and prominent location.”

I raised that complaint with Highways England, which told me that Hertsmere Borough Council was responsible for litter clearance on the roads concerned. Hertsmere Borough Council informed me that the general area was litter-picked on a weekly basis, but that several sections could not be safely accessed without traffic management measures, and that they could take place only if Hertfordshire County Council had road closures planned.

That illustrates the first key issue I wish to raise with the Minister. If we are to tackle the litter that we can see through our car or bus windows every day, we need to

address the problem of divided responsibilities and introduce clearer lines of accountability. That point was made by Peter Silverman of the Clean Highways campaign, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank him for the briefing he provided for the debate and for his determined work to highlight these important matters.

Julian Knight (Solihull) (Con): My right hon. Friend is giving her customarily fantastic evocation of the issue. I congratulate her on securing this hugely important debate. In my constituency, Christine Dunster has set up the Olton library litter pickers and she was recently awarded a British Empire Medal for galvanising the community. As my right hon. Friend has just congratulated the gentleman in the Gallery, will she join me in congratulating other local campaigners on their work to involve the community in this issue?

Theresa Villiers: I will. We should take pride in the fact that so many members of our communities are prepared to put their own time, effort and hard work into tackling litter. In that regard, I highlight the staff at McDonald's Friern Barnet, who regularly go out to litter pick. Those volunteer efforts are hugely to be welcomed, but we also need to ensure that we have an effective response from the Government and local councils.

Allocation of responsibility for clearing highway litter is governed by the Environmental Protection Act 1990. Local councils have that duty in relation to the majority of roads, including trunk roads in the strategic road network. Highways England is charged with maintenance and litter clearance on motorways and a small number of trunk roads. Similarly, Transport for London is responsible for maintenance and litter clearance on several strategic routes in the London region.

That means that there are many cases where the body responsible for maintaining the road and its verges is not responsible for litter clearance on those verges. We also end up in a situation where small district councils are supposed to clear litter from busy major roads but are not geared up for the extensive organisation that comes with health and safety requirements, such as coning off lanes or shutting roads altogether, as in the example near my constituency, which I referred to earlier.

Will the Government consider reforming the law to provide that the body responsible for maintaining a road and the roadside is also the one tasked with clearing litter from that roadside? In particular, that reform would mean that Highways England had an increased duty to clear the litter around all the roads for which it is responsible, and it would make it much easier to combine work such as trimming roadside vegetation with litter picking, so clearance could take place more regularly and efficiently.

If the Government feel that that would be too big a step, can they at least report on progress on improving the partnership working between Highways England and local authorities, as they advocated on page 57 of the 2017 litter strategy? That would be a crucial way to address some of my constituents' concerns.

My second concern is more general. Section 89 of the 1990 Act imposes a statutory duty on Highways England and local authorities to clear litter and refuse from roads where they are the designated authority. The amount of litter blighting our roads must surely mean

[Theresa Villiers]

that that duty is not being taken seriously enough. That is implicitly acknowledged on page 60 of the strategy, where the Government promise to revise the code of practice that provides guidance on how to comply with the section 89 duty.

We need to strengthen the obligations placed on Highways England in relation to litter clearance. I have a copy of its litter strategy with me and, frankly, it is a bit thin—it runs to four pages plus a list of roads. The Government's 2017 strategy refers to working with the Office of Road and Rail and to including a tougher litter-cleaning key performance indicator in the performance specification for Highways England. The Government promised to review the mechanism for holding authorities to account in relation to the performance of their obligations under the code of practice. They also undertook to remove responsibilities from local authorities that failed in their duty to keep the road network clear of litter. I appeal to the Minister to press ahead with reform to make Highways England take the issue more seriously, to toughen up the code of practice as it applies to all local authorities, and to ensure that the enforcement of the section 89 duty becomes much more effective.

My third point relates to the procedures required for litter picking on fast, busy roads. Those responsible for clearing litter have a duty to keep their employees safe, and that obligation must always be strictly adhered to. At present, extensive coning off of lanes, or even full road closures, are often deemed necessary for routine roadside litter clearing.

On page 56 of the 2017 strategy, the Government express their determination to tackle the practical barriers preventing clearance of road litter. They refer to a working group that they have established, which is dedicated to looking at these matters. I appeal to the Minister to ensure that the outcome of that work ensures that rules requiring the coning or closing of roads are used in a proportionate way and only when necessary, to ensure the safety of workers. What we do not want to do is place unnecessary constraints on litter clearance. The Government have been looking at the issue as it relates to workers involved in road maintenance and road works. I hope they will also undertake a similar process in relation to workers who are at one remove—in other words, who are on the edge of the road and not on the road itself.

A fourth concern on which I would like the Minister to reflect relates to heavy goods vehicles. Sadly, roadside litter is not just food wrappers and coffee cups thrown by irresponsible and antisocial drivers; a significant proportion of it will have blown off skip vans or lorries with open loads. I urge both the Environment Agency and Highways England to give higher priority to prosecuting that kind of waste crime. I am sure that they have been sent many dashboard camera video clips of such an offence. I have raised this issue with the Road Haulage Association and the Freight Transport Association. There is also a real concern about some HGV drivers leaving litter after overnight stops, as referred to in the litter strategy. I appreciate that it is very much a minority of HGV drivers who behave in that way, but such littering does happen.

Page 64 of the 2017 strategy refers to the particular challenges in getting an anti-litter message across to drivers from overseas. It would be useful if the Minister could update us on the Government's progress in communicating that message. Of course, it is also important to note that there is a shortage of overnight provision for HGV drivers, and finding more space for those kinds of facilities—including, of course, litter bins and waste disposal facilities—is an important part of a strategy to tackle roadside litter.

Thankfully, the problems that I have highlighted regarding the national road network occur largely outside my constituency. However, like almost everywhere in the country, we suffer from the blight of fly-tipping, with recent bad examples occurring in Mays Lane in the Underhill area and Regal Drive in South Friern. Fly-tipping is a serious crime that enrages those constituents affected by it. I believe that the police and prosecution authorities, including the Environment Agency, should pursue offenders more vigorously and seek the maximum penalties available for that crime.

I welcome the work done locally in my area by Barnet Council to combat fly-tipping. Many neighbouring boroughs have introduced fortnightly bin collections, which inevitably worsens problems with fly-tipping. That is one of the reasons why Barnet Council has kept weekly bin collections for general waste and general recycling. I also commend its #KeepBarnetClean campaign, which started in 2016 and has involved an extensive campaign of public engagement, including highlighting the £80 fine for littering and the £400 fine for fly-tipping.

In conclusion, not too long ago the Government published a 25-year plan for the environment. A plastic bag charging scheme is already in place, a bottle return scheme is out for consultation, and there is a long list of other ideas under discussion on reducing the need for avoidable single-use plastics. There is now greater public concern about plastic waste than I can ever remember in my lifetime. I urge the Government to harness that momentum in support of long-standing efforts to prevent litter from disfiguring our roads, countryside and public spaces.

At this time of year, students throughout the country are embarking on their National Citizen Service programmes. I hope that one of the issues they are asked to consider is litter and how to prevent it. However, I am afraid that it is not just young people who drop litter. To illustrate that, I produce this Crunchie wrapper, which I picked up this week after it had been dropped in the back row of the main Chamber of the House of Commons.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Dr Thérèse Coffey): Shocking.

Theresa Villiers: It is truly depressing that littering occurs even here, in this mother of Parliaments. All ages and all types of people can be guilty of this kind of antisocial activity. We all have a part to play in addressing it, and I very much look forward to hearing the Minister's response to the matters I have raised.

4.14 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Dr Thérèse Coffey): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Davies. I congratulate my right hon. Friend the

Member for Chipping Barnet (Theresa Villiers) on securing this debate on a subject that, as she rightly points out, matters to so many people.

Litter is unpleasant and absolutely unnecessary. Litter louts exhibit behaviour that is selfish, lazy and downright irresponsible. Our litter strategy detailed how we will achieve a cleaner country, with a substantial reduction in litter. We intend to do that by applying best practice in education and enforcement, and by supporting local authorities with better “binrastructure”, in order to change people’s behaviour and make littering entirely socially unacceptable.

Dealing with litter is costly. In 2016-17, local authorities spent £682 million, or £29 per household, to keep our streets clean. In addition, Highways England spends at least £6 million a year on collecting litter from the strategic road network. Those funds could be better used to deliver the range of important services provided by our councils.

Our litter strategy, which was published last year, was the first ever for England, and it was produced in partnership with the Department for Transport and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. We have delivered on a number of key commitments that we detailed, as set out in the annual report, which I assure the House will be published shortly.

Councils now have new enforcement powers they can use, making it easier for action to be taken against people who litter, principally through the use of fixed penalty notices. The big change has been to make the owner, or more precisely the keeper, of a vehicle liable for littering offences committed from it, although I recognise that this power has already been in place in London councils for some time. However, I understand that only one London council uses it, and that is Wandsworth and not, sadly, Barnet.

Since April this year, the maximum fixed penalty that local authorities can issue for dropping litter has nearly doubled, from £80 to £150. The minimum fixed penalty will also increase from £50 to £65 next year. The same changes also apply to penalties for graffiti, fly-posting and the unlicensed distribution of free printed material in a designated area, although I am assured that that does not apply to election leaflets.

I am conscious that people are concerned that councils may just use these penalties as a money-grabbing initiative. That is why we have consulted on improved guidance for the use of these powers. Responses are being carefully considered, and the guidance will be published later this year. However, I should emphasise that penalties collected are to be used to improve tackling litter, including cleaning up litter and educating people.

I stress that it really is now up to councils to take advantage of the powers that they asked for. I think this initiative can become self-financing, and there have been some great examples of how a crackdown has really had benefits. For example, in Southend-on-Sea—a lovely place to visit, where the local people are very proud of their sea front—council officers have been proactive in issuing penalties, and that has had a positive impact on cleaning up the sea front.

The second part of our approach is education and changing behaviour. I am pleased to announce today that we will work in partnership with Keep Britain Tidy to further develop and launch our new national anti-littering campaign. This ambitious campaign will seek funding

from private sector companies, particularly those whose brands’ packaging is often littered. However, I recognise what my right hon. Friend said when she commended staff from her local McDonald’s for being the first to get out and clear up.

