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

**PARLIAMENTARY**  
**DEBATES**

**(HANSARD)**

**Monday 21 January 2019**

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# HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT

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

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## OFFICIAL REPORT

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

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

SIXTH SERIES

VOLUME 653

TWENTY-EIGHTH VOLUME OF SESSION 2017-2019

### House of Commons

*Monday 21 January 2019*

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

#### PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

### Oral Answers to Questions

#### HOME DEPARTMENT

*The Secretary of State was asked—*

#### Security Agreements: European Union

1. **Debbie Abrahams** (Oldham East and Saddleworth) (Lab): What recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on future security agreements with the EU. [908644]

**The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Sajid Javid):** I have regular conversations with Cabinet colleagues on a range of matters. The deal that the House considered last week confirmed the commitment of the UK and the EU to a new security partnership and included a transition period. In considering a way forward, we must focus on ideas that deliver the same benefits, are genuinely negotiable and have sufficient support in the House.

**Debbie Abrahams:** Title V of the draft withdrawal agreement describes the ongoing police and judicial co-operation between the UK and the EU on criminal matters. Given that it has taken 30 months to agree the

13-page section on security and that the section covers only the transition period, why should we have any confidence in this Government completing negotiations to ensure this country's future safety and security by the end of next year?

**Sajid Javid:** Security is an absolute priority for the Home Office, which is why it should come as no surprise to the House that all capabilities on which the UK would wish to co-operate with the EU are covered in the political declaration. If the hon. Lady wishes to continue that kind of co-operation, the best thing to do is to support the deal.

**Sir Desmond Swayne** (New Forest West) (Con): What estimate has my right hon. Friend made of the intervention by Sir Richard Dearlove and General Guthrie?

**Sajid Javid:** I read the intervention carefully a week ago. Although I have huge respect for those two individuals and listen to them on many issues, I think that they are completely wrong in their assessment.

**Yvette Cooper** (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab): The last time the Home Secretary appeared before the Home Affairs Committee, he told us that, in the event of no deal,

“we will be as safe—if we are talking about the SIS II system, for example, as we were just now”,

and said that Schengen Information System II is merely a “nice to have”—those were the words he used. Since then, the Met Commissioner has said that losing access to SIS II

“will be more costly undoubtedly, slower undoubtedly, and potentially, yes, put the public at risk.”

The National Crime Agency has also said that there is “a risk that this country will be less safe as a result.”

What is the Home Secretary's assessment of the risk to the country, particularly in policing and security terms, from no deal, and why is his assessment different from that of the police?

**Sajid Javid:** The right hon. Lady will know that paragraph 87 of the political declaration talks about how the UK and our EU partners will work together to consider continuing arrangements for missing and wanted persons, and on other issues, such as criminal information exchange. Today we are lucky to live in a very safe country. Under our assessment, I am confident that, whether we have a deal or no deal, we will continue to be a very safe country.

**Charlie Elphicke (Dover) (Con):** The arrival of 39 suspected migrants via crossings in just the last two days is a considerable concern to my constituents in Dover and Deal. When will the Home Secretary next meet his French counterpart to discuss this matter? Will the Home Office carry out round-the-clock aerial surveillance urgently? Can he confirm the date on which the two cutters in the Mediterranean will return to be on station to secure our border?

**Sajid Javid:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right to raise this issue. We have started to deploy aerial surveillance of the English channel since I declared a major incident. While we await the arrival of the two cutters in early February, we have increased the presence of vessels, including with help from the Royal Navy. I will be meeting my French counterpart, Minister Castaner, this week.

**Sir Edward Davey (Kingston and Surbiton) (LD):** Further to the question asked by the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper), the police have said that direct access to EU databases such as SIS II are mission critical for their work in tackling criminals and terrorists. What guarantee can the Home Secretary give the House today that, after the transition period, Britain and the police will still have access to these mission-critical databases?

**Sajid Javid:** I agree with the right hon. Gentleman that those databases are important, which is why it is very good that we have an agreement in the political declaration to consider how we can keep using such arrangements. Again, if he is that concerned, he should support the deal.

**Mr Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con):** Is it not the case that our closest security and intelligence partnership is with the United States and the “Five Eyes” signatories, none of which are members of the European Union; that our closest defence partnership is with NATO, not the EU; and that, whether we leave the EU with or without a deal, we will be signing a security and intelligence arrangement with the EU?

**Sajid Javid:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right to highlight the importance of the security relationship we have with many other countries, including, of course, with our “Five Eyes” partners—that is a critical relationship—and the NATO alliance. That does not take away from the fact that we also want to continue co-operating with the EU, and I am sure that we will.

**David Hanson (Delyn) (Lab):** Can the Home Secretary help me, please? The European Court of Justice has oversight of the European arrest warrant, SIS II, Europol

and Eurojust. He says that we will have arrangements with all three; how does he cross the Prime Minister’s red line on those issues?

**Sajid Javid:** That is quite straightforward. If the right hon. Gentleman takes the time to read the political declaration, he will see that it refers to establishing arrangements—for example, for the quick and efficient surrender of individuals. They are not necessarily exactly the same instruments, but we have done this in a way that is consistent with our taking back control of our laws.

**Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney North and Stoke Newington) (Lab):** I have listened with great care to the Home Secretary. He will be aware that the EU insists on treaty arrangements governing key aspects of international security, justice and policing. Without a treaty, courts have no legal basis to implement arrest or extradition warrants, and cannot allow access to criminal and other databases to third countries. The danger is that there will be a mutual loss of the European arrest warrant and the UK will no longer be able to access the Europol database in real time. How does he justify putting the security of the nation at risk in this way?

**Sajid Javid:** The Government have suggested to the EU—if the deal gets through Parliament, this is what will be looked at—having an internal security treaty between the UK and the EU because, as the right hon. Lady quite rightly says, it is best to have these arrangements on a proper legal footing and it makes sense to do that through treaty-type arrangements. I have to say again, however, that if she is really concerned about continued co-operation, she should support the deal.

### County Lines Drugs Operations

2. **Kerry McCarthy (Bristol East) (Lab):** What steps his Department is taking to prevent young people from becoming involved in county lines drugs operations. [908645]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Victoria Atkins):** We have provided £3.6 million for a new national county lines co-ordination centre to enhance the intelligence picture and to support efforts to identify and safeguard victims. The centre launched in September last year and carried out its first week of action in October, leading to more 500 arrests and more than 300 people safeguarded.

**Kerry McCarthy:** I was pleased to see it reported recently that the Government are treating the victims of county lines as victims of modern slavery. That is a helpful approach, but I have two concerns. One is that children who have been excluded from school are particularly at risk. My second concern relates to housing. What conversations are Ministers having with their counterparts in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to make sure that children who are at risk are not housed back in the area where the people who have persecuted them live?

**Victoria Atkins:** I thank the hon. Lady for her continued focus on modern slavery. She is absolutely right that this is not just about policing, although of course that is a

vital part of our treatment of serious violence and county lines. It is about taking a holistic approach, which is why the Home Secretary chairs the serious violence taskforce, which brings together local government, national Government and all the relevant agencies. That can make a real difference in the lives of young people who may be vulnerable to the gangsters.

**Eddie Hughes** (Walsall North) (Con): In November, West Midlands police was granted a cash boost of £1.8 million to help to deal with gangs and violence. Does the Minister endorse the work of the charity Redthread to prevent youngsters from joining gangs and becoming drug dealers?

**Victoria Atkins:** I am delighted to endorse the work of Redthread, a charity we support not just in the midlands, but in London and Nottingham. I have been delighted to visit accident and emergency departments where Redthread is in operation. Its workers reach out to young people when they are in A&E departments, at what they call the teachable moment. That is exactly the sort of positive voluntary work we need.

**Vicky Foxcroft** (Lewisham, Deptford) (Lab): Will the Minister update us on the Government's public health approach to tackle serious violence? I am not asking for an update on the serious violence strategy, the Offensive Weapons Bill or the youth endowment fund. I have been following those very closely, but I cannot find anything about the Government's public health approach, as announced at the Conservative party conference. Perhaps the Minister can update us now.

**Victoria Atkins:** I thank the hon. Lady for her assiduous focus on this important topic. I am grateful to her for her work on the Youth Violence Commission. We are due to consult on the public health duty, a legal duty that will apply across the board to help to embed a public health approach in our treatment of serious violence.

16. [908661] **Rachael Maskell** (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): It is clear, in the light of so many fatalities in the criminal justice system and in the community, that the war on drugs is not working, so will the Minister set out what steps she is taking along the lines of the public health framework to ensure that fatalities are reduced and that public health workers work together with the criminal justice system?

**Victoria Atkins:** The hon. Lady will know that we have recently announced an independent review of the 21st-century drugs market. Indeed, only last week I had the pleasure of visiting a drug treatment centre in south London to see the important work of doctors and health professionals to help those who are sadly addicted to these very harmful substances.

**Louise Haigh** (Sheffield, Heeley) (Lab): For the victims of county lines and youth violence, the trauma from their experiences will be devastating, yet far too often police forces and mental health trusts do not work together to make sure that their needs are automatically assessed, leaving children extremely vulnerable and at risk of being re-exploited. Will the Minister commit to working with her colleagues with responsibility for mental

health to ensure that all such victims receive an automatic referral to mental health services? Will she commit to coming back to the House at the earliest opportunity with a full update on progress against the wider serious violence strategy?

**Victoria Atkins:** The hon. Lady will know that we are very conscious of the impact that mental health issues can have, not only on the immediate victims of serious violence but, of course, in respect of the ramifications further afield for communities affected by serious violence. A great deal of work is going on to help people with mental issues who are being dragged into county lines, in particular. Indeed, my right hon. Friend the Minister for Policing met the relevant Minister in the Department of Health and Social Care only last week to discuss this issue.

### Unsolved Crime

3. **Tracy Brabin** (Batley and Spen) (Lab/Co-op): What recent assessment he has made of trends in the level of unsolved crime. [908646]

13. **Stephen Morgan** (Portsmouth South) (Lab): What recent assessment he has made of trends in the level of unsolved crime. [908657]

**The Minister for Policing and the Fire Service (Mr Nick Hurd):** In the year to June 2018, the proportion of recorded crime that was closed with no suspect identified was 47%—a similar proportion to that in the previous year.

**Tracy Brabin:** Charge rates in West Yorkshire have fallen for some key crimes, with charges for sexual offences as low as 4%—among the lowest in the country. The chair of the National Police Chiefs' Council has said that this is because of fewer officers and staff. The Government's decision to raise money through an increase in council tax means that West Yorkshire will be able to raise almost the same as Surrey, despite having double the population. Will that really meet local need?

**Mr Hurd:** I am sure that, given the seriousness of the point the hon. Lady raises, she will welcome the fact that rates of prosecutions and convictions for rape and sexual offences are at their highest ever level. She also asked about funding, and she wants more resources for her local police force, so I hope that she will support the proposed police funding settlement that will, if the NPCC uses the flexibility, provide an additional £28.5 million for her local police force.

**Stephen Morgan:** In Hampshire, just 4% of sexual offences and just 14% of robberies now result in a charge. Can the Minister honestly tell the people of Portsmouth that after losing 1,000 police officers and a staggering £70 million in central Government funding, my city's streets are safer?

**Mr Hurd:** The hon. Gentleman also refers to the conviction rates for rape and sexual offences, which are at record levels. They are low in percentage terms—unacceptably low—but we are making progress, and it is incredibly important that we do so, because one of the success stories of the past few years has been in

encouraging vulnerable victims of so-called hidden crime to come forward. I hope that the hon. Gentleman would welcome that and that, given his concern about seeing Hampshire police properly funded, he will vote for the proposed police funding settlement, which would see police funding for his local force double.

**Mark Pritchard** (The Wrekin) (Con): The Minister will know that in Telford and Wrekin there is currently a call for not only an independent inquiry but a council-led inquiry into unresolved crimes relating to child sexual exploitation. Will the Minister join me in calling on the council to get on with that inquiry and to release information so that the victims can finally get justice?

**Mr Hurd:** I thank my hon. Friend for raising that issue. When he raised it before, he heard a clear “get on with it” message from the Home Secretary at the Dispatch Box. I repeat that, and I am more than happy to offer to meet him and anyone relevant to discuss the matter.

**Zac Goldsmith** (Richmond Park) (Con): Hon. Members will know from today’s papers that there has been yet another stabbing in London—this time in Kew in my constituency. I am pleased to say that the victim is now expected to make a full recovery and I thank the local police for their full and rapid response. Will my right hon. Friend acknowledge, please, that increased crime in the capital is a source of huge anxiety? Will he reassure my constituents not only that getting to grips with it is a top Government priority, but that he is doing everything he can to work with both the Met and the Mayor of London on a co-ordinated and full response?

**Mr Hurd:** I can certainly give my hon. Friend that assurance, because it is one of the biggest public safety challenges that we face as a city and as a country. I am meeting the Mayor later this evening to discuss this in person. My hon. Friend wants more resources: an additional £100 million of investment is going into the Met police this year and the proposed funding settlement will see an additional £172 million of public money going in to support the Met. That is alongside all the other work that we are doing on the Offensive Weapons Bill, stop-and-search and everything else that he wants to see. I cannot think of a higher priority for the Department at this moment.