Keep Britain Tidy already has an army of 350,000 litter heroes—people who have had enough of other people’s litter and who are willing to do something about it—to help us spread the word. I also think of people such as Nadia Sparkes in Norwich, who has embraced the name of “Trash Girl”, which was given to her by bullies. I understand that she is now being turned into a cartoon superheroine for her efforts to clean up the streets of Norwich.

The third element of our strategic approach is to improve cleaning and “binrastructure”. I recognise the context of ever-increasing pressure on local authority budgets, so it is important that we share best practice and ensure that local authority money is spent in ways that are proven to be effective. To promote innovation and proper testing of new ideas for tackling litter, we have launched a litter innovation fund to pilot and evaluate innovative new approaches that have the potential to be rolled out more widely. This fund, of just under £500,000, is jointly funded by my Department and MHCLG, and 10% of the money has been exclusively allocated to tackling litter in the marine environment.

After more than 200 expressions of interest were received in the first round, grants totalling £125,000 were offered to 14 projects to trial approaches across England. Those projects included reducing litter from riverside pubs along the Thames, work focused on the night-time economy and work using nudge techniques to reduce dog-fouling on playing fields. I must admit we were slightly disappointed with a lot of the initial applications, and we hope that, with some feedback, more will be successful in the second round, which we expect to open next month.

A lot of what my right hon. Friend talked about today was to do with roadside litter, which I recognise is particularly problematic. Our roads and highways are the gateways to our towns and cities, and litter by the roadside gives a bad impression of our country. Furthermore, as she pointed out, clearing that litter from the side of busy roads is a dangerous and expensive job for councils and their employees. This Government are committed to tackling roadside litter, as reflected in our manifesto, and we have taken steps in the last year to do exactly that. I have already mentioned the new powers that we have given to councils to improve enforcement against those who throw litter from their vehicles, but there is a great deal of other activity under way to address that particular problem.

Mr Jonathan Lord (Woking) (Con): Does the Minister have a strong view as to the division of responsibility between Highways England and local councils? Local councils are ultimately responsible to their electorate. Ideally, I think Highways England should be responsible, but I wonder who is marking the organisations’ homework and what mechanisms we have for checking they are doing their job properly.

Dr Coffey: My hon. Friend raises a good point. I was going to bring the matter up later, but I will do so now. Highways England is responsible for cleaning alongside

[*Dr Thérèse Coffey*]

motorways and some of our major trunk roads, and it often contracts that to the local authority. However, to respond to one of the questions my right hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet asked, we are not considering changing the law or the responsibilities at this time.

The Minister for roads—my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford and South Herefordshire (Jesse Norman)—and I want to see Highways England being more effective. We commissioned an independent survey of every council in England that has responsibility for cleansing one or more of the roads I mentioned. Unfortunately, that was delayed by poor weather as a result of the “beast from the east”. The data is still being analysed, but it will give us a much more accurate picture of the scale of litter on that part of the strategic road network and enable us to identify good practice and work with those local authorities that appear to be underperforming. Roadside litter is a problem that can be addressed effectively only by working closely with my colleagues across Government. I will bring some of the points that my right hon. Friend has raised to the attention of my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford and South Herefordshire.

Sir Greg Knight: I congratulate the Government on bringing in the power to seize a vehicle that is being used for fly-tipping. Can we see a greater use of that power to take vehicles off people who are desecrating our countryside?

Dr Coffey: My right hon. Friend is absolutely right. I do not know off the top of my head how many vehicles have been seized, but I know that the Environment Agency and local authorities have been keen to make use of the power. If he wanted to table a written question, I would be more than happy to get that data to him as quickly as possible.

Sir Greg Knight: I will do so.

Dr Coffey: That is good to know. Officials will be working on that as we speak, as they have heard this debate.

Since publishing the strategy last year, I have worked with the Department for Transport and Highways England to build on the work they already had under way to develop both new methods to reduce the amount of litter on the road network and ways to improve litter removal practices.

Thinking about the particular issues faced by hauliers, who spend many hours living in their cabs, it is important to provide suitable facilities for them to dispose of their litter and other waste. In my constituency I have the port of Felixstowe and the A14, which is one of the busiest transit parts of the strategic road network, so I am very conscious of the things that can often appear.

I raised the issue of litter at a meeting with the Road Haulage Association and the Freight Transport Association earlier this year, and I stand by the commitment made in the strategy to work with local councils, ports and the haulage industry to improve facilities for hauliers and others to dispose of their litter and waste. However, that does not excuse littering behaviour in the meantime by people who work in that industry.

We wrote to the Freight Transport Association and the Road Haulage Association following the introduction of new local authority powers to tackle littering from vehicles in April this year. So far as I am concerned, if litter is thrown out of an HGV, we should pursue those people, but it is for local councils to take that action.

There is obviously still more to do, but I assure my right hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet that, while she may feel progress is slow, Highways England has removed more than 12,000 bags of litter in the past year from the 25 identified hotspots. It found that, for February to April 2017, customer reports of littering had reduced by 70%, as compared with the same period in 2016.

Highways England has also been working to improve collaboration between its contractors and local authorities, including by enabling local authority litter pickers to access roads for which they are responsible while Highways England has closed them for routine maintenance, which makes it easier to clean high-speed roads. I am sure Members will agree that is a sensible move. Highways England has also introduced a new way of undertaking maintenance on the network, bringing the responsibility for asset and operational decision-making in-house and directly managing assets and network operations. That means Highways England can take a more flexible approach to when litter picking is planned, scheduled and co-ordinated, enabling a faster response to litter problems on the network.

I hear my right hon. Friend's point about smaller district councils, health and safety requirements and people not necessarily having all the expertise. I also hear her point about the action we will take on those councils that are not performing as well as they can. In the short term, it is fair to say that we need to assess the data, particularly on the strategic road network, to give us a better understanding of what is happening in different councils. I know there has been a change of Minister at the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government since the report, and I am conscious that we now need to work together to take forward the action my right hon. Friend suggests.

In conclusion, I want to assure my right hon. Friend and other Members that the Government are absolutely committed to reducing and preventing litter and littering behaviour. The actions I have outlined today are just the first steps in delivering on our commitments in the litter strategy. I know it is something we all want to see succeed as quickly as possible.

Question put and agreed to.

NHS Whistleblowers

4.27 pm

Geraint Davies (in the Chair): I call Dr Philippa Whitford to move the motion. I know it is a bit early, but we are all here.

Dr Philippa Whitford (Central Ayrshire) (SNP): I beg to move,

That this House has considered NHS whistleblowers and the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

It is an honour to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Davies. Gosport, Morecambe Bay, Mid Staffordshire and Bristol Royal Infirmary are NHS scandals that all have quite a few things in common: they went on for a long time and often whistleblowers who might have brought the issue to an end and saved lives were punished or ignored. They were certainly intimidated. The anaesthetist who raised the issue of baby cardiac surgery at Bristol Royal Infirmary ended up in Australia.

The term “whistleblower” suggests a pressure cooker—a build-up of pressure to the point where someone cannot resist it any longer and feels the need to come forward. We are trying to decompress some of that impression by having audit of patient safety through such systems as Datix, where staff get used to reporting every little aspect that does not go smoothly, which therefore creates the habit of coming forward. We still have issues. They often relate to the whole system, the trust or perhaps the behaviour of certain medical or clinical staff. There is no easy way to come forward, and the people seeing that behaviour take a long time to be listened to or to step up.

In the investigation into Mid Staffordshire, which was the worst NHS scandal, Sir Robert Francis’s report spoke about developing a “freedom to speak up” culture, to make doing so normal. Sir Robert suggested only minor changes to the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 but, as I will come on to later, I think it needs major change because it underwrites everything else.

Mr Jim Cunningham (Coventry South) (Lab): I congratulate the hon. Lady on securing this timely debate. I had two cases in Coventry, going back 10 or 15 years, in which consultants were suspended for whistleblowing. On the one hand, the Government encourage whistleblowers, but on the other the national health service seems to have a different definition of whistleblowers. One of those cases ended up in court. I do not know the exact figure, but it cost between £3 million and £4 million, and went on for at least 10 years. Meanwhile, back at the ranch, the individual was losing their skills. What does she think about that?

Dr Whitford: Obviously, I am unaware of the individual case and the rights and wrongs of it. However, a review of the cost of whistleblowing as it stands shows that having an effective system and effective law would save us money overall.

Sir Robert Francis envisaged “freedom to speak up” guardians in each trust, to whom whistleblowers could go informally to seek advice and support. Such guardians are in all trusts across England. They include a wide range of people, and the appointment system is not altogether clear or transparent. We will have to look at what kinds of staff work best, whether appointments

have been appropriate, and whether whistleblower guardians can recognise, if they are clinicians—which many of them are—that there might be a conflict of interest, because the issue might be in their department. The national guardian has been in place since 2016, but her position is non-statutory and sits inside the Care Quality Commission. Her role is described on the website as “leading cultural change” rather than deciding individual cases.

Through all the publicity, there has been quite a change in atmosphere and tone. The whole issue has had a significant airing. In Scotland, we have an alert and advice line run by Public Concern at Work. It is interesting to see the changes from the second half of 2016 to the first half of 2017. The number of concerns that the hospital, or the health board as it is in Scotland, admitted immediately were valid—instead of their having to be proved, or their being put off—went from 0% to 14%. The number of those that were ignored or denied dropped by 30%, and those reported to a manager or a senior manager went up by 30%. That suggests quite a difference in practice. The numbers are quite small, but they suggest a pattern. The data showed that, naturally, the most common group to report is nurses—they are the biggest employed group within the NHS—and the most common reason was still patient safety.

The problem is that that is all still legally underpinned by the Public Interest Disclosure Act, which was passed in 1998. It was a private Member’s Bill very similar to one that had been introduced a few months before. It therefore did not have a Second Reading, and it had only one day in Committee. At the time, it definitely was ahead of what was going on elsewhere, and was a recognition of the importance of whistleblowers, but that was 20 years ago. It really is time for change.