### Immigration

4. **David Duguid** (Banff and Buchan) (Con): What plans he has for the UK’s future immigration system. [908647]

6. **Jeremy Lefroy** (Stafford) (Con): What plans he has for the UK’s future immigration system. [908650]

11. **Gillian Keegan** (Chichester) (Con): What plans he has for the UK’s future immigration system. [908655]

17. **Julian Sturdy** (York Outer) (Con): What plans he has for the UK’s future immigration system. [908662]

**The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Sajid Javid):** On 19 December last year, the Government published a White Paper that set out our principles and plans for a future skills-based immigration system. The future system will focus on high-skills, welcoming talented

and hard-working individuals who will support the UK’s dynamic economy and enabling employers to compete on the world stage.

**David Duguid:** I thank my right hon. Friend for his response. When we leave the common fisheries policy, as he will be aware, we take back control of our waters and our fish. We can expect at that point an expansion of the seafood processing sector in my constituency of Banff and Buchan, an area of very low unemployment. Will he therefore assure me that our future immigration policy will, if required, facilitate the sourcing of skilled seafood processing workers from outside the UK?

**Sajid Javid:** My hon. Friend is right to highlight the opportunities that Brexit will bring for certain industries. I can assure him that the immigration White Paper does contain proposals to bring medium-skilled workers into the scope of skilled workers and also to introduce a temporary workers’ route at all skill levels. I hope that that offers him some reassurance.

**Jeremy Lefroy:** Will my right hon. Friend assure me that the skills-based immigration system will not fall foul of an arbitrary salary cap? This is important in many sectors. In research—I declare an interest as I am on the board of a university—very highly skilled researchers are often not paid anything like £30,000 at the beginning of their career, but we need them for our university and research sector.

**Sajid Javid:** My hon. Friend is right to raise that issue. He may know that we made our visa offer for academics even more generous last year. Those changes have been warmly welcomed by the research community. I can assure him that we will engage with employers in the higher education sector and others before we determine any future salary thresholds.

**Gillian Keegan:** Chichester is home to a fresh food industry worth £1 billion, and its businesses rely on European workers. One grower in my constituency reached 1.5 million picking hours last year, and with no mechanical alternative for picking soft fruit, any restriction in accessing labour will curtail growth. Will my right hon. Friend assure me that our post-Brexit immigration policy will ensure that such businesses will be able to get the workers that they need?

**Sajid Javid:** I understand the importance of the fresh food industry to my hon. Friend’s constituency. We are piloting a scheme to bring in workers from outside the EU to work in this industry, and our immigration White Paper proposed a temporary work route, allowing workers to come to the UK to work in jobs for up to a year at any skill level.

**Julian Sturdy:** Will the Secretary of State assure me that he will listen to North Yorkshire farmers and those in the agricultural sector who wish to retain access to seasonal workers after Brexit? Will he confirm how the pilot will be assessed and that changes to numbers will be reviewed?

**Sajid Javid:** I can tell my hon. Friend that, first, the pilot will test the effectiveness of our immigration system, alleviating seasonal labour shortages during peak periods

of production while ensuring that there is a minimal impact on local communities. We will fully assess the outcome of the pilot, but I am happy to give him the assurance that he seeks.

**Helen Hayes** (Dulwich and West Norwood) (Lab): It is impossible to consider the future of the immigration system without considering the injustices that the immigration system has meted out in the past. In relation to the compensation scheme for Windrush citizens who have been unjustly and unlawfully treated by the Home Office, is the Home Secretary aware of reports that unscrupulous law firms are approaching Windrush victims and seeking to represent them in relation to the compensation scheme on the basis of a commission rate of more than 25% of the compensation awarded? Will he condemn that utterly predatory and exploitative practice and take steps to ensure that 100% of the compensation awarded by that scheme, when it is finalised, will go to the victims, who have already suffered enough?

**Sajid Javid:** It is very important that we have a fair compensation scheme in place. The work that Martin Forde, QC, has done independently is excellent; we will announce more on that soon. I join the hon. Lady in condemning those unscrupulous firms that are thinking only about lining their pockets, and not about the victims.

**Janet Daby** (Lewisham East) (Lab): Can the Home Secretary say what progress he has made regarding compensation for victims of the Windrush scandal?

**Sajid Javid:** The hon. Lady will know that a consultation on the subject recently closed; it was extended at the request of Martin Forde, the independent chairman appointed to look into the matter. We are now working through the responses across Government, and we will announce more details soon.

**Stuart C. McDonald** (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East) (SNP): Tens of thousands of families have been split by the Prime Minister's draconian anti-family immigration rules. How many more families will be destroyed by the Home Secretary's proposals to extend those rules to EU family members? Should we not be getting rid of these rules, rather than extending them?

**Sajid Javid:** The hon. Gentleman may be aware that in the withdrawal agreement in the Prime Minister's deal, there is an extensive section on guaranteeing citizens' rights. I believe that what we have agreed with the EU is very generous. No one has any interest in splitting any families. We must do everything we can to welcome those EU citizens who have made their home in the United Kingdom.

**Mr Alistair Carmichael** (Orkney and Shetland) (LD): Can the Home Secretary tell us how the settled status scheme will work for EU nationals ordinarily resident in the United Kingdom, but working in the offshore oil and gas industry, or the merchant marine? Can he confirm that the fact that many of those people work outside the 12-mile limit for more than six months in the year will not be a barrier to their inclusion in the settled status scheme?

**Sajid Javid:** One of the reasons why we piloted the scheme was to look at any issues that might come up before the full launch, which is expected in April. The pilot has just closed; we published the results today. It looks at precisely such issues as the one that the right hon. Gentleman has brought up. We will look into that carefully.

**Afzal Khan** (Manchester, Gorton) (Lab): This morning, the Government launched the largest stage of the settled status roll-out. If just 5% of those who need settled status fail to apply for it, 175,000 people in the UK will have insecure immigration status, or no status at all. The British Medical Association found that 37% of EU doctors are not even aware of the settled status scheme. What are the Government doing to make sure that EU citizens know that they need to register for settled status to avoid a repeat of the Windrush scandal?

**Sajid Javid:** The hon. Gentleman might be interested to know that in a recent test—we have just published the results—out of 30,000 applicants, 70% were granted settled status; 30% were granted pre-settled status. None was refused. Almost 80% said that they found the application process very fair and easy to complete, so the process is working well, although he is right to highlight the question of what it might look like once it is fully open. We are making sure, through a huge comms campaign, that we get through to everyone who needs to know about the scheme. We are, for example, working with employers; I visited one such employer, GSK, just last week.

### Immigration Detention Estate

5. **Layla Moran** (Oxford West and Abingdon) (LD): What recent assessment he has made of the size of the (a) current and (b) future immigration detention estate; and if he will make a statement. [908648]

**The Minister for Immigration (Caroline Nokes):** The Government are committed to using the detention estate sparingly, and only when necessary. We have taken a systematic approach to modernising and rationalising the detention estate, so that we ensure that we have the geographical footprint and resilience required to meet our future needs. By this summer, the detention estate will be almost 40% smaller than four years ago, and of significantly higher quality.

**Layla Moran:** I welcome very much the closure of Campsfield House; I have been campaigning for its closure for a very long time. However, it happened very quickly, so lots of workers are now worried about where they will find a job. The local community is desperate to know the plans for the site once Campsfield is totally run down.

**Caroline Nokes:** I am glad that the hon. Lady identified her involvement with the Close Campsfield campaign. I am conscious that she was at many of the protests calling for the closure of Campsfield. We are developing options for the future use of the site following the end of the contract, which was, in any case, scheduled to end in May 2019. Although the employment of Mitie staff is a question for Mitie, the company has provided assurances that it is actively engaged with its staff on

redeployment options within its business. All detainees have been transferred to other centres where they will be held in decent and dignified conditions.

### EU Settlement Scheme

7. **Alison Thewliss** (Glasgow Central) (SNP): What recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the EU settlement scheme. [908651]

**The Minister for Immigration (Caroline Nokes)**: The hon. Lady raises the question of how the EU settlement scheme is working. Of course, we know that EU citizens make a huge contribution to our economy and society, and we want them to stay. The first two phases of beta testing have successfully concluded, and the wider public implementation of the scheme has gone live today.

**Alison Thewliss**: I have received a worrying pattern of news about EU citizens in my constituency being denied universal credit because they are deemed not to have the right to reside. This is happening despite the Department for Work and Pensions having access to work history records and other evidence to the contrary. Is this an example of the hostile environment extending to EU citizens before Brexit has even happened, and will the EU settlement scheme have any impact on this?

**Caroline Nokes**: The EU settlement scheme is a really crucial part of making sure that the 3.4 million EU citizens living here can absolutely evidence their right to stay here through a digital status in line with 21st-century requirements. The hon. Lady will have heard my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary talk in positive terms about how important this scheme is. We have now opened the final phase of testing before the whole scheme goes live at the end of March.

**Mrs Maria Miller** (Basingstoke) (Con): The Government are right to be working hard to secure a Brexit deal, but if no deal is reached, can my right hon. Friend reassure EU citizens living in our county of Hampshire and elsewhere in the UK that their rights will still be guaranteed? This is important and it needs to be clear, not just to citizens but to businesses as well.

**Caroline Nokes**: Picking up on the final part of my right hon. Friend's question, last summer we launched the employer toolkit to enable employers best to communicate to their employees the settled status scheme. She is right to point out the concerns that many may have about the event of no deal. I would like to reassure her that across Government we are working incredibly hard to avoid a no-deal outcome. However, the Department for Exiting the European Union was very clear about the protections afforded to EU citizens in the event of no deal, and we believe that our offer to them is generous. Deal or no deal, the scheme will open publicly at the end of March, and it is crucial that as many citizens as possible apply.

**Mr Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): The Minister knows that this is an increasingly complex area. I have had many letters from constituents concerned that they will be impacted by the immigration health

surcharge. Who is going to have to pay this, and is it going to be increased along the lines foreshadowed in the press?

**Caroline Nokes**: The hon. Gentleman will know that we did increase the immigration health surcharge. That was an important manifesto commitment that the Conservative party made to make sure that those who are using NHS services are also contributing to the NHS. The settled status scheme has deliberately been designed to be simple, not complicated. It is really important that EU citizens only have to prove their identity, prove their residence, and confirm that they do not have criminality. In the second phase of private beta testing, it has been very plain that the vast majority of people going through the scheme—in the region of 80% or so, I believe—have been able to confirm their residence of five years without any reference to additional information other than their records with Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs or their DWP records.

**David T. C. Davies** (Monmouth) (Con): As somebody who is married to an EU citizen, I think that these proposals are entirely fair and proportionate, and are in marked contrast to the outrageous scare stories that were put about by some people, in and out of this House, who are fanatical about remaining in the European Union.

**Caroline Nokes**: I absolutely agree with my hon. Friend. I am sure that his wife will be going through the process very soon indeed. In fact, some of the best advocates for the simplicity of the EU settled status scheme have been those who have already gone through it, and we have had very positive feedback on the first two phases of testing.

### Immigration: Scottish Economy

8. **Martyn Day** (Linlithgow and East Falkirk) (SNP): What assessment he has made of the potential effect on the Scottish economy of the policies set out in the White Paper, "The UK's future skills-based immigration system". [908652]

**The Minister for Immigration (Caroline Nokes)**: The Government's immigration White Paper sets out the principles of an immigration system that will work in the best interests of the whole of the UK. As my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has made clear, the White Paper is the start of the conversation. I look forward to ongoing engagement with stakeholders in Scotland over the course of this year.

**Martyn Day**: The Scottish policy chair at the Federation of Small Businesses has said:

"The UK Government's obstinate approach to immigration is a clear threat to many of Scotland's businesses and local communities. These proposals will make it nigh impossible for the vast majority of Scottish firms to access any non-UK labour and the skills they need to grow and sustain their operations."

Is he wrong?

**Caroline Nokes**: The hon. Gentleman is right to point out the importance of our engaging with business groups and stakeholders across Scotland. I was delighted to meet the CBI in Scotland in a business roundtable back

in the summer, and that engagement will continue. I would also like to point out that the independent Migration Advisory Committee was very much of the view that Scotland's economic situation is not sufficiently different from the rest of the UK to justify a very different migration policy.

**Mr Paul Sweeney** (Glasgow North East) (Lab/Co-op): Does the Minister accept that the idea of a skills-based immigration system is undermined by having an arbitrary salary threshold, which should be scrapped in favour of an honest assessment of the real skills demand across different sectors in the economy?

**Caroline Nokes**: I would gently point out that it was not an arbitrary salary threshold; it was the one put forward by the independent Migration Advisory Committee. It is, of course, important that we engage with business and employers across the whole of the United Kingdom, and we will use the next 12 months to do so.

**Joanna Cherry** (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow and East Falkirk (Martyn Day) has referred to the concerns of the policy chair of the Federation of Small Businesses in Scotland. The chief executive of the Scottish Tourism Alliance, Marc Crothall, has said:

“There is no doubt that the government's plans will exacerbate the existing recruitment crisis considerably, placing our tourism industry and what is one of the most important economic drivers for Scotland in severe jeopardy.”

Is he wrong as well?

**Caroline Nokes**: The hon. and learned Lady will be aware that the Migration Advisory Committee, which is independent of Government, made the point that it did not see the case for a wide range of sectoral schemes. In fact, it made the case that perhaps only in agriculture was one appropriate. However, it is important that we continue to engage with all businesses and sectors. I am sure she will be delighted to know that the tourism industry in Wales has already beaten a path to my door, and I look forward to Scotland doing likewise.