Mike Hill (Hartlepool) (Lab): Does the hon. Lady agree that workers are still put off by responses to whistleblowing allegations and, under the legislation, the threat of disciplinary action if the complaint is perceived to be malicious?

Dr Whitford: I utterly agree. It is important to be clear that a disclosure in the NHS, which is what we are focusing on, regarding patient safety as opposed to employment issues, which are quite separate and dealt with differently, is in the public interest. The problem is that in cases where whistleblowers have been punished and have suffered detriment, what starts as reporting becomes a bullying and harassment issue that ends up in a normal employment tribunal setting, and the original concern is not dealt with.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I congratulate the hon. Lady on bringing this matter to Westminster Hall for consideration. Some 7,000 staff raised concerns about bullying or patient safety in 2017-18. Over the same period, some 356 whistleblowers said that they had experienced repercussions, ranging from subtle persecution, such as career opportunities being closed off, to being fired unjustly. That is truly shocking. Does she agree that the Minister may have to look at a full investigation into just how far-ranging these matters are?

Dr Whitford: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. I hope that this is just the first little step towards putting the matter on the agenda. The tragedies

[Dr Whitford]

at Gosport brought the whole issue back. A nurse had come forward years and years ago, and could have saved hundreds of lives had she been listened to. Not being listened to is almost the least that can happen to a whistleblower, in that often they suffer detriment or reprisals and even lose their jobs.

The one change that Sir Robert Francis suggested to PIDA that has been made in England and Scotland is redress for discrimination regarding new employment—that is, applying for a new post within the NHS. Work is under way to introduce that in Wales as well. However, the main Act remains as it was. The first key weakness of PIDA is that it does not ensure an investigation of the whistleblower's concern. Given the risks they take when they come forward, the detriment they may face, and the months or years of tribunals or other stages, it is crucial that the concern that made them step forward is not either overshadowed or completely ignored. I think that is their biggest frustration.

The Act most certainly does not protect whistleblowers. It describes itself as protecting whistleblowers from detriment, intimidation and reprisals, but PIDA can be used only for litigation after the detriment. Once someone has lost their job they can take their employer to an employment tribunal and attempt to have redress. The problem at that point is that the whistleblower has to prove that it was their disclosure—their coming forward and speaking up—that drove the loss of their job. Of course, employers will find all sorts of other excuses, such as, “Oh, they didn't get on with their colleagues,” or, “They were a trouble maker,” or, “They were late for work.”

The success rate of litigation under PIDA is 3%, which is appalling, and shows how utterly weak the law is. Whistleblowers suffer further detriment while going through litigation. They know that they may face being landed with the costs. They may face bankruptcy, and stress that could go on for extended periods. Furthermore, between 2013 and 2017, people had to pay for employment tribunals. That, of course, closed that avenue off to many whistleblowers.

I make the simple case that we need a new public interest disclosure law. It should not sit inside employment law. It should not be a tweak to what we have now. We should recognise that the Public Interest Disclosure Act covers all sectors. The NHS may be one of the most common sectors to have whistleblowers, but the Act covers finance, research and business. We need a specific law.

It must be utterly clear that such disclosures are in the public interest, and that is where I disagree with the hon. Member for Stirling (Stephen Kerr), who may speak later. I do not agree with paying bounties to those who would disclose. Whether or not it creates a conflict of interest, it certainly gives the impression of doing so. It is utterly important, in the defence and protection of whistleblowers, that they can show that the only reason they have come forward is to protect patients or whoever the consumer is in their service.

Stephen Kerr (Stirling) (Con): Just for clarity, I am not advocating bounties. It is one of the options to be looked at, but there are reservations about it, which I know the hon. Lady shares.

Dr Whitford: I thank the hon. Gentleman, who has set up an all-party group on whistleblowing and on the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998. I welcome that, but one of my concerns is the issue of bounties.

It is important that we have a new PIDA law and an independent, statutory body that is equal to other bodies and can take on the NHS, NHS Improvement and the CQC. It must not be a department in one of those regulators; it must be separate from the NHS to ensure real independence, and it must investigate and act on concerns. If a local investigation has failed or is failing, there should be a mechanism to report that to an independent body. If we get to the point where there is simply a slanging match within a trust, there will never be a satisfactory resolution, so arbitration needs to come in and look at the cold facts and the original facts of the disclosure. Often, what is looked at is the process, but not whether the whistleblower was actually right to raise an issue in the first place.

It is critical that whistleblowers are protected from detriment from the moment of speaking up. They should be protected during the investigation, and they must not be picked on either subtly, as the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) said, or blatantly—they must not lose their jobs. It is important that legal penalties for reprisals against whistleblowers can actually be enforced.

There should be a system of redress for whistleblowers that does not involve litigation. Litigation is expensive for the NHS and the whistleblower, and is utterly confrontational. That means that, at the end of the process, even when a whistleblower has been proven to be right and genuine, there has often been such a breakdown in relationships that it is not possible for them to go back to their previous role.

Mr Jim Cunningham: I thank the hon. Lady for giving way once again. The case I outlined actually ended up in the courts, and the hospital was told to take the individual back. Well, it never took him back. There was a long, drawn-out process over a number of years, and it was eventually settled through litigation. That individual—Dr Mattu—was a well-known consultant.

Some of the older Members will remember the case, going back 10 or 15 years. We had debates and got the support of Mr Speaker. The hospital tried to use letters I sent to it, in which I raised issues that had been raised with me, in the courts, and the judge ruled it out of order. The hon. Lady is right that we need an independent body, but where it finds that the hospital is guilty, as it were, and that the whistleblower was doing their job, it should have the power to order reinstatement—that is the nub of the matter—to ensure they are not victimised.

Dr Whitford: I agree that there should be protection to ensure that whistleblowers are not victimised, but the problem is that if the relationships have been allowed to break down because the system is so confrontational, often even the whistleblower does not consider it possible to go back. That is a tragedy, because it often means losing someone talented, particularly at a time when we are so short of staff in all four NHS systems in the UK.

The body obviously needs to be statutory so it has enforcement powers, but it should also be responsible for developing standards and training to show hospital trusts, health boards and hospitals, regardless of the system, what good looks like. Setting up, speaking up

for and reporting on a body structure for the NHS will be for all four nations, because health is devolved, but PIDA still sits above that. It needs to be the underpinning statutory law that gives the body force.

In Scotland, we are still working on our system. Obviously, the Francis report looked at the system in England. We have whistleblower champions in our health boards, but we are working on setting up the independent national whistleblowers office. The difference between that and the national guardian in England is that it will be statutory and independent of NHS Scotland. It will sit in the office of the Scottish public services ombudsman, so it is utterly outside the NHS and clearly sends a message of independence. It will be able to adjudicate in individual cases. Normally, that will be when all local processes have been exhausted, but provision is being considered to allow an earlier referral when the local system has simply broken down and the concern about patients has been lost in the conflict-driven system.

Standards are being developed for all health boards so there is a consistent approach. The standards that sit above everything else are that whistleblowers will be listened to, that their concerns will be acted on and that they will be supported. The former Secretary of State, who is now away to sunnier climes or travelling the world, used to keep saying in the Chamber that whistleblowers are central to patient safety. I have to say that I slightly disagree.

When someone is forced to blow the whistle, it is because the patient safety systems have failed. In Scotland, we have a national patient safety programme, which is the first in the world that is right across the system. People cannot pick and choose whether they do the huddle at the start of an operating list or whether they do the World Health Organisation checks before operating on somebody. It looks at the frontline to try to reduce errors, but we know that there will still be situations that are not ideal, so someone will need to come forward. That is the thing: whistleblowers are a backstop. The patient safety system, the Datix system or the auditing may need to be improved, but whistleblowers provide a backstop to prevent us from going over the cliff, to prevent more people from dying and to allow timely action.

The problem is that, although doctors have a duty of candour laid on us by the General Medical Council, we also see the landscape littered with people's careers and jobs, as the hon. Member for Strangford said earlier. For an individual, that is really difficult. They think, "If I speak up and step forward, it may be the end of my career. I may be out of a job. I may be out of this hospital." For patients' sake, we need a change, we need to get it right, and we need a new public interest disclosure law. We should start work on that now.

4.47 pm

Stephen Kerr (Stirling) (Con): It is a privilege to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Davies. I congratulate the hon. Member for Central Ayrshire (Dr Whitford) on securing this debate and on her compelling and powerful speech. I find myself agreeing wholeheartedly with what she had to say. It is a noteworthy event when Scottish Conservatives and Scottish National party Members agree unanimously, but it has happened twice today—it happened in the main Chamber, too.

I welcome the hon. Lady's description of the work being done in NHS Scotland. She described the patient safety system, which has been in place for some time. Work on it is subject to continuous improvement, which is the correct approach. The different parts of the United Kingdom can share things with and learn from each other, and this is a good case in point.

As the hon. Lady has said, I was recently elected co-chair of the all-party parliamentary group on whistleblowing—I declare that up front. Time and again, inquiries into healthcare scandals, such as that at Gosport War Memorial Hospital, expose cases of people who spoke out to warn those who should have taken action but who were suppressed because healthcare leaders know that PIDA has no effective mechanism to address cover-ups and retaliation. The NHS continues to forensically investigate and penalise whistleblowers, while concerns go unheeded. PIDA has not changed that. It leaves patients at risk because it does not require the investigation of the whistleblower's concerns. It is, in short, no deterrent. More than 19% of calls to Public Concern at Work and 30% to WhistleblowersUK are from the healthcare sector. Very few complaints proceed to an employment tribunal. Only 3% of claimants who make it to an employment tribunal win a PIDA claim, as has been mentioned. That is not good enough, and it is not a fair reflection of reality. Furthermore, the cost to the whistleblower can be far reaching and include complete ruin, while the institution can remain unaccountable—"It's only taxpayers' money"—but for a few forgettable headlines.