**Joanna Cherry**: Clearly the tourism industry in Scotland are very unhappy with the proposals, and I beg to suggest that they know more about their industry than the Migration Advisory Committee. The reality of the situation is that people in businesses across Scotland are dismayed by the UK Government's approach to immigration. Scotland already has different policies and approaches on taxation, climate change, tuition fees and social care. If those major areas of policy can be devolved and implemented to suit Scotland's needs, why can immigration not be devolved? I would like to know the Minister's views, rather than the Migration Advisory Committee's views.

**Caroline Nokes**: I am sure the hon. and learned Lady recalls my appearance before her at a Select Committee, where I made it clear that my view was that immigration policy was a matter reserved to the United Kingdom Government.

## Fire Services

**9. Laura Pidcock** (North West Durham) (Lab): What assessment he has made of the correlation between changes in the number of firefighters and fire service response times. [908653]

**The Minister for Policing and the Fire Service (Mr Nick Hurd)**: Response times to fire have increased gradually over the last 20 years. At the same time, as the hon. Lady knows, the number of fires and deaths from fire has, thankfully, fallen. There is no clear link between response times and firefighter numbers.

**Laura Pidcock**: I thank the Minister for his response, but last month a report by Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary and fire and rescue services found that fragmentation was resulting in a postcode lottery of 999 response times and standards, which simply is not fair on the public or on firefighters. What steps is the Minister taking to introduce a consistent national framework of standards across fire and rescue services, to provide a proper benchmark against which inspections can take place?

**Mr Hurd**: The independent inspection of the effectiveness of our fire service found that 10 of the 14 fire services inspected were rated good for effectiveness, including their response to emergencies. We are driving up standards and finding out what “good” looks like through independent inspection, the creation of the standards board and robust local accountability, including the chance for local police and crime commissioners to take over governance. That framework will drive up standards across the fire service, which is what everyone wants.

**Karen Lee** (Lincoln) (Lab): Rising response times are not the fault of firefighters, chief fire officers or local politicians. They are the result of this Government's austerity agenda, which has led to 10,000 fewer firefighters protecting our communities. Council leaders such as those in South Yorkshire, where £12.5 million has been slashed since 2010, have explained to the Minister that this Government's austerity measures will risk the public's safety—they have made that clear. Will he explain how sustained cuts to fire service budgets, which force a reliance on small, one-off, un-earmarked—note the distinction—reserves, provide a sufficient basis for a responsive and well-resourced service? Will he commission a review?

**Mr Hurd**: I would say to the hon. Lady that we have fewer firefighters because we have had 46% fewer fires over the past decade. What I would also say to her, which I said to all the fire chiefs this morning, is that I am absolutely determined that, in the next comprehensive spending review, the fire service gets the resource it needs to continue to be world class.

**Anna Soubry** (Broxtowe) (Con): I met the chief fire officer and the chair of the fire and rescue authority in Nottinghamshire on Friday, and they made no complaint about their funding level. They have had to make a series of reductions, and they have done it extremely well, without any risks increasing at all to the people of Nottinghamshire. They want to make sure that their funding is retained, and I do not expect the Minister to

comment on that. However, does he agree with me that our fire services have done remarkable things, with cuts in their budgets, without any risk to the public at all?

**Mr Hurd:** I said exactly that to the fire chiefs today. Through austerity, they have made changes, and they should be commended on their leadership during that period. Their spending power will grow by 2.2% next year, and they sit on reserves worth 42% of their spending power. I repeat to my right hon. Friend what I said to them today: I am determined to ensure that, in the CSR, our fire service is properly resourced.

### Economic Crime

12. **Chris Davies** (Brecon and Radnorshire) (Con): What steps he is taking to tackle economic crime.

[908656]

**The Minister for Security and Economic Crime (Mr Ben Wallace):** The Government have concentrated on bringing law enforcement together alongside regulators to focus ruthlessly on tackling dirty money and economic crime. In the next 18 months, we will invest over £48 million to bolster capabilities, including in the establishment of the National Economic Crime Centre.

**Chris Davies:** Does my right hon. Friend agree with me that, by bringing together specialists across both the public sector and the private sector to tackle this, we can use the best of our experience to maintain our status as a global financial centre?

**Mr Wallace:** Yes, I agree with my hon. Friend. It is in all our interests to ensure that our financial sector and country tackle financial crime. The global scale of it demands that all of us play our part to burden-share, which is why the serious and organised crime strategy last year specifically committed to ensuring the widest response from both Government and the private sector.

**Nick Thomas-Symonds** (Torfaen) (Lab): A year ago, the Government introduced unexplained wealth orders to tackle the laundromat of dirty money in this country. It is reported that the National Crime Agency has identified 140 cases in which such an order would be appropriate, but only one order has been imposed in the past year. Why are the Government afraid of using the tools available to them?

**Mr Wallace:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving me the opportunity to clarify some of his remarks. First, those orders were not introduced—enacted—until April last year, so they have not been used for a year; and two, not one, have been used. At the same time, the Criminal Finances Act 2017 brought into existence asset-freezing orders. In one year, since April, we have seen asset-freezing orders used 200 times alone in the Metropolitan police, freezing over £40 million. I assure him that the use of unexplained wealth orders will continue. However, he will know as a lawyer that the courts and the judiciary have to get used to understanding them, and we have to understand how the courts interpret the legislation; but he should not worry, the asset-freezing orders are doing their job, as will the unexplained wealth orders.

### Vandalism

15. **Andrea Jenkyns** (Morley and Outwood) (Con): What plans he has to tackle vandalism. [908660]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Victoria Atkins):** We have reformed and strengthened the powers available to local areas to tackle antisocial behaviour, including vandalism, through the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. Six powers are available to the police, local councils and other agencies, including the civil injunction and public spaces protection orders, which set out how a public space can be used.

**Andrea Jenkyns:** Over the Christmas period, the Outwood memorial hall in my constituency was vandalised, the community centre and war memorial were damaged, and the possessions stolen include a wheelchair used by the Outwood stroke club. This is a truly sickening crime that has caused great distress to our community. What plans does my hon. Friend have to increase the sentences for those found guilty of such offences?

**Victoria Atkins:** I am sure that the whole House is sorry to hear about that appalling incident, and I fully understand the distress that it must have caused my hon. Friend's constituents. Everyone has the right to feel safe in their local community. Robust legislation is in place to tackle such crimes, from the antisocial-behaviour powers in the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, to criminal damage offences—and, indeed, violence offences, if those are appropriate on the facts of the case.

**Stephanie Peacock** (Barnsley East) (Lab): Residents and businesses in Hoyland have recently been subjected to a distressing wave of serious crime, including vandalism, break-ins and theft. That reflects the fact that there are nearly 600 fewer South Yorkshire police officers on our streets as a result of this Government's cuts. Can the Minister confirm that Barnsley will not get a penny from the Government in this year's funding settlement to recruit more frontline officers? Will she think again?

**Victoria Atkins:** I am sorry to hear about the experiences in the hon. Lady's constituency and I hope that she will therefore be supporting the Government's funding settlement, which is coming towards us and will help give up to £970 million more to policing, with the help of police and crime commissioners.

### Online Crime: Company Responsibility

18. **John Lamont** (Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk) (Con): What steps he is taking to ensure that tech companies tackle serious crimes perpetrated on their platforms. [908663]

**The Minister for Security and Economic Crime (Mr Ben Wallace):** Tackling serious crime online is one of our highest priorities. We are increasing our investment in law enforcement and will set out plans to legislate in the online harms White Paper, jointly led by the Home Office and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. It will set clear responsibilities for tech companies to keep UK citizens safe online, including protection from serious online crime.

**John Lamont:** Technology is at the root of a great deal of serious crime in the United Kingdom. I know that the Minister understands that and will want to work with tech firms to fight against crime committed online. However, does he rule out the suggestion made by some people, including Sir Timothy John Berners-Lee, the inventor of the worldwide web, that if significant change is not forthcoming from the tech firms, we should regulate them?

**Mr Wallace:** Sir Tim Berners-Lee is ultimately right in the sense that, yes, if communications service providers fail to respond to abuse of the internet, they will need to see an increase in existing regulation. We are considering a full range of possible solutions to address the issue, including a regulatory framework as well as broader legal and regulatory changes, where necessary.

### Violent Crime

19. **Henry Smith** (Crawley) (Con): What steps he is taking to tackle serious violent crime. [908664]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Victoria Atkins):** We launched the serious violence strategy last year; it has culminated in detailed work, stretching across Government. It includes the Offensive Weapons Bill and the serious violence taskforce. In addition, we want to build resilience for young people into the future, so we will be launching a £200 million youth endowment fund to intervene on children and young people at risk of serious violence. Shortly, we will consult on a new duty to underpin the multi-agency approach on public health.

**Henry Smith:** Sussex police and crime commissioner Katy Bourne was recently successful in getting a grant of almost £1 million from the Home Office—I thank the Department for that—to specifically address serious offences among young people. May I have an assurance that Crawley will continue to remain a focus of such support to combat serious offences?

**Victoria Atkins:** I congratulate police and crime commissioner Katy Bourne; it is always a pleasure to work with her. That was one of 29 projects awarded a total of nearly £18 million from the early intervention youth fund. The project in Crawley helps engage positively with children under 18 at risk of committing serious violence. The project will establish a network of coaches, drawing together the various agencies working with those young people—again, very much underpinning our approach to tackling serious violence: that we should all be concerned about this matter and working together on it.

**Ellie Reeves** (Lewisham West and Penge) (Lab): The Home Office-funded Violence and Vulnerability Unit report of 2018 noted that a reduction in services that offer positive activities to young people, such as youth services and school clubs, has left a vacuum that gangs are moving into. Does the Minister agree that supporting vulnerable young people and protecting them from county lines requires a cross-departmental approach with funding to back it? That has all too often been missing under the austerity agenda.

**Victoria Atkins:** I am pleased that the hon. Lady recently met my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary to discuss this issue. As she will know from the serious

violence strategy, the taskforce and our intention to consult shortly on a public health duty, the Government take our work to tackle serious violence very seriously.

**Mr Speaker:** Order. The hon. Member for Colchester (Will Quince) was focused intently upon his electronic device, and I am sure he found it thoroughly captivating, but I gently point out to him that he has a question that is not unadjacent to that with which we are dealing now, and that he might care to shoehorn his inquiry into the present.

**Will Quince** (Colchester) (Con): No. 21, Mr Speaker.

**Mr Speaker:** No. What I mean is blurt it out now man!

21. [908666] **Will Quince:** Will the Minister join me in welcoming the £664,000 allocated to Essex from the Home Office early intervention youth fund? Will the Secretary of State keep the situation under review while ensuring that Essex police have the resources required to continue to tackle this issue?

**Victoria Atkins:** I am delighted that Essex is one of 29 projects across the country that have received money under the early intervention youth fund. The project in Essex will help to support the violence and vulnerability project. As we know, it is the vulnerability of young people that often places them so starkly in the path of those gangsters who want to exploit them.

**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan** (Tooting) (Lab): After a worrying upward trend in violent crime in Tooting, I held a crime summit that brought together the police, local authorities and community groups. That kind of joined-up, multi-sector working is essential in tackling violent crime. Will the Minister tell me what the Government are doing to ensure that we work with local groups at the heart of the community to stamp out violent crime?

**Victoria Atkins:** I am delighted that the hon. Lady has taken that approach in her constituency. I have to say that the Government are very much leading on it. I am delighted, for example, that the Mayor of London sits on the taskforce chaired by the Home Secretary. Our approach is that we cannot arrest our way out of this. We want to intervene at an early stage to stop these young people from getting into the clutches of these criminals in the first place.

### Topical Questions

T1. [908684] **Tracy Brabin** (Batley and Spen) (Lab/Co-op): If he will make a statement on his departmental responsibilities.

**The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Sajid Javid):** The public testing phase of our EU settlement scheme was launched today. It is open to all resident EU citizens with a valid passport, allowing us to further test the scheme ahead of full roll-out by April.

We have also announced a significant increase in police funding for the next year. Police and crime commissioners are consulting on plans to recruit around 1,200 extra officers, which is potentially the biggest increase in officer numbers in 10 years.

Finally, we have published our draft domestic abuse Bill to support victims, tackle perpetrators and improve services.

**Tracy Brabin:** Like me and many others in north Kirklees, the Home Secretary will have been shocked and concerned to hear last week about the 55 local arrests in relation to child sex abuse. This vital investigation will put extra strain on the police and the local authority, whose resources are already stretched to breaking point. Will the Home Secretary give my constituents a cast-iron guarantee that the police will have the resources they need to protect victims in the long and short term? Will he also ensure that the perpetrators are brought to justice, with which I am sure the House would agree?

**Sajid Javid:** The hon. Lady is absolutely right to raise that case. The Government, local police forces and others such as the National Crime Agency have a huge focus on child sexual exploitation and abuse. She has raised the horrific case in Kirklees. I assure her that we want to ensure that all the necessary resources are available. The recent police settlement for this year will certainly help, but there is more to be done, including with the tech giants and those who groom our children online.

T2. [908685] **Kevin Hollinrake** (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): Will the Home Secretary join me in welcoming the High Court judgment in the Kotey-Elsheikh case—they are also known as the ISIS Beatles? Does he believe that the judgment vindicates the position he took in the face of fierce criticism in the House and further afield?

**Sajid Javid:** I, of course, welcome the High Court judgment, which upholds my decision on all grounds. I hope that hon. Members who at the time claimed that my decision was inconsistent with long-standing Government policy take their time to reflect on it. With the situation changing on the ground in Syria as we speak, I will do all I can to protect our country and to bring suspected terrorists to justice.