Inquiries into healthcare scandals such as those mentioned by the hon. Lady show that we are still not there on measures for whistleblowing. People who spoke out to warn those who should take action were suppressed, as I have said, and that happens because of the lack of an effective mechanism under PIDA. Punitive investigations and penalties are still part of the reality of life for a whistleblower. The Act does not go far enough to protect whistleblowers against that.

For whistleblowers, the cost of bringing a PIDA claim often exceeds £100,000 and they often find themselves on trial, as has been said. They suffer from retaliation and financial ruin. In the health service, as in so many sectors, institutions use attrition to wear down whistleblowers and can bring to bear uncapped resources and lawyers who use strategies to exhaust their funds, wearing them down mentally as well as financially and into submission. Whistleblowers are left without any money or resources, with their professional reputation undermined and their health impaired.

When a whistleblower acts, it is from a sense of duty to the public and to their vocation. In the case of health, that is in pursuit of patient wellbeing. When institutions react, it is often with an attitude of legalistic defence rather than in the spirit of embracing the opportunity to improve, or to right a wrong. Take the case of Dr Raj Mattu who exposed the preventable death of patients. After a fight of more than 10 years—this case may have been the one referred to by the hon. Member for Coventry South (Mr Cunningham), but I did not catch the name he used—Dr Mattu's case was upheld by a judge. It had cost taxpayers anywhere between £6 million and £22 million, according to various estimates. Furthermore, Dr Mattu had been a leading cardiologist but now, at the age of 59, he is having to retrain. That is a waste of talent, and he was someone who did the right thing and has been proven to have

[Stephen Kerr]

done the right thing. A vast amount of money was spent to defend a legal position and to fight against a whistleblower, instead of being used to right the wrongs that Dr Mattu identified—all because a route of legal challenge was followed.

The main upshot of such cases is to channel NHS funds to firms of employment lawyers. That cannot be right at any time, because resources are always scarce. The case for legal reform is evident. The APPG will gather evidence to support changes to the law, which is what is required. Our objective is to bring together Members on both sides of the House, including those with different views on the finer details, to continually highlight the issue of whistleblowing and what happens to those who have the integrity and courage to act. The objective is to build consensus on certain issues and, we hope, to draw sufficient attention from Members across the House to achieve that change in the law.

We need to look closely at the idea of an independent investigatory authority, as has been discussed—I completely support what the hon. Member for Central Ayrshire said in that regard. We must also look at having independent and transparent investigations, and at the provision of arbitration, which has also been mentioned. We need to keep the law under review and up to date—it is 20 years since this law was looked at in any detail, and that is a long time—because the landscape changes, loopholes become apparent and new legal strategies can be deployed to shut down whistleblowers. Most of all, we need to look at the issue of protection for whistleblowers. Our job in this place is to formulate law, and we should do so to give genuine whistleblowers the protections they need. They may need financial help, and their professional reputations will almost certainly need protection. Most importantly of all, however, they need to know that we as legislators have their back through not only our words but our actions.

I hope that this important and valuable debate will continue. I also hope that the Minister will suggest that the Government have taken heed of the need for improvements to be made to the way in which whistleblowers are treated, because we still have a long way to go.

4.55 pm

Mike Hill (Hartlepool) (Lab): Thank you, Mr Davies, for allowing me to speak under your chairmanship.

I absolutely agree with the aspiration of the hon. Member for Central Ayrshire (Dr Whitford) to put in place a separate level of protection. My experience of whistleblowing comes from my experience of many years as a full-time trade union official for Unison. I remember the original PIDA being enacted, and that immediately afterwards employers were scurrying about to design internal policies to make it hard for whistleblowers even to come forward, let alone to proceed with a complaint in comfort and with protection. Many of those policies emphasised that, if the complaint were malicious, it could end with disciplinary proceedings. Certainly the policies were not favourable to the spirit of the legislation.

I agree with everything that has been said, but I must underpin my opinion that employment law must sit alongside the matter in question—there must be protections

for workers. Yes, we have had the Francis review, but let us not forget the recent Gosport War Memorial Hospital inquiry, which shows that PIDA is clearly not working as a self-policing device within big employers such as the NHS.

I remember the Winterbourne View scandal. The investigation originated with a different kind of whistleblowing, through “Panorama”, but it came out of staff concerns. The scandal not only affected how mental health patients were treated in their communities from thereon in—it exposed the difficulties of working in such an environment—but had a knock-on effect for NHS employees. From my time with the Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys mental health trust in Hartlepool, I remember the movement of workers, with patients, into localities. That was disruptive to their jobs and lives; sometimes it led to job losses, so there are consequences.

There are also difficulties with whistleblowing. Often, whistleblowers will blow the whistle at inappropriate times. For example, they might be subject to internal inquiry or a disciplinary, and if the whistleblowing comes at that point it can be seen as disruptive, even when it is not deliberately so. However, that should not deter any important review of the basis of that whistleblowing.

I agree with the hon. Member for Central Ayrshire that local proceedings should be dealt with separately, with whistleblowing dealt with centrally from an independent perspective. We are not just talking about the NHS; there has also been whistleblowing in the civil service, for example.

I hate to see victims. As a trade union activist, I have seen too many victims. Equally, I have seen too many patients let down in mental and core health. Whistleblowers can be young or old. Young people are often concerned about peer pressure. They learn about whistleblowing on the job, and they might see obvious things that more experienced people do not. People at the older end of the shift also whistleblow, for whatever reason, about important issues that are stark-staringly obvious to them. Such things must be taken seriously. We cannot go on and have more and more patient deaths on our hands because we do not have a proper structure.

I apologise to the hon. Member for Stirling (Stephen Kerr). I was interested in the APPG, but I was unable to get there. I have always been keen on the issue. We cannot have a glass-half-full or glass-half-empty situation. We have to have protections for workers, whistleblowers and patients. We cannot live our lives through television investigations, or organisations such as the Nursing and Midwifery Council saying they have fit-for-purpose policies to deal internally with such issues. Whistleblowing is a global matter of protection for all. I appreciate the opportunity to speak in this important debate.

4.59 pm

Patricia Gibson (North Ayrshire and Arran) (SNP): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Central Ayrshire (Dr Whitford) for bringing forward this important debate. I think we all agree that when malpractice and failure in our NHS threaten the public interest, and when concerned staff do not have the confidence to speak up and share their concerns, our public services are threatened across the board. Of course, that does not apply just to the NHS—we know it has happened in other sectors.

My hon. Friend, who focused on the NHS, pointed to recent examples that underline the need for staff who raise concerns to be protected. Indeed, almost all the official reports and the inquiries that have followed have shown that co-workers had seen the dangers but had been too afraid to raise the alarm, or had raised it with the wrong person or in the wrong way. We need only cast our minds back to the Clapham rail disaster, the Zeebrugge ferry disaster and the empire of Robert Maxwell—in all those cases and others, people already had concerns, but they were either unable or unwilling to come forward, for whatever reason.

Paul Girvan (South Antrim) (DUP): Numerous NHS staff have indicated to me their unwillingness to come forward because they believe there is a culture of bullying in the NHS. If they make a complaint, they are targeted. Even though complainants want to remain totally anonymous, that does not seem to happen. I know one doctor, in particular, who raised an issue and who feels he has been sidelined from promotion and everything else because of the stance he took against his peers.

Patricia Gibson: Sadly, we have heard that point several times during the debate. We hear it far too often. The culture must change.

We have focused on the NHS, which we all understand is an important public service. If the public cannot trust and have faith in the NHS, we are in a sorry state indeed. I am sure my hon. Friend the Member for Central Ayrshire would tell us that the reason we need to ensure there are robust mechanisms in place to protect whistleblowers is that, ultimately, whistleblowing is about saving lives.

We will never know whether safer whistleblowing, with protection for those who raised concerns, would have halted the activities of Ian Paterson in the NHS and the private sector, given that concerns about his surgical procedures and his desire to carry out harmful and unnecessary mastectomies had apparently been circulating since 2003. Professor Ian Kennedy, who reviewed Paterson's practice, put it like this:

“Whistleblowers do not fare well in the NHS. This is one of the major indictments of management in the NHS: that it is inwards-looking, over-defensive, and prone to destroy, by a variety of means, those who suggest that the Emperor has no clothes...It is a blight on the NHS and is one of the principal areas where lessons must be learned.”

As the hon. Member for Stirling (Stephen Kerr) reminded us, where provisions to further protect whistleblowers are required, they should be put in place.

It has been reported that up to 10 doctors who worked with Paterson are under investigation by the GMC, apparently for failing to act on concerns. I make no comment about that, but one has to ask how it is possible that there is a culture in which fellow medics can even be suspected of failing to act on such concerns. How on earth could such an ethos ever develop and, apparently, thrive? That monster has lurked in the NHS, and that culture has to be changed. As the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mike Hill) said, it is changing, but not as quickly as we would like.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Central Ayrshire outlined, the Scottish Government have implemented a number of measures to help protect whistleblowers and ensure they feel confident to speak out. Extra legal

protections are now in place for student doctors and other postgraduate trainees who speak up if they are unfairly treated by their training body. However, as she pointed out, those are—and must be—quite separate from standard employment issues.

Importantly, the Scottish Government have committed to the function of the independent national whistleblowing officer for NHS Scotland being held by the Scottish public services ombudsman, creating a mechanism for independent external review where an individual has a concern about the handling of their whistleblowing case. That will be in place by the end of 2018. Importantly, the intention is to ensure that whistleblowing cases are concluded in a reasonable timescale. We heard from the hon. Member for Stirling about a case that dragged on for many years, which is far too long. That is simply not acceptable.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Central Ayrshire pointed out, we are building a consistent approach in Scotland. Staff will have access to an independent external body that can review their case and bring it to a clear, final and fair conclusion. I urge the Minister to study the improvements in Scotland carefully to ensure that the system in England is as robust as it can be and as supportive as possible to whistleblowers who raise genuine concerns. Of course, that is not to suggest that Scotland has nothing left to learn. We all must continue to be very vigilant, as the hon. Member for Stirling pointed out.

Gagging clauses have been used to suppress, or potentially suppress, information about patient care, which can lead to failings being repeated. I think we would all agree that that is completely unacceptable. My hon. Friend gave us a timely reminder—if we needed reminding—about the tragedy of Mid Staffordshire, which led to the deaths of as many as 1,200 patients. That must not be allowed to happen again.