**Carolyn Harris** (Swansea East) (Lab): I am pleased that the Government have finally announced that they have introduced the draft domestic abuse Bill. Cross-examination of survivors by perpetrators will now be outlawed, but more scrutiny of the family courts is needed. Will the Minister commit to including in the Bill an independent inquiry into the culture, practice and outcomes of the family courts in connection with child contact cases, and to listening to the children?

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Victoria Atkins):** I thank the hon. Lady for her great example of cross-party consensus, which is very much to be welcomed at the moment. It is great to hear that she welcomes the introduction of this important draft Bill. It is a draft Bill because we will have pre-legislative scrutiny of it, and the idea that she has suggested I am sure will be looked at by the Joint Committee.

T4. [908687] **Fiona Bruce** (Congleton) (Con): Investigations by the Independent Office for Police Conduct can take many years, meaning that officers often put their lives

on hold although two thirds of gross misconduct cases are subsequently not proven. Do Ministers share my concern about that, and what can be done to address it?

**The Minister for Policing and the Fire Service (Mr Nick Hurd):** I certainly share my hon. Friend's concern. There is widespread frustration among our police officers about that. She will share my view that, obviously, robust investigation of misconduct is important, but we want the IOPC to focus on the most serious cases and to process those investigations faster. That is exactly what we see happening.

T3. [908686] **Teresa Pearce** (Erith and Thamesmead) (Lab): The Home Office has a service standard to deal with indefinite leave to remain applications of six months, unless they are complex, when there is no timescale at all. Reviewing my casework, I noticed the worrying trend of cases being badged complex just before the six months, and therefore having no service standard at all. Will the Minister let me know the current percentage of applications that are badged complex compared with each of the previous eight years?

**The Minister for Immigration (Caroline Nokes):** The hon. Lady asks a very specific question about figures. I am very conscious that service standards can sometimes drive behaviours that we would not want to see, with caseworkers deliberately choosing cases that are less complex to deliver. Sometimes it has been the case that complex cases have not received the attention that we want. We are working incredibly hard in UK Visas and Immigration, across the piece of visas and applications for asylum and leave to remain, to ensure that we drive down waiting times. If she would like to see me to discuss any particular cases, I will be delighted to talk to her about them.

T5. [908688] **Gillian Keegan** (Chichester) (Con): As the Minister might have seen, Oxford University recently suspended grants from telecoms firm Huawei due to security concerns. In the same week, Germany joined the growing number of our allies and intelligence partners by blocking the company from its 5G network. Will Britain take similar action?

**Sajid Javid:** My hon. Friend is right to raise this. A cross-Government approach is looking at safeguarding our telecoms networks. It would be inappropriate for me to mention any particular company by name, but I can say that I very much share her concerns and I believe that we should work with our allies on a co-ordinated approach.

T7. [908691] **Paula Sherriff** (Dewsbury) (Lab): Further to the question of my hon. Friend the Member for Batley and Spennings (Tracy Brabin), last week we saw a further 55 arrests regarding historical and horrific child sexual offences in Kirklees. I have to press the Secretary of State: exactly when will we see the extra resources put into Kirklees so that those offences and others can be fully investigated and the victims of crime can have the necessary protection and support?

**Sajid Javid:** I want to make sure that police forces across the country, including West Yorkshire, have the resources that they need to deal with this priority. I am sure that the hon. Lady will welcome the draft police

settlement, which I think has an additional almost £30 million for her local force, which will go to help with that absolute priority.

**Julian Knight** (Solihull) (Con): The percentage of convictions secured for domestic abuse is at its highest since 2010. What more can the Department do to ensure that we get more prosecutions and thereby more convictions?

**Sajid Javid:** I have listened carefully to what my hon. Friend said. The resources and the settlement that has been announced, with the additional almost £1 billion for police forces in England and Wales, will certainly help, but more can be done making sure that the police have the powers that they need.

T8. [908692] **Liz Twist** (Blaydon) (Lab): Last November, Tyne and Wear MPs joined together in Westminster Hall to raise the funding problems of the Tyne and Wear fire and rescue service. The Minister undertook to meet the chief fire officer. Will he update us on progress in resolving those problems?

**Mr Hurd:** I thank the hon. Lady—[*Interruption*—]and the House for that welcome. I recently met the leadership of Tyne and Wear, an excellently led force, and it will be receiving an increase in core spending of 1.5% this year. My undertaking to her, as to all fire chiefs, is that I will work with them to build the evidence base to put in a credible bid in next year's comprehensive spending review to make sure that our fire service continues to be well resourced and world-class.

T6. [908689] **Anna Soubry** (Broxtowe) (Con): The domestic violence Bill really is an outstanding piece of legislation, and I am pleased it has been getting a warm welcome from both sides of the House, but I am hearing anecdotal evidence that the East Midlands Ambulance Service—and indeed Nottinghamshire police—is not properly using the existing laws. If that turns into hard evidence, would the Minister agree to meet to see what progress we can make?

**Victoria Atkins:** I am extremely grateful to my right hon. Friend for raising this point, and I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, for whom this Bill and helping victims of domestic abuse are a personal priority. I would be delighted to meet my right hon. Friend, not least because we share the same ambulance service, and I would like it to be doing right by victims of domestic abuse.

T9. [908693] **Rushanara Ali** (Bethnal Green and Bow) (Lab): The Government have cut 21,000 police officers, which is the cause of violent crime doubling. Knife crime and antisocial behaviour have brought misery and terror to our communities. Is it not time the Home Secretary got a grip on law and order and invested in our police service before he fast becomes known as the Home Secretary for crime and disorder?

**Sajid Javid:** The hon. Lady will know that action is required on many fronts to fight the rise in serious violence, and that is why we have our serious violence strategy, which includes more than 60 different measures.

On resources, if that is what she really believes, the best thing is for her to support the Government's police settlement.

**Ms Esther McVey** (Tatton) (Con): I, too, welcome the Government's domestic abuse Bill and the announcements today. Will the Minister meet me to discuss issues of continuing emotional abuse where a couple have divorced but share the parenting of their children? Constituents of mine in that situation have some very practical suggestions for reducing such emotional bullying.

**Victoria Atkins:** Very much so. The Bill is just part of our response to tackling domestic abuse; there is a range of non-legislative measures as well. Including emotional abuse in the definition of domestic abuse will help victims of this terrible crime, and I would be delighted to meet my right hon. Friend.

**Jamie Stone** (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): In the remotest parts of the United Kingdom, EU health workers are filling vital roles that might otherwise remain unfilled. Will the Government assure me that these crucial people will be allowed to remain at no cost to themselves?

**Caroline Nokes:** The hon. Gentleman will know that, in the second private beta testing phase of the EU settled status scheme, we made a political priority of those working in NHS trusts and the universities sector. He is absolutely right to point out the vital role that EU citizens play within our health service, and of course he will have heard the Home Secretary and I say repeatedly that we want them stay and are determined to make it as easy as possible for them to do so.

**Tom Pursglove** (Corby) (Con): People in Corby and east Northamptonshire want to see more police out on the beat, catching criminals and deterring crime. What difference does my right hon. Friend believe the additional funding recently announced will make to achieving that objective?

**Mr Hurd:** We are proposing the biggest increase in police funding since 2010. Almost every force in the country is now actively recruiting and delivering what the public want, which is more officers on the streets and more investigators bearing down on crime.

**Chris Stephens** (Glasgow South West) (SNP): *The National* newspaper this morning reports on a female constituent who has been detained and is due to be removed tomorrow despite court papers having been lodged at the Court of Session at the start of the month. Is this the hostile environment in action, and either way will the Minister meet me urgently so that we can secure the immediate release of this constituent?

**Caroline Nokes:** I am, of course, very happy to meet the hon. Gentleman to discuss this case. He will be conscious that it would be inappropriate for me to discuss it on the Floor of the House, but I will meet him privately immediately afterwards.

**Helen Whately** (Faversham and Mid Kent) (Con): In the coming months, fruit farmers in my constituency plan to welcome thousands of migrant workers from the European Union. Will my right hon. Friend assure

me that, in the event of a no-deal Brexit, these workers will still be able to come to make sure we can pick and pack our fruit?

**Caroline Nokes:** My hon. Friend will be aware that, in addition to the rights of EU citizens, which we have secured, we are also piloting a seasonal agricultural workers scheme for those in the soft fruit and growing industries, about which she has spoken to me several times. I am happy to reassure her that we wish that pilot to be successful and will work with her growers to make sure it is.

**James Frith (Bury North) (Lab):** Mrs Amodio and her husband came to live in Bury over 60 years ago. Mrs Amodio had to sign the Official Secrets Act when

she worked at Bury police station. Now retired, she and her husband have been told by this Government to register, apply and pay for settled status. She feels unwelcomed and angry. Will the Secretary of State confirm this policy, and what has he to say to them? Does he agree that we become lesser versions of ourselves as a country with such mean-spirited policies?

**Sajid Javid:** The Government have made it absolutely clear that we welcome all EU citizens who have made their homes here and have contributed so much to our nation. We want to have a scheme in place that shows they are welcome, and we will reflect on what is being said and see how we can continue to improve the scheme.

## Leaving the European Union

3.35 pm

**The Prime Minister (Mrs Theresa May):** I am sure that the whole House will join me in condemning Saturday's car bomb attack in Londonderry and in paying tribute to the bravery of the Northern Ireland police and the local community, who helped to ensure that everyone got to safety. This House stands together with the people of Northern Ireland in ensuring that we never go back to the violence and terror of the past.

Let me now turn to Brexit. Following last week's vote, it is clear that the Government's approach had to change, and it has. Having established the confidence of Parliament in this Government, I have listened to colleagues across Parliament from different parties and with different views. Last week I met the leader of the Liberal Democrats, the Westminster leaders of the Democratic Unionist party, the Scottish National party, Plaid Cymru and the Green party, and Back Benchers from both sides of the House. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster also had a number of such meetings.

The Government have approached those meetings in a constructive spirit, without preconditions, and I am pleased that everyone whom we met took the same approach. I regret that the Leader of the Opposition has not chosen to take part so far, and I hope he will reflect on that decision. Given the importance of this issue, we should all be prepared to work together to find a way forward, and my ministerial colleagues and I will continue with further meetings this week.

Let me set out the six key issues that have been at the centre of the talks to date. The first two relate to the process for moving forward. First, there is widespread concern about the possibility of the UK's leaving without a deal. There are those on both sides of the House who want the Government to rule that out, but we need to be honest with the British people about what that means. The right way to rule out no deal is for the House to approve a deal with the European Union, and that is what the Government are seeking to achieve. The only other guaranteed way to avoid a no-deal Brexit is to revoke article 50, which would mean staying in the EU.

There are others who think that what we need is more time, so they say that we should extend article 50 to give Parliament longer to debate how we should leave and what a deal should look like. That is not ruling out no deal, but simply deferring the point of decision, and the EU is very unlikely simply to agree to extend article 50 without a plan for how we are going to approve a deal. So when people say, "Rule out no deal", what they are actually saying is that, if we in Parliament cannot approve a deal, we should revoke article 50. Those would be the consequences of what they are saying. I believe that that would go against the referendum result, and I do not believe that that is a course of action that we should take or one that the House should support.

Secondly, all the Opposition parties that have engaged so far, and some Back Benchers, have expressed their support for a second referendum. I have set out many times my deep concerns about returning to the British people for a second referendum. Our duty is to implement the decision of the first one. I fear that a second referendum would set a difficult precedent that could have significant implications for how we handle referendums

in this country—not least, strengthening the hand of those who are campaigning to break up our United Kingdom. It would require an extension of article 50, and we would very likely have to return a new set of MEPs to the European Parliament in May. I also believe that there has not yet been enough recognition of the way in which a second referendum could damage social cohesion by undermining faith in our democracy. We do not know what the Leader of the Opposition thinks about this because he has not engaged, but I know there are Members who have already indicated that they wish to test the support of the House for this path. I do not believe there is a majority for a second referendum and, if I am right, then just as the Government are having to think again about their approach going forwards, so too do those Members who believe this is the answer.

The remaining issues raised in the discussions relate to the substance of the deal, and on these points I believe we can make progress. Members of this House, predominantly but not only on the Government Benches and the DUP, continue to express their concern on the issue of the Northern Ireland backstop. All of us agree that as we leave the European Union we must fully respect the Belfast agreement and not allow the creation of a hard border between Northern Ireland and Ireland, or indeed a border down the Irish sea. And I want to be absolutely clear, in the light of media stories this morning: this Government will not reopen the Belfast agreement. I have never even considered doing so, and nor would I.

With regard to the backstop, despite the changes we have previously agreed, there remain two core issues: the fear that we could be trapped in it permanently; and concerns over its potential impact on our Union if Northern Ireland is treated differently from the rest of the UK. So I will be talking further this week to colleagues, including in the DUP, to consider how we might meet our obligations to the people of Northern Ireland and Ireland in a way that can command the greatest possible support in the House. I will then take the conclusions of those discussion back to the EU.

From other parts of this House, concerns have also been raised over the political declaration. In particular, these have focused on a wish for further precision around the future relationship. The political declaration will provide the basis for developing our detailed negotiating mandate for the future and this new phase of negotiations will be different in a number of ways. It will cover a far broader range of issues in greater depth, and so will require us to build a negotiating team that draws on the widest expertise available, from trade negotiators to security experts and specialists in data and financial services. As we develop our mandate across each of these areas, I want to provide reassurance to the House. Given the breadth of the negotiations, we will seek input from a wide range of voices from outside Government. That must include ensuring Parliament has a proper say, and fuller involvement, in these decisions.

It is Government's responsibility to negotiate, but it is also my responsibility to listen to the legitimate concerns of colleagues, both those who voted leave and those who voted remain, in shaping our negotiating mandate for our future partnership with the EU. So the Government will consult this House on their negotiating mandate, to ensure that Members have the chance to make their views known and that we harness the knowledge of all Select Committees across the full range of expertise

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needed for this next phase of negotiations, from security to trade. This will also strengthen the Government's hand in the negotiations, giving the EU confidence about our position and avoiding leaving the bulk of parliamentary debate to a point when we are under huge time pressure to ratify.

I know that to date Parliament has not felt it has enough visibility of the Government's position as it has been developed and negotiated. It has sought documents through Humble Addresses, but that mechanism cannot take into account the fact that some information when made public could weaken the UK's negotiating hand. So as the negotiations progress, we will also look to deliver confidential Committee sessions that can ensure Parliament has the most up-to-date information, while not undermining the negotiations. We will regularly update the House, in particular before the six-monthly review points with the EU foreseen in the agreement.

While it will always be for Her Majesty's Government to negotiate for the whole of the UK, we are also committed to giving the devolved Administrations an enhanced role in the next phase, respecting their competence and vital interests in these negotiations. I hope to meet both First Ministers in the course of this week and will use the opportunity to discuss this further with them, and we will also look for further ways to engage elected representatives from Northern Ireland and regional representatives in England. Finally, we will reach out beyond this House and engage more deeply with businesses, civil society and trade unions.

Fifthly, hon Members from across the House—  
[Interruption.]

**Mr Speaker:** Order.

**The Prime Minister:** Fifthly, hon Members from across the House have raised strong views that our exit from the EU should not lead to a reduction in our social and environmental standards, and in particular workers' rights. So I will ensure that we provide Parliament with a guarantee that not only will we not erode protection for workers' rights and the environment, but we will ensure this country leads the way. To that end, my right hon. Friend the Business Secretary indicated the Government's support for the proposed amendment to the meaningful vote put down by the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (John Mann), including that Parliament should be able to consider any changes made by the EU in these areas in future. My right hon. Friend and others will work with Members across the House, businesses and trade unions to develop proposals that give effect to this amendment, including looking at legislation where necessary.

Sixthly, and crucially, a number of Members have made powerful representations about the anxieties facing EU citizens in the UK and UK citizens in the EU who are waiting to have their status confirmed. We have already committed to ensuring that EU citizens in the UK will be able to stay and continue to access in-country benefits and services on broadly the same terms as now, in both a deal and a no-deal scenario. Indeed, the next phase of testing of the scheme for EU nationals to confirm their status has launched today. Having listened to concerns from Members, and organisations such as

the 3million group, I can confirm today that, when we roll out the scheme in full on 30 March, the Government will waive the application fee so that there is no financial barrier for any EU nationals who wish to stay. Anyone who has applied, or will apply, during the pilot phase will have their fee reimbursed. More details about how this will work will be made available in due course. Some EU member states have similarly guaranteed the rights of British nationals in a no-deal scenario, and we will step up our efforts to ensure that they all do so.

Let me briefly set out the process for the days ahead. In addition to this statement, today I will lay a written ministerial statement, as required under section 13(4) and (5) of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018, and table a motion in neutral terms on this statement, as required by section 13(6). This motion will be amendable and will be debated and voted on in this House on 29 January, and I will provide a further update to the House during that debate. To be clear, this is not a rerun of the vote to ratify the agreement we have reached with the European Union, but the fulfilment of the process following the House's decision to reject that motion.

The process of engagement is ongoing. In the next few days, my ministerial colleagues and I will continue to meet Members on all sides of the House and representatives of the trade unions, business groups, civil society and others as we try to find the broadest possible consensus on a way forward. While I will disappoint those colleagues who hope to secure a second referendum, I do not believe that there is a majority in this House for such a path, and while I want to deliver a deal with the EU, I cannot support the only other way in which to take no deal off the table, which is to revoke article 50. So my focus continues to be on what is needed to secure the support of this House in favour of a Brexit deal with the EU.

My sense so far is that three key changes are needed. First, we will be more flexible, open and inclusive in how we engage Parliament in our approach to negotiating our future partnership with the European Union. Secondly, we will embed the strongest possible protections on workers' rights and the environment. Thirdly, we will work to identify how we can ensure that our commitment to no hard border in Northern Ireland and Ireland can be delivered in a way that commands the support of this House and the European Union. In doing so, we will honour the mandate of the British people and leave the European Union in a way that benefits every part of our United Kingdom and every citizen of our country. I commend this statement to the House.

3.48 pm

**Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Lab):** I thank the Prime Minister for giving me an advance copy of her statement. I join her in condemning the car bomb attack in Londonderry at the weekend, and I commend the emergency services and local community for their response. The huge achievement of the Good Friday agreement in reducing violence in Northern Ireland must never be taken for granted. It was an historic step forward, and we cannot take it for granted.

The Government still appear not to have come to terms with the scale of the defeat in this House last week. The Prime Minister seems to be going through the motions of accepting the result, but in reality she is

in deep denial. The logic of that decisive defeat is that the Prime Minister must change her red lines, because her current deal is undeliverable, so can she be clear and explicit with the House—which of her red lines is she prepared to move on?

The Prime Minister's invitation to talks has been exposed as a PR sham. Every Opposition party politician came out of those meetings with the same response. Contrary to what the Prime Minister has just said, there was no flexibility and there were no negotiations—nothing has changed. [*Interruption.*]

**Mr Speaker:** Order. The Prime Minister was heard and, when there was noise, I called for it stop. The same must apply to the Leader of the Opposition. No one in this Chamber will shout the right hon. Gentleman down. They need not bother trying, because they are wasting their breath.

**Jeremy Corbyn:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. However, I do welcome the commitment that the fee for EU citizens to apply for settled status will be waived.

The Prime Minister was fond of saying that this is the best possible deal on the table and that it is the only possible deal. However, our EU negotiating partners have been clear, saying that

“unanimously, the European Council have always said that if the United Kingdom chooses to shift its red lines in the future... to go beyond a simple free trade agreement... then the European Union will be immediately ready... to give a favourable response.”

The House voted to hold the referendum and to trigger article 50. There is a clear majority in this House to support a deal in principle and to respect the referendum result, but that requires the Prime Minister to face reality and accept that her deal has been comprehensively defeated. Instead, we now understand that the Prime Minister is going back to Europe to seek concessions on the backstop. What is the difference between legal assurances and concessions? What makes her think that what she tried to renegotiate in December will succeed in January? This really does feel like groundhog day.

The first thing the Prime Minister must do is recognise the clear majority in this House against leaving without a deal. She must rule out no deal and stop the colossal waste of public money planning for that outcome. Questions must also be asked of the Chancellor. He reassured businesses that no deal would be ruled out by the Commons, yet he sanctioned £4.2 billion to be spent on an option that he believes will be ruled out. Last week, the Foreign Secretary said that it was “very unrealistic” to believe that the House of Commons would not find a way to block no deal. Will the Prime Minister meet with her Chancellor and Foreign Secretary to see whether they can convince her to do what is in her power and rule out no deal? If she will not do that now, will she confirm to the House that, if an amendment passes that rules out no deal, she will implement that instruction? The Prime Minister agreed the backstop because of her pledge to the people of Northern Ireland to avoid a hard border, but no deal would mean a hard border in Ireland and would break the Prime Minister's commitment. Is she seriously willing to accept a hard border?

Today heralds the start of a democratic process whereby this House will debate the amendments that will determine how we navigate Brexit. Of course, the Government tried to block us ever getting to this stage. They wanted

no democratic scrutiny whatsoever. Labour has set out a proposal—I believe there may be a majority in this House for this—for a new comprehensive customs union with the EU that would include a say and a strong single market deal that would deliver frictionless trade and ensure no race to the bottom on workers' rights or any other of the important regulations and protections that we currently have. As we have said consistently from the beginning, we will back amendments that seek to rule out the disaster of no deal and, as we have said, we will not rule out the option of a public vote. No more phoney talks. Parliament will debate and decide, and this time I hope and expect the Government to listen to this House.

**The Prime Minister:** The right hon. Gentleman says “no more phoney talks.” It would be nice just to have some talks with him on this issue. He makes lots of claims about what has been said in the talks that have been held so far but, actually, he does not know, because he did not turn up to those talks.

The right hon. Gentleman makes a great deal about the issue of no deal. He says that there is a consensus—a view across this House—that supports a deal in principle and wants to deliver on Brexit. That is exactly what I want to sit down and talk to him about. What we need to see is what it is that will secure the support of this House to enable us to leave the European Union with a deal. We are continuing to listen to groups across the House in order to find a way to secure that support.

The right hon. Gentleman talks about ruling out no deal. As I said in my statement, there are only two ways to ensure that a no deal does not happen: one is to revoke article 50, to reverse the decision of the referendum and to stay in the European Union, which would be a betrayal of the referendum decision in 2016; and the other way is to agree a deal with the European Union. It is precisely to find a way to secure the support of this House for a deal that I am talking to Members across the House and that I want to talk to the right hon. Gentleman. From what he has said today, I hope that he will reconsider his decision not to attend those talks.

The right hon. Gentleman complains about the amount of money being spent. He talks about £4.2 billion being spent and how that money should be spent in other ways—I see that the Labour party has put out a press release saying the money should be spent in other ways. What he might not have noticed is that, actually, not all that £4.2 billion is being spent on no deal. If we stopped spending that money, we would not be prepared for a deal either, so he needs to recognise that, actually, the Government have to spend money to ensure that we are in a position whatever the outcome of the negotiations with the European Union, and whether we leave with a deal or in a no-deal circumstance.

I say once again to the right hon. Gentleman and to Members across the House who are concerned about no deal that that means we should leave with a deal and that what we need to find is a way to secure the support of this House for a deal. What is clear from the discussions that we have had so far is the wide variety of views held across the House on this issue.

When it comes to it, we all need to be able to look our constituents in the eye and say that we did the right thing by them, which is leaving with a deal to ensure

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that we deliver on the referendum and protect their jobs. That is what the Government are about, that is what we are working on and that is what we will deliver.

**Mr Kenneth Clarke** (Rushcliffe) (Con): As a supporter of the withdrawal agreement last week, I welcome the Prime Minister's acceptance of the need for change in the light of the result and her reassurance that she will not compromise on a permanently open border in Northern Ireland, and that therefore any discussions that she has with the hard right wing on the Irish backstop will not compromise the commitment to a permanently open border.

Will the Prime Minister also consider reaching out to those remainers who are not yet convinced of her agreement by at least relaxing—if she cannot do a U-turn—her normal rejection of a customs union? I do not see outside powers lining up to do trade agreements to compensate us for leaving Europe. Will she also consider relaxing her resistance to regulatory alignment with Europe? Regulatory alignment is not inconsistent with some tightening up, at least, of free movement of labour. I urge her to be flexible on every front, because there was a large majority against the proposal last week. There are probably more remainers who voted against her than there are Brexiteers, and she needs to reach out to those remainers.

**The Prime Minister:** My right hon. and learned Friend talks about some degree of regulatory alignment. He might not have noticed that, last summer, the Government put forward a proposal that included a degree of regulatory alignment, with a parliamentary lock on that regulatory alignment, and that the proposal raised concerns among a number of Members of this House. Some Members said that they did not consider the proposal to be the proper way forward.

I actually think that what we need in the future is a good trade relationship with the European Union. What we have in the political declaration is recognition that regulatory alignment and alignment with standards followed by the European Union are in balance with the question of checks at the border, and there is a spectrum of where that balance results. I have argued for frictionless trade; there are those in the European Union who have not accepted the concept of frictionless trade, but who do accept the concept of reducing friction at the border as far as possible.

My right hon. and learned Friend also said that he did not see potential trade deals with the rest of the world. Today, I had lunch with the Prime Minister of New Zealand and one of the topics we discussed was precisely a future trade deal between the United Kingdom and New Zealand—[*Interruption.*] Just before Opposition Members start talking about the size of New Zealand, that is not just a trade deal with New Zealand, but United Kingdom membership in the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.

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

All of us share the Prime Minister's abhorrence and disgust at the bombing in Derry over the weekend. We are delighted that the efforts of the emergency services

ensured that there was no loss of life. In the light of that incident, however, it was disturbing to see media reports this morning of at least the potential reopening of the Good Friday agreement. I welcome the Prime Minister's comments this afternoon, but will she confirm that she will seek neither to amend or to add to the Good Friday agreement in any way? Many of us remember the dark days that Northern Ireland went through. This weekend's attack was a frightening reminder of the fragility of the peace in Northern Ireland.

On the subject of talks, the Scottish National party entered willingly into talks with the Prime Minister last week, and we remain ready to engage in those talks on the basis that we can discuss pausing article 50, taking no deal off the table, and a people's vote. The Prime Minister talks about "no preconditions", but in the letters that have gone back and forth between the two of us, she insists that the United Kingdom must leave the European Union on 29 March. That is not consistent with a desire to discuss a people's vote. All preconditions must be taken off the table if we are to engage in meaningful dialogue. We know that the Prime Minister's strategy is now to run down the clock. There is no sign that she is interested in meaningful talks or meaningful change.