Such malpractice and failings can thrive only in a culture where people are afraid to speak out and where fear and secrecy reign, as the hon. Member for Hartlepool reminded us. We have learned from Mid Staffordshire, but we must go on learning from it. I urge the Minister to be ever vigilant and watchful. Of course, genuine concerns have to be raised responsibly, but they must be raised. The NHS as an institution must encourage that, as the hon. Members for Stirling and for Hartlepool set out.

A whistleblower must be seen not as a problem but as someone who genuinely seeks to improve how things are done. Every Member who spoke alluded to that. That requires a culture change in the many corridors and management offices of our health system, which will take time. We are getting there, but we are not there yet. We must never be complacent. Openness and transparency are key to ongoing learning and improvement, and such a culture will give patients the confidence they need. I am keen to hear the Minister's response to those concerns.

5.8 pm

Justin Madders (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab): It is, as always, a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Davies.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Central Ayrshire (Dr Whitford) on securing the debate and on her powerful and knowledgeable contribution. As always, she drew on her many years of experience in the national

[Justin Madders]

health service. She listed a series of scandals in the NHS and raised themes common to them all. They lasted too long, and too often those who blew the whistle paid a high personal price for their actions. She raised the real risk of clinicians finding themselves with potential conflicts of interest, which requires further thought, and rightly highlighted the fact that the current legislation does not create an obligation to investigate the original complaint—it is primarily concerned with protection after the event.

In his analysis, the hon. Member for Stirling (Stephen Kerr) suggested that PIDA was intended to be a deterrent but that, given the way it has operated, it is not that at all because whistleblowers are still being punished. Both he and the hon. Lady pointed out the woeful success rates in employment tribunals, which should give us all pause for thought about whether the legislation is fit for purpose. The hon. Member for Stirling talked about how litigation can sometimes be a war of attrition and employers can be very defensive at times, and how at the bottom of all this is an individual—sometimes a highly skilled individual—whose talent has been wasted and lost because they have blown the whistle.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool (Mike Hill) spoke with great passion and no little knowledge of some of the experiences of those who have blown the whistle. He was right that some employers have not embraced the spirit of the legislation; in fact, they contrive policies to run contrary to what we are trying to achieve here. Having met many of the staff in the NHS, I know they care deeply about the work they do and they want to do the best by their patients. That is why it is so important that we provide an environment where they are able to raise their concerns about things they may be worried are going wrong, without fear of repercussion or unfavourable treatment. They must also be confident, once they have raised those concerns, that action will be taken.

However, despite some notable advances in the protections available in recent years, it remains the case that even the best run organisations, with the most comprehensive policies in place, can still feel very daunting for individuals who want or need to blow the whistle. I know from my many years working as an employment lawyer—although not one who lined his pockets in this particular area—that it is extremely difficult for an employee to raise those issues. As we have heard already, the consequences of doing that can be hugely damaging. They can face anything from being shunned by their colleagues to summary dismissal on spurious charges, and the impacts of the kinds of things they deal with can last much longer than the period of employment to which we are referring.

In that respect, it was deeply concerning to read in the Francis report about staff who were on the brink of suicide because of the treatment they had received after speaking out. One of the few criticisms on the record of the NHS is the fact that many promising careers have lain in tatters as a result of ineffective protections under this legislation, while other people have spent years languishing in the legal system, with the taxpayer racking up tens of thousands in legal fees in the process.

Of course, while protecting whistleblowers is vital across all professions, it should be pointed out that NHS staff also have a professional duty to raise concerns. The NHS England and NHS Improvement policy states:

“If in doubt, please raise it. Don’t wait for proof... It doesn’t matter if you turn out to be mistaken as long as you are genuinely troubled.”

We cannot say that enough; I just wish it was easier to see that delivered in practice.

The Minister recently brought forward regulations to provide some additional protections for the present and future employment prospects of whistleblowers, which we welcomed. I raised a number of concerns during that debate and the Minister was good enough to write to me afterwards setting out some of the responses. However, one issue that I do not think we have got to the bottom of was protections for other workers who support whistleblowers. There is a worrying gap in the existing legislation. It is easy to envisage circumstances, particularly in the health service, where two or more employees might have an issue of concern that they jointly notice, but only one of them, in law, can make that protected disclosure.

When I raised that point to the Minister, her response made clear that the only remedy available to such associated parties would be to register a grievance under their employer’s grievance policy. That is a very worrying omission from existing legislation and I ask the Minister to consider whether she will look at that again, as well as at the many points that have been raised about the deficiencies of the existing legislation.

Another lacuna in the existing law was exposed much more prominently by Dr Chris Day. On 10 January 2014, Dr Day made a protected disclosure about critically low staffing ratios during a night shift on an intensive care unit at the Queen Elizabeth hospital in Woolwich. Unfortunately, the trust and Health Education England decided not to act on his concerns and terminated his contract, based on what Dr Day believes were false allegations, thereby stalling his progress to consultant.

Sadly—like many whistleblowers, as we have heard today—rather than having his rights protected by his employer, Dr Day was instead forced to defend them via legal redress at an employment tribunal. This is because Health Education England contended that

“even if the facts alleged by Dr Day were true, HEE could not be liable in law for any acts causing him detriment.”

That was significant because, while not acting directly as the employer, HEE recruits doctors in training, supplies them to various trusts and appraises them. The result was a wholly unnecessary and extremely lengthy legal battle, whereby Health Education England, which is a body of the Minister’s Department, effectively sought to move around 54,000 doctors out of whistleblowing protection. Despite the clear principles at stake, the Government consistently refused to become involved in the case to prevent the costly and embarrassing outcome that we have now arrived at.

In September 2017, in a written parliamentary question, I asked about the cost to the NHS of defending the legal action brought by Dr Day. I was told that the total legal fees incurred by Health Education England stood at over £100,000, while Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust had incurred costs of £30,000. In May this year, Health Education England was ordered to pay Dr Day’s solicitors’ legal costs of £55,000 after it backed down and accepted that it should be considered an employer after all.

After four years and more than £200,000 of taxpayers' money spent, Health Education England has accepted its responsibility and made a statement that I consider frankly astonishing:

"Having never wished to do anything other than facilitate whistleblowing for doctors in training, HEE is happy to be considered as a second employer for these purposes if it removes a potential barrier for junior doctors raising concerns."

I ask the Minister to explain why this situation was allowed to go on for so long, when the case was refuted not on the basis of the facts, but on a technicality that flies in the face of everything we have tried to achieve today.

Dr Whitford: As in the case of Dr Day, the issue of poor staffing levels or rota gaps is a common incidence for people blowing the whistle because they feel it is unsafe. Scotland has just passed a safe staffing law, and I wonder whether, as with Datix and other systems, we need staffing level reporting to be seen not as whistleblowing but as something that should be done routinely. Whistleblowing would then start to become a smaller and smaller part of what staff might feel they had to do.

Justin Madders: That is an important point; we should see reporting issues such as staffing levels as something that would not be such a big deal. As is happening in Scotland, the safe levels should be ingrained not only into law, but into the culture of the workplace.

In conclusion, I repeat the same point that I made when the recent statutory instrument was discussed: that we now have a two-tier whistleblowing system, which provides some NHS employees with a greater level of protection than others working in the health and social care sector—social care workers, construction workers or anyone else who does not happen to work within those particular areas. Social care in particular is an issue. Public Concern at Work found that more than half of whistleblowers also reported some kind of victimisation, with 23% saying they had been dismissed after raising concerns. I ask the Minister, who is of course also responsible for social care, whether she considers that a satisfactory state of affairs.

Whistleblowers should be not just protected, but celebrated for the role that they play in defending the safety of others. Nobody making such a disclosure should do so in fear, wherever they work, nor should they face the risk of having their livelihood taken away. We owe it them to ensure that those protections are as effective as they can be.

5.18 pm

The Minister for Care (Caroline Dinéage): It is a great pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Davies.

I start by thanking the hon. Member for Central Ayrshire (Dr Whitford) for bringing forward this important debate on a vital issue and for the keen interest she has shown in patient safety across the board. I always listen carefully to what she says, not only because her contributions come from her perspective as a clinician—something that should be incredibly valued—but because, as a Member, I respect the practical, constructive and calm way she presents information to the House. It always makes an enormous difference as a Minister when information is given in that way. I also thank her for the role she has played in the pre-legislative scrutiny of the

health service safety investigations Bill—another piece of legislation we are introducing to ensure that our health systems are continually learning and making a difference when things go wrong.

I also put on the record my thanks to my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Stephen Kerr) for setting up the all-party parliamentary group on whistleblowers. I am delighted he has taken that step. There are all-party parliamentary groups on a range of different issues, and one often wonders where they are coming from. However, I welcome his wholeheartedly, and I am keen to hear its considered recommendations. I am also delighted that the new Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has already stated his commitment to the health and social care workforce. The work of my hon. Friend's APPG will go to the heart of that.

The Government are committed to building a culture of openness and transparency in the NHS, which is part of achieving our goal of making it the safest healthcare system in the world. We need to make sure that people who work in the NHS feel safe to speak up. We want that to become routine, and it is a key part of our commitment to ensuring patient safety and improving the quality of services. The NHS should support and welcome all staff—be they permanent employees, agency workers, volunteers or other contracted staff—raising concerns, wherever they have them.

The importance of people in healthcare speaking up has been demonstrated by many brave champions of patient safety, such as Helene Donnelly at the Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust. It is through the bravery of Helene and those like her that we can fully recognise the changes that have to happen in our health and care services. As the hon. Member for Central Ayrshire has said today and in the past, people blowing the whistle is a sign that the system has failed somewhere earlier on—that something has gone wrong and has not been put right. We want a culture in which we do not need whistleblowers like Helene because stronger preventions and better patient safety measures are in place, because people feel confident to admit when something has gone wrong, and because people feel protected and supported and are willing to raise concerns in the workplace as a norm.