Prime Minister, take no deal off the table. She tells me that she has no desire for no deal. The Foreign Secretary has no desire for no deal. The Chancellor has no desire for no deal. The Leader of the Opposition has no desire for no deal. The SNP has no desire for no deal, and nor do the Liberal Democrats, Plaid Cymru or the Greens. Let us stop this charade. To have a people's vote, we would have to extend article 50. It is not true that the only option is to revoke it—although we would welcome that. After last week's result—a defeat by 230 votes—the Prime Minister has not come here with fundamental change. This Government are a farce and an embarrassment, and their leadership is shambolic.

The Prime Minister must now step up. We must extend article 50 and end this impasse by bringing forward a second EU referendum. Do it for all sorts of reasons, but do it for the EU citizens living in the UK and now facing a registration scheme. I am grateful—I congratulate the Prime Minister—for the fact that fees have been waived for EU nationals, after a campaign led by the Scottish National party and our Government in Edinburgh, but it is shameful that people here, many of whom have been living here for decades, are being forced to register to stay in their own home. That is the fundamental fact. Not in our name. Where is the humanity of this?

We in Scotland have another choice. We did not vote for Brexit. We will not be dragged out of Europe by a Tory Government we did not vote for. We might not be able to save the UK, but we can save Scotland. We have an escape route from the chaos of Brexit: an independent Scotland. Scottish independence will result in our country being a destination in Europe—a country at the heart of Europe, while the rest of the UK turns inward, isolated from its European neighbours. We want no part of it.

**The Prime Minister:** The right hon. Gentleman raises a number of issues. He talked about the Belfast agreement. As I said in my statement, this Government will not reopen the Belfast agreement. I have never considered

doing that and I would not do it. We remain committed to the Belfast agreement and to maintaining our commitments under it.

The right hon. Gentleman talked about the question of no deal and running down the clock. We are not running down the clock. I brought to the House a deal that had been negotiated with the European Union, and the House has rejected that. I say once again to the right hon. Gentleman, as I did earlier to the Leader of the Opposition and to other Members, that it is very simple: he cannot wish away no deal. Either we stay in the European Union or we have a deal. I believe that it is right for us to leave the European Union because that was what people voted for in the referendum in 2016. If somebody does not want no deal, they have to be willing to agree a deal. The point about sitting down and talking with people across this House is to identify those issues on which it will be possible for us to make changes such that we can secure support around this House.

I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his comments about the announcement we made today about the fees for applications for citizens. I commend my hon. Friends the Members for South Leicestershire (Alberto Costa) and for Bexhill and Battle (Huw Merriman) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Dame Cheryl Gillan), but the issue was also raised by other Members across this House.

Finally, I will say to the right hon. Gentleman, as I have said before and will continue to say, that for the Scottish National party to stand up and say that the best economic future for Scotland is to be outside the United Kingdom is to fly—[HON. MEMBERS: “Hooray!”] Well, I have to say to every one of those Members who is cheering that thought that that is to fly in the face of economic reality, because the reality is—[HON. MEMBERS: “Hooray!”]

**Justine Greening** (Putney) (Con): I wonder whether the Prime Minister and, indeed, the Leader of the Opposition recognise that with just two months to go, the past week has shown that party politics and Westminster will not deliver a resolution on Brexit, because party politics is not the same as Brexit—it is separate from party politics—so the situation will not change and the House will not find a route forward. The Prime Minister talks about social cohesion, but surely the most divisive thing to do would be for Members to vote through her deal knowing that our communities simply do not want it. Is it not time for us all to be honest about the fact that Parliament has run out of road? We have been debating for two and a half years; we could debate for another two and a half years and we still would not reach a resolution on Brexit. The only people who can do that now, surely, are the British people.

**The Prime Minister:** I recognise the passion with which my right hon. Friend is campaigning on this particular issue, but she is assuming that it is not possible to reach an agreement that will secure the support of the House. The purpose of what we are doing at the moment in talking with parties and Back Benchers across this House is to find those issues—I have indicated issues in my statement—on which we can move and on which we can then find that support across the House. I believe it is right for us to continue

to work for a deal to leave the European Union on 29 March, and for us to do so with a deal that has secured the support of this House.

**Edward Miliband** (Doncaster North) (Lab): As a litmus test of the Prime Minister’s flexibility, may I ask whether, if the House voted for membership of a customs union, for example, she would implement that decision?

**The Prime Minister:** Of course, the point about what we are doing in terms of this process is identifying those issues on which there is agreement across the House and on which the support of the House can be secured, and dealing with that with the European Union, but while also being faithful to the vote that was cast in the referendum. I believe that when we look at this issue, everybody should not only say, “Should we be leaving the European Union?”, but recognise the reasons that lay behind the vote to leave the European Union and deliver on them.

**Mr Iain Duncan Smith** (Chingford and Woodford Green) (Con): I welcome my right hon. Friend’s statement, particularly the part in which she said that EU nationals would have their fee waived—the whole House should recognise that—and also her acceptance that there is to be no change to the Belfast agreement, as I recognise completely that that would have opened a can of worms. As someone who did not support the agreement last week, I welcome the fact that she has also made it clear that she will now go forward and seek further change. In doing that, has she given further thought to the idea that, although she would remain absolutely in complete overall charge, she could insert a senior politician in those day-to-day negotiations to ensure that the political ramifications are taken carefully into consideration?

**The Prime Minister:** The negotiations at this stage are for politicians. Indeed, I will continue to have a role, as will the Secretary of State, as we go forward. What we need to ascertain is where we can ensure that we can secure the support of this House for a deal, and then take that forward to the European Union.

**Sir Vince Cable** (Twickenham) (LD): I, too, welcome the fee waiver and the Prime Minister’s willingness to engage in serious conversations, including about the merits and practicalities of a people’s vote. May I ask a specific question? At the end of last week, the Secretary of State for Defence put 3,500 troops on Brexit standby. Will she clarify what their rules of engagement would be in the event that they face angry and violent demonstrators, and would they be armed?

**The Prime Minister:** It is of course right that the Government are taking the necessary contingency arrangements for the situation. The right hon. Gentleman will find that we are talking about those troops perhaps being able to relieve others who are undertaking roles such as the guarding of certain sites. That is what we are talking about.

**Sir William Cash** (Stone) (Con): On the vital issue of UK tax policy, will my right hon. Friend also reconsider the provisions under which the United Kingdom will embrace EU state aid rules? With the European Commission supervising our Competition and Markets

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Authority, a veto will be given to the Commission over future tax incentives for investment developments such as free ports, airports, and industrial and enterprise zones.

**The Prime Minister:** If my hon. Friend looks back at the discussions that have taken place in the European Union, he will see that it has often been the United Kingdom that has been promoting fair competition, including in relation to state aid rules. The question of those state aid rules and what will be included in any future trade agreement with the European Union is, of course, a matter that we look at in detail in the next stage of the negotiations.

**Yvette Cooper** (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab): The Prime Minister seems to be talking as if she lost by 30 votes, not 230. She says that she wants to give Parliament a say on the political declaration and the future partnership but, to be honest, we have heard all that before. If she is serious, why not give Parliament a say before we finish the article 50 negotiations, not after? Why not put to Parliament some votes on her red lines, including on a customs union; otherwise, how can any of us believe a word she says?

**The Prime Minister:** As I have set out, the correct process, which is provided for under the legislation, is that there will be a neutral motion next week, which will be amendable. There will be Members across the House who wish to put down amendments that may reflect different views across the House in relation to different matters. We will, of course, continue to work on this, and when the Leader of the Opposition said that we were denying any democratic involvement in the process—*[Interruption.]* The right hon. Member for Islington North (Jeremy Corbyn) says from a sedentary position that, yes, we were. Actually, no, even when we get the support of this House for a deal, there will still be the process of legislating to ensure that that deal is put in place, and this House will play a role in that legislation.

**Boris Johnson** (Uxbridge and South Ruislip) (Con): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on her decision to waive the registration fee for EU nationals—I think that that will be very welcome—and also on her determination now to go back to Brussels and fix the backstop, because that is the way forward. Will she confirm that, in so doing, she will now seek legally binding change to the text of that backstop and to the text of the withdrawal agreement itself?

**The Prime Minister:** We are exploring with Members across this House the nature of any movement on the backstop that would secure the support of this House. A number of options have been raised with us by Members across the House. We need to look at those, and to continue to talk with colleagues—with those who have raised the issue from the Government Back Benches, and those who have done so from the Opposition Benches, and particularly, obviously, our confidence and supply partners. There are a number of options; we will look to see what will secure the support of the House.

**Nigel Dodds** (Belfast North) (DUP): May I join the Prime Minister in her words about the despicable and reckless attack in Londonderry at the weekend? It was carried out, of course, by the republican terrorists responsible for the murder of prison officers David Black in 2012 and Adrian Ismay in March 2016. These people have nothing to offer anyone in Northern Ireland, and are rejected right across the board.

On Brexit, I thank the Prime Minister for our meetings in recent days, the good engagement there has been, her recognition that core issues to do with the withdrawal agreement need to be sorted out, her willingness to try to reach a consensus, and the fact that she will go back to Brussels and ask for the necessary changes to be made. Can I take it from what she says that she is really serious about getting a consensus that can get this through the House, with the necessary legal changes to the withdrawal agreement?

**The Prime Minister:** Yes; I can give the right hon. Gentleman the assurance that, obviously, what I want to do is identify the way forward in dealing with the issues raised about the backstop. In my statement, I referenced the two key issues: its potential permanency, and the impact on the Union. I want to find a way to resolve those issues that will command support from this House.

**Alberto Costa** (South Leicestershire) (Con): I thank the Prime Minister warmly for having listened to the concerns that I and other Members have raised on the issue of EU nationals. Given the good will that she has shown on the issue, will she remind the EU of its promises to reciprocate, and will she encourage the EU27 to remove any fees that its member states charge UK citizens?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend has raised a very important point. While it is important for us to give that reassurance to EU citizens here, we must also remember the EU citizens living in the EU27 member states; we will be pressing member states to give reciprocal commitments to UK citizens living there. A number of states have already committed to various ways in which they will provide protection of rights in a no-deal situation. We will continue to press them all to reciprocate.

**Hilary Benn** (Leeds Central) (Lab): Last Wednesday, the Prime Minister said to the House that she would reach out to try to find a way forward on the crisis facing our country, but having listened to her statement, I am sorry to say that while her door may have been open, her mind has remained closed. She has rejected stopping us leaving the EU with no deal, even though she knows that no deal would be disastrous, and she has rejected remaining in a customs union, even though she knows it is an essential contribution to keeping an open border and maintaining friction-free trade. Last Wednesday, the Select Committee on Exiting the European Union published a report identifying a number of alternative ways forward, and recommended that they be put to the House in a series of indicative votes. Given that the Prime Minister has twice asked this afternoon, “Well, what will secure the support of the House?”, will she put those proposals to the vote?

**The Prime Minister:** The right hon. Gentleman knows that the Government will table a neutral motion next Tuesday; that is what is required under the legislation. That is an amendable motion. He again referenced the issue of rejecting no deal. As I said earlier, if people do not want no-deal, there are only two ways to go. *[Interruption.]* It is no good hon. Members chuntering or shouting about this issue from a sedentary position. The sheer facts are that no deal will only be taken off the table either by revoking article 50, which turns back the result of the referendum—the Government will not do that—or by having a deal, and that is what we are trying to work out.

**Andrea Jenkyns** (Morley and Outwood) (Con): Today, the shadow International Trade Secretary visited my constituency and said to the BBC:

“If there is a motion for a second referendum that is put before Parliament, our position as a party is that we would be supporting a public vote”.

Does the Prime Minister agree with me—and, I am sure, many Brexiteers in the north of England—that a second referendum would be a sell-out and cause a huge amount of harm to trust in politicians?

**The Prime Minister:** I do agree with my hon. Friend. A lot of people voted for the first time, or for the first time in many years, in the referendum in 2016, and I think their faith in politicians would be shattered if we failed to deliver on that vote. We have a duty to deliver on that vote in the referendum.

**Ms Angela Eagle** (Wallasey) (Lab): The Prime Minister could reach out by relaxing her own self-imposed red lines, including thinking about other solutions such as staying in the customs union, which would deal with the backstop situation, but she seems intent on trying to get her dead end through the House by playing chicken with her own Brexiteers and what she calls her confidence and supply partners. Will she, first, tell us that she really does want to reach out? Secondly, will she tell the House this: if we do amend the motion next Tuesday, will she respect that decision and put it into effect?

**The Prime Minister:** Of course, as I have said, it is possible for people to move amendments to the motion next Tuesday. We wanted to sit down with all parties and with different groups across the House, because there are different opinions on these issues in parties across this House, and find out where it will be possible to secure support for a deal to take that forward to ensure that we leave with a deal, but underpinning that, of course, is the importance of us delivering on the referendum. I believe that it is a duty for this Parliament to deliver on the referendum, to deliver Brexit, and to deliver a Brexit with a deal.

**John Redwood** (Wokingham) (Con): I think a majority of voters in the referendum voted to leave and did not vote to sign a new comprehensive treaty binding us back into features of the EU. However, I think a big majority in the country would welcome a comprehensive free trade agreement, and use of article XXIV of the general agreement on tariffs and trade, while we are negotiating it, so when my right hon. Friend goes back to Brussels, will she table such a comprehensive free trade agreement and see if that breaks the logjam?

**The Prime Minister:** We have been looking at a free trade area—a free trade agreement—with the European Union. I just want to ensure that that is as ambitious as possible, and that is what is set out in the political declaration.

**Lucy Powell** (Manchester Central) (Lab/Co-op): The only thing we know for certain that people voted for in the referendum was to leave the EU—any other speculation is simply that. I repeat the question that my right hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster North (Edward Miliband) put earlier. Amazingly, the Prime Minister did not even mention the words “customs union” in her statement, but if this House voted either to remain in a customs union or to remain in EFTA or the EEA—all issues that were raised with her by her own MPs when she met them last week—will she adhere to that?

**The Prime Minister:** As I have said, obviously it will be for people to amend the motion that takes place next week and to see whether there is—*[Interruption.]* Can I just say to the hon. Lady that she is making some assumptions about the views of people across this House that have not been reflected by the discussions that we have had with Members across this House?

**Sir Hugo Swire** (East Devon) (Con): My right hon. Friend is absolutely right to reject ruling out no deal. May I also say that for those of us like me who did not support the Government’s withdrawal agreement on the basis of the backstop, if she can return from Brussels with something that is legally enforceable on this one area, I believe that she will carry most of the House with her?

**The Prime Minister:** I thank my right hon. Friend for his comment. It has been clear in the conversations we have had that, in terms of the specifics of the withdrawal agreement, the backstop is the issue. That is why we will be working hard to find a resolution of it.

**Liz Saville Roberts** (Dwyfor Meirionnydd) (PC): The Prime Minister knows that farming is integral to Welsh heritage. It is the beating heart of our rural economy. She must also understand that when she humours the idea of a no-deal Brexit, she freezes the heart’s blood of our communities. When I meet Welsh farmers this week, on what grounds can I possibly assure them that Westminster defends their interests, given that the Prime Minister would evidently prefer no deal to a people’s vote?

**The Prime Minister:** I have given my response on the issue of a people’s vote or second referendum. After we negotiated the deal with the European Union, I was pleased to meet Welsh farmers, and they supported the deal and believed that it would be a good deal for them.

**Sir Patrick McLoughlin** (Derbyshire Dales) (Con): Bearing in mind that the Leader of the Opposition has a reputation for meeting almost any organisation in the world, my constituents found it distasteful that he was not prepared to give up his time to meet the Prime Minister.

The House has given the Prime Minister instructions on a number of occasions. It has given the Government an instruction about holding a referendum and the date

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that we leave the European Union. Will she assure the House that she is doing her utmost to carry out those commands?

**The Prime Minister:** I thank my right hon. Friend for his question. I think that a number of people are surprised at the unwillingness of the Leader of the Opposition to meet me, as the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, when he has met other groups who do not have the national interest of this country at heart. As my right hon. Friend says, I am absolutely working to deliver on the instruction of this Parliament to leave the European Union on 29 March.

**Kate Hoey (Vauxhall) (Lab):** I welcome the Prime Minister ruling out a second referendum, ruling out revoking article 50 and leaving on the table a WTO deal, whether managed or not. However, this is a remain Parliament—the majority of Members of this Parliament voted to remain. Does she agree that one way to show we are honouring what the people said is to speed up the progress of statutory instruments and legislation that need to get through this Parliament, so that we can get out on 29 March?

**The Prime Minister:** We have been laying statutory instruments. Getting statutory instruments through the House requires the usual channels to work together, and I am sure that those on the Labour Front Bench have heard the hon. Lady's interest in ensuring that those statutory instruments are able to get through the House.

**Dominic Raab (Esher and Walton) (Con):** I welcome the Prime Minister's statement and support her determination to return to Brussels to secure changes, particularly to the backstop. Given what she said in her statement, may I urge her to rule out not only revoking article 50 but extending it? That would give businesses certainty and give the public some finality and reassurance that we will leave at the end of March, as promised.

**The Prime Minister:** I hope I can give my right hon. Friend the reassurance that I am working to find a deal that will secure the support of this House, such that we can and will leave the European Union on 29 March.

**Wes Streeting (Ilford North) (Lab):** It is now clear that the Prime Minister is counting on the House of Commons to rule out her red lines because she lacks the political authority to do so. Whether it is her dead deal, no deal, Norway or no Brexit, all the options that lie ahead are substantially different from what people were promised before the referendum. Given that, does she accept that there is not only a practical desire for a new referendum, to break the parliamentary deadlock, but a moral imperative, to ensure that it is the people who agree this country's future for generations to come?

**Mr Speaker:** I apologise that I did not have an immediate recall of the fact, but I wish the hon. Gentleman a happy birthday, and I observe—probably not for the first time or the last—that he seems to be a very youthful fellow.

**The Prime Minister:** I am happy to echo the many happy returns to the hon. Gentleman.

When people voted in the referendum, they voted to leave the European Union and to ensure that free movement came to an end. There were those who voted to ensure that we had an independent trade policy, those who voted to ensure there was no remit of the European Court of Justice here in the United Kingdom and those who were concerned about the money sent every year to the European Union. It is important that this Parliament focuses on delivering on those.

**George Freeman (Mid Norfolk) (Con):** May I welcome the Prime Minister's statement, particularly her commitment to waive the fee required to be paid by European citizens and her commitment to reach out, cross-party, in pursuit of a Brexit deal? We have to honour that referendum. Does she agree with me that while the position of the Leader of the Opposition on Brexit is crystal clear—he is for leave up north and remain down south—many Back-Bench Labour colleagues who have very serious Brexit-voting constituencies are looking for a way to honour the referendum result with us? Will she support those talks in trying to find a moderate, sensible, orderly Brexit that can deliver for the majority of the British people?

**The Prime Minister:** I thank my hon. Friend for pointing out the inconsistencies in the position of the Leader of the Opposition on this particular issue. I am working to ensure that we can deliver and find such a way through that enables us to leave the European Union, to leave in a smooth and orderly way, to leave with a deal and to leave with a deal that is good for people across the whole of the United Kingdom.

**Frank Field (Birkenhead) (Ind):** The Prime Minister is spending time reaching out to the House of Commons. Might we have a chance to reach out to her? During her statement, she made a number of assertions about what the opinions of this House were, but none of us knows what the opinions of this House are. When I table an amendment on indicative votes, might the Prime Minister make that Government policy so that we can openly say—and our constituents see how we are voting, not how we are privately lobbying—what guidance we wish to give to the Prime Minister?

**The Prime Minister:** The right hon. Gentleman says I made a number of assertions in my statement. I made a number of comments that were based on the discussions that we have had so far with people from across this House, and we will continue to have those discussions. I am sure the right hon. Gentleman will do so; as I indicated earlier, there is a neutral motion that is amendable next week. However, the comments I made on the views of people across the House were based on the discussions that we have had. There are further discussions to be had.

**Heidi Allen (South Cambridgeshire) (Con):** I would like to start by thanking the Prime Minister for offering to waive the £65 fee for EU citizens. I have a significant number in south Cambridge in my constituency, in the scientific and research communities, who will be relieved. However, what they will not be relieved about, and neither will I, is the fact that almost a week has gone by

since the vote that was significantly lost in this place, yet we have no further information today about what the Government's position is. Surely we cannot go on for yet another week—that is wasting another two weeks in total—without some direction. Many Members in this House today have suggested a customs union, a people's vote or indicative votes, and the Prime Minister must commit to honouring one of those next week.

**The Prime Minister:** I set out in the statement the issues that had come up during the discussions we have had with Members across this House. We will continue to have those discussions, and we are addressing the issues that I identified in my statement.

**Jo Swinson** (East Dunbartonshire) (LD): I cannot believe in good conscience, knowing what the Prime Minister does about the devastating impact of no deal on our economy and on our security, that she is willing to let us leave the EU on that basis, yet she seems wedded to her red lines and still against a people's vote, which would have majority support if she backed it. With 67 days to go, the country deserves better than a massive game of chicken in the Tory party. When will the Prime Minister recognise she needs to move?

**The Prime Minister:** The hon. Lady talks about the issue of no deal. It is not good enough simply to say that somebody does not want no deal. You can only deliver not having no deal, as I have said, in two ways. There may be members of the Liberal Democrat party who have a different view from me on whether or not we should stay in the European Union—I believe we should honour the result of the referendum in 2016—but the only other way to ensure that we do not leave with no deal is to leave with a deal. It is pretty simple.

**Priti Patel** (Witham) (Con): I welcome the Prime Minister's recognition of the difficulties that have been raised about the backstop, so when she goes to Brussels, is she prepared to reopen the text of the withdrawal agreement in order to address many of the concerns that she has heard from many right hon. and hon. Members of the House with regard to the backstop?

**The Prime Minister:** What we are doing is talking to Members across the House to identify the various ways in which it would be possible to address the issue of the backstop. A number of options have been raised with us, and we are looking at all those options that have been raised.

**Mr Chris Leslie** (Nottingham East) (Lab/Co-op): The Prime Minister says that there are only two ways to rule out a no-deal scenario. Why does she keep leaving out the option of a people's vote? It is true that that would involve seeking to extend article 50, but that would be for the very specific reason of the democratic consent of the British people rather than for no specific reason. On this issue, for both her and Labour party Front Benchers, is this not now a time for leadership and decision making, not prevarication and delay?

**The Prime Minister:** The decision was made in 2016 by the British people that we should leave the European Union. That is what we are delivering.

**Mr David Jones** (Clwyd West) (Con): The Irish Government have warned of the likely adverse economic and social impact on the Republic of a no-deal Brexit given the extent of that country's reliance on the British economy. Since the Irish backstop is probably the greatest impediment to a negotiated Brexit, will my right hon. Friend confirm that she maintains bilateral discussions with the Irish Government with a view to ascertaining, if at all possible, whether we can put forward an agreed position to the European Union?

**The Prime Minister:** We continue to talk to the Irish Government about their position in relation to the backstop. The formal position, of course, is that the issue of customs across the border—dealing with the border—is an EU competence and therefore not an individual member state competence. But of course the position that the Irish Government take will be an important element of any consideration that the EU gives to any proposals that we put forward. We will continue to talk to them.

**Rachel Reeves** (Leeds West) (Lab): The Prime Minister says that she wants to find a way forward but without allowing Parliament to vote on the different options, it is unclear how we can discover where consensus lies. Is it not the truth that any alternative to the Prime Minister's deal—whether a Norway-type model, a Canada-type model, a customs union or a people's vote—requires more time to negotiate or to go back to the country?

The Prime Minister says that extending article 50 is just putting off the decision, but the truth is that, by failing to build a consensus, the only way we can leave without a deal—now that her deal has been so roundly rejected by the House—is to extend article 50. Even at this late stage, will the Prime Minister now agree to do that?

**The Prime Minister:** We are continuing to work to see what deal would secure the support of the House such that we can leave the European Union with a deal. I also say to the hon. Lady that extending article 50 is not the great hope that she has—that somehow it solves everything. It defers the point at which the decision needs to be taken. There are limitations to what will be possible. This is not a decision for the United Kingdom alone and the EU would be highly unlikely to agree an extension to article 50 unless it had the prospect that an agreement, a deal, would be delivered. Talks to ensure that we can identify what deal can be delivered is what we are engaging in.

**Mr Owen Paterson** (North Shropshire) (Con): I welcome my right hon. Friend's comments on Northern Ireland. She knows that if we were to follow the route proposed by my right hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (John Redwood) and did get to the point where we could trigger article 24 of the general agreement on tariffs and trade, we could continue for up to 10 years on zero tariffs and zero quotas. That would allay many of the fears of Opposition Members who are worried about high tariffs under so-called World Trade Organisation terms.

**The Prime Minister:** The question of GATT 24 is perhaps not quite as simple as some may have understood it to be. My right hon. Friend's expectation that it is simply possible to leave with no deal and immediately

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go into that situation does not actually reflect accurately the situation that the United Kingdom would find ourselves in. I continue to believe that leaving with a deal is the best way forward for us in leaving the European Union, and that is what we will continue to work for.

**Mr Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): Is the Prime Minister aware that this is supposed to be blue Monday, the most miserable day of the year in the United Kingdom? But, on this day, may I offer her warmth and cheer? After last week's resounding vote, she has showed her resilience and has been listening and talking to people. I urge her to carry that process on. In this Westminster village, things do not happen overnight, so will she persist? Otherwise, she will have misread the feeling of the House. We will be demanding a vote on the customs union; we will be demanding a vote on lengthening the process; and we will be demanding a vote on the people's vote. If she listens more, we can come to a conclusion in the House that will be good for the country and not a miserable one.

**The Prime Minister:** I assure the hon. Gentleman that we want to continue those discussions and conversations, and to continue to listen, to find what he indicated at the end of his question: a way forward that can be supported by the House and that will be good for everybody across the country.

**Anna Soubry** (Broxtowe) (Con): I am sorry, but this just is not good enough. This whole process is now turning our country into a laughing stock. The people of this country are worried and businesses have none of the certainty that they absolutely need in order to flourish. When the Prime Minister faced the possibility in December of losing the vote, she delayed it and said she would go over to the EU and sort out the backstop. We waited and nothing happened—nothing changed. Last week was a historic defeat. The House has spoken. It has rejected overwhelmingly the Prime Minister's deal, and here we are with another week of can-kicking. Is not the truth, Prime Minister, that nothing has changed?

**The Prime Minister:** We received further assurances from the European Union following the delay of the vote in December. Those assurances proved not to be sufficient for the House—the House rejected the deal, including those assurances. We are now working with people across the House to find the way forward that will secure a deal so that we can leave the European Union in a smooth and orderly way—a deal that is in the interests of people across this country.

**Sammy Wilson** (East Antrim) (DUP): I welcome the fact that the Prime Minister has rejected the demands of the leader of the Labour party to raise the white flag in the negotiations by moving the date of leaving the EU from 29 March. Is she disappointed that, even before she has put forward any plan B, the Irish Government and the Irish Vice-President of the European Parliament have rejected any suggestion that the backstop will be changed? Does she therefore accept that, in the face of such intransigence, we need to adhere to what the people of the United Kingdom have asked for and leave on 29 March?