Hon. Members will know that I am the Member for Gosport. I have recused myself from speaking as a Minister on the situation there so that I can continue to represent my constituents in that case, which I have been involved in for the last eight years. However, the case amply demonstrated the risks of not listening to those who raise concerns. It is clear that much of the pain and suffering experienced by families could have been avoided had those whistleblowers been listened to earlier.

Speaking up and raising concerns should be routine in the NHS. As the hon. Lady said, whistleblowing legislation has been in place for 20 years, and all hon. Members have been vocal about its limitations. I am not averse to reviewing the legislation, and I am keen to hear any proposals that the new APPG and other Members feel would be appropriate. Evidence on the legislation's effectiveness—or ineffectiveness—would be helpful. Hon. Members know that reviewing that legislation does not fall within the gift of either myself or the Department; the Department for Business, Energy and

[*Caroline Dinenage*]

Industrial Strategy holds the control there. However, I am more than happy to speak to Ministers in that Department about this.

We are aware that improvements to our health and care system are needed to ensure that workers feel safe to speak up about problems. Responses to our call for evidence in 2013 highlighted that whistleblowers did not feel that way, which is why we legislated in the Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Act 2015 to require prescribed persons to produce an annual report on whistleblowing disclosures made to them by workers. The regulations to implement that reporting duty are now in place, and the prescribed persons' first annual reports, covering 2017-18, are due to be published in the next few months. That is aimed at increasing public confidence that prescribed persons take whistleblowing disclosures seriously, through greater transparency about how they handle disclosures, and particularly that they investigate and take action where necessary.

Dr Whitford: The Minister mentions prescribed persons. The fact that Members are also prescribed persons shows how difficult and confusing it can be for whistleblowers to know where they should go. I suggest it would be difficult and confusing for an MP to know what to do with such information and where to go. I recognise that the NHS, as one of the major generators of these cases, perhaps needs its own structure. However, if we had an independent body that covered all other sectors, everyone who wants to blow the whistle would at least know where to go, because a lot do not at the moment. As my hon. Friend the Member for North Ayrshire and Arran (Patricia Gibson) said, they may blow the whistle in the wrong way and to the wrong person, and they will suddenly not be covered by PIDA at all.

Caroline Dinenage: The hon. Lady makes a valid point, which we will take into consideration.

As the hon. Lady knows, the National Guardian's Office was established in 2016, and the independent national guardian, Dr Henrietta Hughes, was appointed to support NHS whistleblowers and to improve the NHS reporting culture. The National Guardian's Office also provides leadership, training and advice for a network of more than 750 "freedom to speak up" guardians based in all NHS trusts and foundation trusts. There have been more than 6,700 cases of speaking up in the last financial year. The National Guardian's Office is looking to extend a network into primary care later this year.

The ability of the National Guardian's Office to effectively engage the system is already helping it to make recommendations to trusts, arm's length bodies, the Government and providers of services to the NHS to help drive this cultural change. Its role in the system is as an influencer of change, rather than an imposer of requirements. Organisations should rightly remain responsible for tackling their own cultural issues.

The NHS is one of the largest employers in the world and makes a large investment in its workers. We do not want to lose great people from the NHS because they face discrimination for doing the right thing. That is why we introduced protections from discrimination for

people seeking NHS employment who are perceived to have previously blown the whistle. That regulation came into force in May and will support NHS Employers in being an exemplar to others in fostering a culture of openness and a willingness to report problems with care. Separately, we also extended the definition of "worker" within the whistleblowing statutory framework in the Employment Rights Act 1996 to include student nurses and student midwives, meaning that those people are now protected under the Act.

Aside from statutory protections, on 1 April 2016 NHS England and NHS Improvement published a single national integrated "speaking up" policy to provide clarity and consistency across the system. In March 2017, NHS England also launched the whistleblowing support scheme—a nationwide pilot to help workers in primary care who have spoken up. A similar pilot was launched in September 2017 by NHS Improvement for people who have made a disclosure in secondary care. The schemes offer a range of services to support people back into employment. It is too soon to say how the pilots are progressing and how effective they have been. The aim is to ensure that any future scheme is fit for purpose and meets the needs of people who require support after making a disclosure.

We have also made changes at the regulatory level of the health and care system to better protect whistleblowers. The CQC has a legal duty to report on whistleblowing disclosures, and it has revised the "well-led" domain of its inspection assessment framework to include how organisations are progressing with implementing the recommendations from "Freedom to Speak Up". It is important to mention the link between an organisation's CQC rating and how seriously it takes speaking up, with 100% of organisations rated as outstanding by the CQC having guardians who reported that speaking up is taken seriously in their organisation, in contrast with only 36% of trusts rated as inadequate.

NHS staff who are prepared to speak up are an important asset. We want NHS staff to feel confident that, when they speak up in the public interest, it will not have a negative impact on their career. Supporting those who speak up in the NHS is utterly crucial to achieving those aims.

5.29 pm

Dr Whitford: I appreciate how consensual the debate has been, and I hope the Minister recognises the points raised. As was mentioned, NHS structures will be different in each of the four nations, but PIDA sits above that. Perhaps, in trying to work together to tackle those differences, we can also share good practice from each country that sits within the NHS. We simply cannot go on as we are, because people die, and then people lose their careers. We are running without looking. I hope that the Minister takes this forward, both with the APPG and other Members.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House has considered NHS whistleblowers and the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

5.30 pm

Sitting adjourned.

Written Statements

Wednesday 18 July 2018

CABINET OFFICE

Conflict, Stability and Security Fund

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office (Mr David Lidington): I wish to update the House on the progress of the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) for the financial year 2017-18, as well as to announce the initial regional and thematic allocations for this financial year 2018-19.

The CSSF is a cross-government fund which uses both official development assistance (ODA) and non-ODA resources to deliver against both national security and UK aid objectives, through security, defence, peacekeeping, peace-building and stability activity.

Following a review of the cross-government funds, undertaken as part of the national security capability review, ministerial oversight of the CSSF and the Prosperity Fund is now the responsibility of a sub-committee of the National Security Council. I chair this sub-committee, which met for the first time on 13 June, and ensures that both funds deliver effectively on national security priorities and UK aid objectives.

Examples of successful programmes and results, as well as ways in which the CSSF has made improvements, are included in the CSSF annual report, published today. A copy of this document will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses and has been published on gov.uk.

In 2017-18, the CSSF spent £1,182 million against a cross-government allocation of £1,188 million (99.5%). A further breakdown of spend against regional and thematic allocation, by department and by discretionary and non-discretionary spend is included in the annual report. The initial allocated budget for the fund is £1,279 million for FY 2018-19.

FY 2018-19 Allocations

Allocation	Non-ODA	ODA	Total
Middle East North Africa	£30.5 million	£177.1 million	£207.6 million
South Asia	£18.5 million	£89.7 million	£108.2 million
Africa (sub Saharan)	£34.0 million	£58.9 million	£92.8 million
Overseas Territories	£44.0 million	£4.5 million	£48.5 million
Eastern Europe, Central Asia	£25.7 million	£16.9 million	£42.5 million
Western Balkans	£5.7 million	£22.4 million	£28.0 million
Americas	£0.3 million	£9.7 million	£10.0 million
Good Governance Fund (Western Balkans and Eastern Europe)	-	£33.0 million	£33.0 million

FY 2018-19 Allocations

Allocation	Non-ODA	ODA	Total
Asia Pacific	-	£3.0 million	£3.0 million
Regional Total	£158.6 million	£415.0 million	£573.7 million
Migration	£10.0 million	£18.5 million	£28.5 million
Counter-extremism	£13.3 million	£14.2 million	£27.5 million
Multilateral strategy	£3.0 million	£51.5 million	£54.5 million
Thematic total	£26.3 million	£84.2 million	£110.5 million
Peacekeeping	£303.2 million	£82.8 million	£386.0 million
MOD DMAP	£50.0 million	-	£50.0 million
MOD Afghan security	£100.0 million	-	£100.0 million
MOD UNFICYP	£181.1 million	-	£181.1 million
MOD UN Ops Africa	£20.0 million	-	£20.0 million
Non-discretionary Total	£491.3 million	£82.8 million	£574.1 million
Corporate Delivery Support and Other (this includes Stabilisation Unit, Joint Funds Unit and pilot activities)	£5.1 million	£15.2 million	£20.4 million
Total CSSF	£681.4 million	£597.2 million	£1,278.7 million

[HCWS874]

DEFENCE

Military Support to France

The Secretary of State for Defence (Gavin Williamson): I wish to update the House on the deployment of three CH-47 Chinook heavy lift helicopters to Mali to support French operations in the Sahel region, which I announced in a written ministerial statement on 18 January 2018 [HCWS413]. All aircraft and personnel have now deployed and flying operations will begin shortly. We are committed to supporting our French allies in this armed conflict, combating terrorism and instability, as well as strengthening our military co-operation with one of our closest allies.

[HCWS867]

EDUCATION

Schools: Response to a Resolution of the House 25 April 2018

The Minister for School Standards (Nick Gibb): I would like to respond to the resolution of the House following the Opposition day debate on school funding on 25 April.

School funding is at a record high and schools have benefited from the introduction of the national funding formula, which came into force in April. The new formula is supported by our investment of an additional £1.3 billion in the core schools budget, on top of what was announced at the last spending review.

Core schools funding will rise from almost £41 billion last year, to £42.4 billion this year and £43.5 billion in 2019-20. This means that real terms per pupil funding in 2020 will be more than 50% higher than it was in 2000.

The new national funding formula is an historic reform which means that, for the first time, resources are distributed according to a formula based on the individual needs and characteristics of every school in the country.

The formula recognises the challenges of the very lowest funded schools, by introducing a minimum per pupil funding level. Under the national funding formula, in 2019-20 all secondary schools will attract at least £4,800 per pupil, and all primary schools will attract at least £3,500 per pupil.

Moreover, the formula allocates every local authority more money for every pupil in every school in 2018-19 and 2019-20. Final decisions on local distribution will be taken by local authorities, but under the national funding formula every school is attracting at least 0.5% more per pupil in 2018-19, and 1% more in 2019-20, compared to 2017-18.

We recognise that the introduction of the national funding formula represents a significant change to the way schools are funded. To provide stability for authorities and schools through the transition, we have previously confirmed that in 2018-19 and 2019-20 each local authority will continue to set a local formula, in consultation with local schools.

Many local councils feel that the right thing to do is to replicate the national funding formula locally, and we support and encourage this. However, we recognise that some areas will want to use their local flexibility to introduce a more tailored local formula, for instance because of local changes in characteristics, rapid growth in pupil numbers or the need to invest more in pupils with SEN or disabilities.

After too many years in which the funding system has placed our schools on an unfair playing field, we are finally making the historic move towards fair funding. Alongside the increased investment we are making in schools, this will underpin further improvements in standards and help create a world-class education system, and build a system that allows every child to achieve their potential, no matter their background.

[HCWS876]

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Social Care Funding: Resolution of the House 25 April 2018

The Minister for Care (Caroline Dinéage): Today I would like to update the House on social care funding following the Opposition day debate of 25 April 2018.

We know that social care services are facing pressures from rising demand for care, and the Government have taken steps to support the sector. That is why we announced an additional £2 billion central Government funding for adult social care in the 2017 spring Budget. In total, Government have given councils access to up to £9.4 billion additional funding for social care from 2017-18 to 2019-20, including the 2018-19 local government finance settlement announcement of a £150 million adult social care support grant.

The action we have taken means that funding available for social care is increasing by 8% in real terms from 2015-16 to 2019-20.

This funding allows councils to support more people and sustain a diverse care market.

It is also helping to ease pressures on the NHS, including by supporting more people to be discharged from hospital and into care as soon as they are ready.

We have already seen a real difference to services across the country: social care related delayed transfers of care had been rising year on year from 2014 up to February 2017, but since taking action last year we have achieved a reduction of 40%. We are taking additional steps to ensure that those areas facing the greatest challenges improve services at the interface between social care and the NHS.

By passing the Care Act 2014, this Government established a national threshold that defines the care needs that local authorities must meet. This eliminates the postcode lottery of eligibility across England, and means that all councils have statutory duties to look after the vulnerable, elderly and disabled people in their area.

Last year local authorities in England advised over 500,000 people on how to access services to meet their care needs. This includes services provided by leisure, housing, transport and care providers as well as voluntary groups.

According to the Care Quality Commission, 81% of adult social care providers are good or outstanding—testament to the many hardworking and committed professionals working in care to whom we owe a huge debt of gratitude.

But still too many people experience care that is not of the quality we would all want for our own loved ones, and there is too much variation in quality and outcomes between different services and different parts of the country.

The Department of Health and Social Care is working with the adult social care sector to implement Quality Matters—a shared commitment to take action to achieve high quality adult social care for service users, families, carers and everyone working in the sector.

An ageing society means that we need to reach a longer-term sustainable settlement for social care. This is why the Government will publish a Green Paper on care and support to set out our proposals for reform.

The health and social care systems are two sides of the same coin, and decisions on future reforms must therefore be aligned. That is why we will now publish the Green Paper in the autumn, around the same time as the NHS plan. Social care funding will be agreed at the forthcoming spending review, alongside the rest of the local government settlement.

[HCWS872]

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Inter-American Investment Corporation

The Secretary of State for International Development (Penny Mordaunt): This statement sets out the particulars of a short-term arrangement arising from the UK's intention to become a member of the IIC (the private sector arm of the IADB Group) through the transfer of up to US\$6.98 million of UK resources already held in the IADB. These resources form part of a US\$725 million capital asset transfer from the IADB (of which the UK is a member) to the IIC, and will be temporarily held by the IADB in an escrow account while the UK's membership goes through the ratification process and the privileges and immunities sections of the treaty are brought into UK and Scottish law.

Joining the IIC through capital asset transfer offers the opportunity, at no extra cost, to be part of an important organisation in the Latin America and Caribbean region, which will support economic growth and leverage further private sector resources for development financing, as part of the UK's prosperity agenda. The UK's membership will deepen economic ties with the region and create opportunities for British businesses, by making it easier for UK companies to win contracts through the IIC.

The only alternative would be to transfer the assets back to the UK Treasury over eight years. However, doing so would go against our Global Britain objective of playing an active, outward facing role in the rules-based international system.

In 2015 the UK was part of a unanimous vote of the bank's shareholders to merge the bank's private sector operations into a single consolidated entity, the IIC. This took effect in January 2016, formalised by a treaty signed by members who were providing new capital at that time. The UK opted to join at no cost, as part of an agreed capital transfer from the IADB to IIC which starts this year and spans eight years. This will give the UK a 0.22% shareholding in the IIC.

The IADB obtained permission from governors at this year's annual meeting in March to initiate the eight year US\$725 million capital transfer process, including approval for an initial US\$50 million transfer of which the UK's share is US\$482,000. The first transfer took place on 30 March 2018. The timing and size of further transfers will be subject to annual agreement by the IADB's board of governors but will likely follow the indicative schedule below (set out in the implementation package for the second general capital increase of the IIC). The UK's share of the transfers is a proportion of the capital that we invested plus the pro rata amount of accumulated net income earned with that capital, totalling US\$6.98 million over the eight years and breaks down as follows (using the indicative schedule):

<i>Transfer year</i>	<i>IADB capital to be transferred</i>	<i>Number of UK shares to be transferred</i>	<i>UK share of transfer</i>
2018	US\$50,000,000	29	US\$481,510.09
2019	US\$50,000,000	30	US\$481,510.09 ^[1]

<i>Transfer year</i>	<i>IADB capital to be transferred</i>	<i>Number of UK shares to be transferred</i>	<i>UK share of transfer</i>
2020	US\$110,000,000	66	US\$1,059,322.20
2021	US\$150,000,000	89	US\$1,444,530.27
2022	US\$150,000,000	89	US\$1,444,530.27
2023	US\$72,000,000	43	US\$693,374.53
2024	US\$72,000,000	43	US\$693,374.53
2025	US\$71,000,000	42	US\$683,744.33
Total	US\$725,000,000	431	US\$6,981,896.33

^[1]2018 and 2019. Half shares non-transferable, so shares transferred differ, rounded down or up while funds paid in are the same.

The UK needs to become a member of the IIC by ratifying the treaty and bringing the privileges and immunities sections of the treaty into UK and Scottish law. Given the estimated timeframes, neither of these processes was possible before the IADB completed the first capital transfer.

To ensure that, despite this delay, the UK can still become a member and maintain the agreed share at its current value, DFID has negotiated to move the UK's capital share into a no-cost escrow account. An escrow account is a temporary holding account that the IADB will set up, to keep UK funds separate from both the IADB's and IIC's accounts until all parliamentary processes are completed and in place. This is the only means of the UK preserving the full value of our share. DFID has sought and received HMT's approval of this process.

We will be pursuing parliamentary approval as soon as possible to ensure that the UK's funds remain inactive for as short a time as possible.

[HCWS870]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Free Trade Agreements: Consultation

Board of Trade (Dr Liam Fox): Today I am announcing the first public consultations on future free trade agreement negotiations. As I informed the House on Monday 16 July, these consultations will provide one of a number of means by which Parliament, the Devolved Administrations, the public, business, civil society and trade unions can have their say on the Government's approach to new trade agreements.

Our first consultations will seek views on free trade agreements with some of our closest strategic allies, with whom we have no existing trade agreements—the United States, Australia and New Zealand. I am also opening a consultation on potentially seeking accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). Our trade and investment working group discussions with Australia, New Zealand and the United States have been constructive and the Governments of each have expressed a desire to enter negotiations with the UK. These consultations will inform our overall approach to our future trade relationship with these countries.

The US is the UK's single largest trading partner and foreign investor, accounting for £100 billion of UK annual exports. UK exports to Australia and New

Zealand meanwhile are growing at 14.8% and 16.8% respectively, a faster pace than our global average. These relationships are mutually beneficial—in total, the UK imported £75.4 billion worth of goods and services from these three markets.

While there are other markets the UK will look to for new agreements in the future, our shared values and strength of trade with the US, Australia and New Zealand make them the right places to focus our initial attention.

The Government are also engaging with members* of the CPTPP about the possibility of the UK joining the agreement in future.

CPTPP is a signed, but not yet in force, plurilateral trade agreement including some of the world's fastest growing economies that together represent 13-14% of global GDP, and a total population of around 500 million people. If the UK were to join, it would be the second largest economy in the group, and CPTPP's coverage of global GDP would increase to around 17%.

Alongside these online consultations, which will shortly be available on: www.gov.uk, I will be publishing information packs that set out the characteristics of free trade agreements and the nature of the current trade and investment ties with the countries in question.

The consultations will be open for 14 weeks.

* Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam.

[HCWS873]

NORTHERN IRELAND

Northern Ireland: Appointments

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Karen Bradley): The ongoing absence of a Northern Ireland Executive has meant that a number of key public appointments cannot be made both in Northern Ireland and to some posts appointed by UK Ministers. As I told the House on 20 June, *Official Report*, column 309, this is an issue that I have been considering carefully.

While my overriding priority remains reaching agreement on restoring an inclusive power-sharing Executive, it is clear that there are current and developing issues in relation to certain public appointments in Northern Ireland that need to be addressed urgently. If an Executive is not in place soon, I intend to take measures to ensure good governance and the continued functioning of vital public bodies. This is consistent with my wider political strategy which aims to ensure we take the necessary action in the absence of Northern Ireland Ministers while we also continue to remove the obstacles to the restoration of a fully functioning Executive and Assembly.

Existing legislation confers responsibility for the most significant public appointments in Northern Ireland on Northern Ireland Ministers. Therefore, in the absence of Northern Ireland Ministers, new legislation is needed in the autumn to enable certain key Northern Ireland and UK appointments to be made.

This legislation would allow for certain specified appointments normally made by Northern Ireland Ministers to be made by the relevant UK Minister, either the Secretary of State or the Lord Chancellor as appropriate to the appointment being made. I have

considered whether each appointment is essential for good governance and public confidence in Northern Ireland and my officials have engaged with the main political parties in Northern Ireland.

Currently, I am of the view that the appointments specified in the legislation would address the most pressing appointments held up by the lack of Northern Ireland Ministers, including the Northern Ireland Policing Board, the Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Commission and the Probation Board for Northern Ireland. Further consideration is being given to the ongoing ability of Northern Ireland departments to make appointments already conferred on them in legislation. The legislation would also need to address those appointments to key UK Government-sponsored bodies that cannot be made as they require consultation with Northern Ireland Ministers, such as the chair of the Disclosure and Barring Service. Detailed policy work will continue over the summer on how to achieve this, should legislation be necessary.

Any such legislation would, of course, apply only while there are no Northern Ireland Ministers in place. Once a new Northern Ireland Executive is formed, the responsibility for appointments in Northern Ireland would return to Ministers in that Executive, and UK Ministers would again be required to consult Northern Ireland Ministers prior to making certain UK-wide appointments.

We are continuing to engage closely with the political parties, and the Irish Government as appropriate, to encourage and support work towards an accommodation to restore the Executive. This legislation would contribute towards ensuring good governance in Northern Ireland while the Government redouble those efforts to restore a locally elected, democratically accountable devolved Government.

[HCWS868]

PRIME MINISTER

Child Death Review Policy

The Prime Minister (Mrs Theresa May): This written statement confirms that child death review policy will transfer from the Department for Education to the Department for Health and Social Care. More than 80% of child deaths have medical or public health causes. The Department of Health and Social Care, its arm's length bodies and the wider NHS have a responsibility to support understanding of children's deaths and translating learning into actions to reduce preventable deaths.

The transfer was recommended by the Wood review of the role and functions of local safeguarding children boards, published in March 2016. It includes responsibility for issuing statutory guidance relating to child death reviews, supporting child death review partners with the implementation of this guidance alongside NHS England, and putting in place transitional arrangements involving NHS Digital for the collection of local safeguarding children boards child death review data, and then, once operational, by the national child mortality database.

Related areas that remain the responsibility of the Department for Education include children's social care, including safeguarding children and child protection.

These changes will be effective from today, 18 July 2018.

[HCWS869]

Intelligence and Security Committee: Diversity and Inclusion Report

The Prime Minister (Mrs Theresa May): The Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament (ISC) has undertaken a review of diversity and inclusion in the UK intelligence and security community focusing on four key protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010: gender, race, sexuality and disability. The Committee has now completed its inquiry and its report has today been laid in Parliament.

The Government welcome the publication of the ISC's report. The report recognises that the intelligence and security community needs to attract and draw upon the skills, talent and experience of all sectors of our society in order to continue its vital work effectively, and to reflect the diverse population it protects. The report acknowledges the significant progress that has taken place in recent years, highlighting the work of staff networks, innovative and inclusive recruitment campaigns and the facilitation of more flexible working patterns and styles. There is clearly room for improvement and senior leaders remain committed to ensuring the intelligence and security community is as inclusive as possible.

The Government thank the ISC for its work. We will give full consideration to the conclusions and recommendations contained in the report and will respond formally in due course.

[HCWS871]

WORK AND PENSIONS

Contingency Fund Advance

The Minister for Employment (Alok Sharma): The Department for Work and Pensions has identified the need for minor revisions to two statutory instruments. These relate to the award of some premiums to people entitled to income-based jobseeker's allowance, and to the application of the shared accommodation rate for foster carers in universal credit. Both drafting points date back to April 2013.

No customers have been adversely affected in either circumstance and payments of benefit have been—and continue to be—made fully in accordance with the policy intent.

The Department will amend the relevant legislation as soon as practically possible to ensure that these payments are included on the statutory framework.

Parliamentary approval for resources of £21,400,000 for this new service has been sought in the main estimate for the Department for Work and Pensions. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £21,400,000 will be met by repayable cash advances from the Contingencies Fund.

Once the Supply and Appropriation (Main Estimates) (No.2) Bill achieves Royal Assent, the advance will be repaid in full and ongoing expenditure will legitimately rest on the sole authority of the Supply and Appropriation Act, until the amending legislation is in place.

[HCWS875]

Employment and Support Allowance

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Ms Esther McVey): On 15 March I provided the House with a statement setting out how the work my Department was undertaking to correct underpayments that occurred when converting Incapacity Benefit claims to Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) between 2011 and 2014 was progressing. I wanted to take this opportunity to provide the House with a further update.

In March I explained that my Department would resource this exercise with 400 staff to make sure we could review cases at pace. This work is now under way with staff reviewing cases, contacting claimants and correcting claims; so far we have paid out over £40 million in arrears.

The Department has analysed the relationship between "official error" and section 27 of the Social Security Act 1998 in regulating how and to what extent arrears can be paid. As a result of the conclusions of this analysis, we will now be paying arrears to those affected back to their date of conversion to ESA.

My Department will be contacting all those identified as potentially affected as planned. Once an individual is contacted, and the relevant information gathered, they can expect to receive appropriate payment within 12 weeks. I can also confirm that once contacted, individuals will be provided with a dedicated free phone number on which they can make contact with the Department.

Where we have already corrected cases and paid arrears from 21 October 2014 we will review the case again and pay any additional arrears that are due prior to that date.

I hope this will help Members to provide reassurance, to their constituents who think they may have been affected, that they will receive all the money they are entitled to.

[HCWS877]

Petitions

Wednesday 18 July 2018

PRESENTED PETITIONS

Petition presented to the House but not read on the Floor

Home education: draft guidance and consultation

The petition of residents of Meon Valley constituency,

Declare that the “Home Education—Call for Evidence and revised DfE guidance” has been written following significant consultation with local authorities and no consultation whatsoever with the home education community; further that the consultation is consequently for little more than show as an intention to implement the content has already been stated: further that it seeks to encourage local authorities to breach the ECHR Article 8 and the GDPR; and further that the report provides no accessible means for a parent to address ultra vires behaviour by their local authority, where many of those authorities already act routinely in an ultra vires manner.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to withdraw the draft guidance and the consultation, until it has put in place an accessible and workable complaints procedure and further has consulted with home educating parents, as it has with Local Authorities, what the contents should include.

And the petitioners remain, etc. .]

[P002239]

The petition of residents of Dudley South constituency,

Declare that the “Home Education—Call for Evidence and revised DfE guidance” has been written following significant consultation with local authorities and no consultation whatsoever with the home education community; further that the consultation is consequently for little more than show as an intention to implement the content has already been stated: further that it seeks to encourage local authorities to breach the ECHR Article 8 and the GDPR; and further that the report provides no accessible means for a parent to address ultra vires behaviour by their local authority, where many of those authorities already act routinely in an ultra vires manner.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to withdraw the draft guidance and the consultation, until it has put in place an accessible and workable complaints procedure and further has consulted with home educating parents, as it has with Local Authorities, what the contents should include.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—[*Presented by Mike Wood.*]

[P002240]

The petition of residents the United Kingdom ,

Declare that the “Home Education—Call for Evidence and revised DfE guidance” has been written following significant consultation with local authorities and no consultation whatsoever with the home education community; further that the consultation is consequently for little more than show as an intention to implement the content has already been stated: further that it seeks

to encourage local authorities to breach the ECHR Article 8 and the GDPR; and further that the report provides no accessible means for a parent to address ultra vires behaviour by their local authority, where many of those authorities already act routinely in an ultra vires manner.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to withdraw the draft guidance and the consultation, until it has put in place an accessible and workable complaints procedure and further has consulted with home educating parents, as it has with Local Authorities, what the contents should include.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—[*Presented by Mr Robert Goodwill.*]

[P002241]

Home Education: draft guidance and the consultation

The petition of residents of Erewash constituency,

Declare that the “Home Education—Call for Evidence and revised DfE guidance” has been written following significant consultation with local authorities and no consultation whatsoever with the home education community; further that the consultation is consequently for little more than show as an intention to implement the content has already been stated: further that it seeks to encourage local authorities to breach the ECHR Article 8 and the GDPR; and further that the report provides no accessible means for a parent to address ultra vires behaviour by their local authority, where many of those authorities already act routinely in an ultra vires manner.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to withdraw the draft guidance and the consultation, until it has put in place an accessible and workable complaints procedure and further has consulted with home educating parents, as it has with Local Authorities, what the contents should include.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—[*Presented by Maggie Throup.*]

[P002226]

The petition of residents of Stoke North,

Declare that the “Home Education—Call for Evidence and revised DfE guidance” has been written following significant consultation with local authorities and no consultation whatsoever with the home education community; further that the consultation is consequently for little more than show as an intention to implement the content has already been stated: further that it seeks to encourage local authorities to breach the ECHR Article 8 and the GDPR; and further that the report provides no accessible means for a parent to address ultra vires behaviour by their local authority, where many of those authorities already act routinely in an ultra vires manner.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to withdraw the draft guidance and the consultation, until it has put in place an accessible and workable complaints procedure and further has consulted with home educating parents, as it has with Local Authorities, what the contents should include.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—[*Presented by Ruth Smeeth.*]

[P002227]

OBSERVATIONS

Observations from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Jesse Norman):

TRANSPORT**Charlton Boulevard**

The petition of residents of South Gloucestershire,

Declares that local residents have great concern over the proposal to make Charlton Boulevard into a bus only lane, and the resulting effect this will have on local congestion.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to encourage South Gloucestershire Council, and all stakeholders in Charlton Hayes traffic planning to reassess the planned route.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—[*Official Report*, 20 June 2018; Vol. 643, c. 435.]

[P002156]

The Government's view is that most projects should be decided locally to meet the needs of the local people and businesses, and to promote local economic growth, while taking into account any other considerations that may arise. In this case, the section of road in question is the responsibility of South Gloucestershire Council.

I understand that the proposal has been developed to prevent "rat-running" and to encourage the use of public and sustainable transport, including the new MetroBus route which will run along Highwood Road. The decision to take forward the proposal is likely to require a statutory Traffic Regulation Order (TRO). I would encourage the public to share their views when this procedure commences, which I understand will be within the next 12 months. In the meantime, I would suggest that the public continues to work with Council officers to understand the plans further.

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Wednesday 18 July 2018

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