**The Prime Minister:** It is important that we deliver on the vote that took place in the referendum in 2016. We will continue to talk to the Irish Government because I believe that the best way forward for all of us is to be able to leave with a deal. We recognise the commitments that we have made to the people of Northern Ireland for no hard border. I would hope we will be able to find a way through that can secure the support of the House and the European Union, such that we are able to leave with a good deal.

**Sir Bernard Jenkin** (Harwich and North Essex) (Con): I thank my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister for her statement and for her willingness to engage with those who are willing to engage with her. I congratulate her on the vote last week that she won, namely the vote of confidence, which she won on the basis that she would not engage in preparations for a second referendum, and on the basis that we either negotiate a successful deal for which the House of Commons votes or leave on World Trade Organisation terms.

Will the Prime Minister take the advice of J.P. Morgan, which stood side by side with remain in the referendum, but which now warns that the extension of article 50 would be the worst of all possible worlds and “death by a thousand cuts” for the British economy? Will she ensure that we avoid that extension?

**The Prime Minister:** I had not seen that comment from J.P. Morgan, but I have been clear that it is important that we deliver on the referendum vote and leave the European Union on 29 March.

**Luciana Berger** (Liverpool, Wavertree) (Lab/Co-op): The Prime Minister said earlier that a public vote could damage social cohesion by undermining faith in our democracy. The public already believe that our politics is broken because of how she and her Government have thus far handled this process over the last years. Will she today acknowledge that there can be nothing more democratic than a vote that gives the entire country a final say on her deal?

**The Prime Minister:** Many, many people up and down this country have a very simple view: a vote took place in 2016 and the result of that was to leave the European Union. Many people now—not only those who voted to leave at the time but many who voted to remain—feel it is incumbent on Government and Parliament to deliver on the result of that vote.

**Daniel Kawczynski** (Shrewsbury and Atcham) (Con): Reports from Warsaw suggest that the Polish Foreign Secretary, Mr Czaputowicz, is taking the lead in trying to help the United Kingdom to break the impasse, by suggesting a definitive time for the backstop. Will the Prime Minister share with us some of the helpful things that the Polish Government are doing to help us, and encourage others to follow suit?

**The Prime Minister:** I look forward to exploring in more detail the proposals of the Polish Foreign Minister on the particular issue of dealing with the backstop. We have always worked well with the Polish Government on these and other matters in the European Union's Council, and we want to continue to have that very close relationship with Poland after we leave the European Union.

**Mr Ben Bradshaw** (Exeter) (Lab): On the Union, may I suggest that seeking public consent for a Brexit that looks very different from the one sold to the public in 2016 would do far less damage than tearing Scotland and Northern Ireland out of the Union in a botched Brexit against their will? So may I ask the Prime Minister, is her first loyalty to her party or to the country?

**The Prime Minister:** Every decision that I have taken, I have taken because I believe that it is right in the national interest. I genuinely believe that we should, as a Government and as a Parliament, deliver on the result of the referendum in 2016. I think that is our duty—it is very simple.

**Vicky Ford** (Chelmsford) (Con): Twelve days ago, the hon. Member for North Down (Lady Hermon) warned that, in her view, a no-deal Brexit could be used by those who want to agitate for a border poll, trying to force Northern Irish people to vote to leave the UK. Does the Prime Minister agree that that is a risk, and will she confirm that no deal is not her top priority or, indeed, the priority of the Government?

**The Prime Minister:** The position of the Government is very clear: we want to leave the European Union with a deal—we want to leave with a good deal. The deal that we negotiated has been rejected. That is why we are asking questions across the House, and talking and listening to people about what would secure the support of this House that will enable us to leave with a good deal on 29 March.

**Mr George Howarth** (Knowsley) (Lab): The Prime Minister ruled out a second referendum on the grounds that such an action would undermine social cohesion in this country. Does she not accept that that displays an incredibly jaundiced view of the character of the British people?

**The Prime Minister:** No, it does not. If the right hon. Gentleman looks at the decision that was taken in 2016, many people—17.4 million—voted for us to leave the European Union. It was the highest turnout in a poll for some considerable time. Many people voted for the first time for many years, if not for the first time at all, in that referendum. If we were to go back to them to say that we were not delivering on the result of that referendum, that would indeed damage people's faith in politics—it would damage our democracy.

**Dr Julian Lewis** (New Forest East) (Con): As today is blue Monday, the gloomiest day of the year, will the Prime Minister cheer up at least 17.4 million people, and probably many more, by confirming that beyond a shadow of doubt this country will have left the European Union by 30 March?

**The Prime Minister:** My right hon. Friend has regularly asked me that question, and my answer has not changed. First, I believe that it is our duty to deliver leaving the European Union and, as he knows, there is a date in legislation for us to leave—it is 29 March. That is the end of the two-year article 50 process.

**Dame Louise Ellman** (Liverpool, Riverside) (Lab/Co-op): Last week, the Prime Minister suffered a major defeat. Today, she has not come to the House with any answers. She claims she wants to have extensive discussions on a

variety of issues both inside and outside this House, yet meaningful discussions need time, so why is she refusing to call for an extension of article 50?

**The Prime Minister:** There were two elements in my statement on the question of discussions: the discussions we are holding to find a deal that can secure the support of the House and the discussions we will be having in the next stage of negotiations not just within the House, but outside the House. It is important for us to work to find a deal that enables us to leave on 29 March.

**Mrs Helen Grant** (Maidstone and The Weald) (Con): Does the Prime Minister agree that Members should be mindful that most of us were elected on manifestos that promised to honour the referendum result?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend makes an important point—in one sense, it is a very simple point, but it is very important—which is that 80% of the votes cast at the general election last year were cast for parties that had in their manifestos a commitment to respect and deliver on the referendum result and ensure we leave the EU, and that is what the Government are doing.

**Emma Reynolds** (Wolverhampton North East) (Lab): The words “customs union” were not on the ballot paper in the EU referendum. Can the Prime Minister name a UK manufacturer who has said that the benefits of free trade agreements around the world, even if they were agreed quickly, would outweigh the costs of our leaving the European customs union?

**The Prime Minister:** The position that I believe will be of great benefit to manufacturers and our economy is our having a good trading relationship with the EU and the freedom to negotiate those trade deals around the rest of the world, and that is what we have been working for.

**Sir Desmond Swayne** (New Forest West) (Con): How is remaining in a customs union consistent with the decision of the British people to be no longer subject to the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice?

**The Prime Minister:** My right hon. Friend raises an important issue. I believe one reason people voted to leave the EU was that they wanted to leave the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice, and that is what we want to deliver.

**Alison Thewliss** (Glasgow Central) (SNP): The Prime Minister said that EU citizens in the UK will be able to stay and continue to access in-country benefits and services on roughly the same terms as now. Is she aware that my constituents and many of those of my hon. Friends have been finding it difficult to access universal credit on the basis that they have not been here long enough? Will she look into this, because it seems that EU citizens are already being denied their rights? It is a new hostile environment for EU nationals.

**The Prime Minister:** The scheme that the Home Office has set out is very clear about the rights that EU citizens would have, and the withdrawal agreement, which I think the hon. Lady voted against, also sets out clearly

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the rights of EU citizens upon our leaving the EU, but I will ensure that the relevant Department looks at the issue she raises.

**Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg** (North East Somerset) (Con): I thank the Prime Minister for saying that she will go back to the EU to discuss the backstop in particular. When she goes, will she take with her a copy of the House of Lords report from March 2017 that says if we leave without a deal we do not owe it any money, because that may make it more willing to talk?

**The Prime Minister:** My right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney General responded to the issue of the House of Lords report in last week's debate. He was very clear that the House of Lords report had looked at a particular aspect of law but had itself recognised there might be obligations under other aspects of international law. The advice is clear that there would be obligations on us to pay in a no-deal situation, and I believe that we should be a country that respects its legal obligations.

**Chuka Umunna** (Streatham) (Lab): I listened carefully to what the Prime Minister said about social cohesion and division in our country. We all worry about the far right and the threat it poses to our country, and history shows that a resurgence of the far right usually follows an economic depression, which is why avoiding no deal at all costs is essential. Does she not agree in any event that it would be wholly wrong to allow any group in society to threaten and intimidate us into not following our democratic processes and into not having votes, that this would clearly be unacceptable and that anyone engaging in such threats, violence and intimidation should feel the strong arm of the law come down on them?

**The Prime Minister:** There is an important issue relating to some of the behaviour that we have seen. Members of this House have been victims of it, but others also have been on the receiving end of aggressive behaviour because they appear to hold a different view from those held by other people. It is important that we are able to have our debates on these issues—not just in the House, but in public—with dignity and respect. Yes, people will want to put their positions passionately, but there must be respect for the right of others to hold a different view, and to hold that view equally passionately. However, I also believe it is important, when the House has given a decision to the British people in a referendum, that we deliver on that.

**Mr John Whittingdale** (Maldon) (Con): I thank my right hon. Friend for listening to concerns expressed by a number of Conservative Members and for her recognition that there must be changes in the backstop, but will she also confirm that the aspects of our future relationship set out in the political declaration, which also cause some concern, are not legally binding, and can be addressed and changed in the course of the subsequent negotiation?

**The Prime Minister:** The political declaration sets out the framework for the negotiations in the future, but that has to be negotiated into legal text and, as I am sure my right hon. Friend knows, there are elements

within that text which have not identified absolutely a particular position. In response to an earlier question, I referred to the balance between checks at borders and regulatory alignment. That is obviously a matter for the future negotiations.

**Mr Pat McFadden** (Wolverhampton South East) (Lab): The Prime Minister has set out today, and on many occasions in recent weeks, her implacable opposition to any kind of public vote to establish public consent to the terms on which we leave the European Union through a referendum. Is she as implacably opposed to a general election?

**The Prime Minister:** If the right hon. Gentleman had heard the speech that I made last week in the no-confidence debate, he would know that I made it absolutely clear that I do not believe that a general election is in the national interest at this time.

**Greg Hands** (Chelsea and Fulham) (Con): May I return to issues concerning the World Trade Organisation? One of the things that will need to be sorted out in connection with the question of a no-deal Brexit is what will happen in relation to some of the “most favoured nation” clauses. If the Prime Minister were to put up no tariffs, barriers or checks to EU goods at all after 29 March—which would be very helpful in ensuring that there was no change in free-flowing trade from our side—that might provoke MFN challenges at the WTO.

What assessment have the Government made of the relative merit of carrying on with trade as it currently is in such a scenario, vis-à-vis the risk of WTO challenges? Those challenges would of course not be heard for 18 months, and any infraction could not be retrospective. Does my right hon. Friend agree that it may well be worth while—as long as the study is done—to pursue that course of simply keeping the border open in the event of a no-deal Brexit?

**The Prime Minister:** I know—given his previous ministerial position and his interests—that my right hon. Friend has considered this issue with great care. However, it is not simply a question of the tariffs that we set for items going across our border. Questions of the WTO requirements in relation to customs declarations at the border, and other issues which are referred to in the political declaration, such as issues relating to data, are also relevant to this matter.

**Helen Goodman** (Bishop Auckland) (Lab): If the House votes to take time to consider options other than those that the Prime Minister has been presenting to us, will she accept that that is not an attack, but a sign of the strength of our parliamentary democracy?

**The Prime Minister:** If the hon. Lady is referring to the issue of an extension of article 50—

**Helen Goodman** *indicated dissent.*

**The Prime Minister:** The hon. Lady shakes her head.

**Helen Goodman:** I am referring to Standing Order No. 14.

**The Prime Minister:** But the only way in which it is possible to ensure there is more time in the negotiations with the EU to find that resolution would be if article 50 were extended. Article 50, as I have indicated, cannot be extended simply by the decision of this House alone; it is a matter that has to be agreed by the European Union as well. It is very clear that it would not be likely to allow that extension unless it were clear that there was a deal or agreement that was coming forward as a result of that. As I have said, I believe we should be leaving the EU on 29 March, and the discussions I and others have been holding with Members across this House are aimed exactly at being able to do that with a deal that secures the support of this House.

**Mrs Maria Miller (Basingstoke) (Con):** I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement and the extraordinary work she is doing to shape our exit from the EU. May I just say, in response to the right hon. Member for Exeter (Mr Bradshaw), who questioned the Prime Minister's commitment to our country, that nobody on this side of the House, and very few people outside, would do that?

Can I press my right hon. Friend? If the leader of the Labour party continues to refuse to work collaboratively with the Government, that action effectively makes no deal the more likely outcome in March. Should he not just come clean and admit that?

**The Prime Minister:** My right hon. Friend is absolutely right. As I said, the only way in which it is possible—other than staying in the EU, which we will not do—to ensure that no deal is off the table is to agree a deal. I gave an offer—it remains open to the Leader of the Opposition—to engage in talks with us. They were precisely talks about ensuring we can have a deal so we do not leave with no deal.

**David Linden (Glasgow East) (SNP):** You could be forgiven for watching these proceedings and thinking that the Northern Irish backstop is the only issue that is preventing people from supporting this agreement, but last week when I visited the Glasgow Kelvin College campus in Easterhouse people expressed major concern about the Erasmus scheme and the lack of clarity for them. Not referring to universities, what reassurance can the right hon. Lady give to colleges in this country about the future after Brexit?

**The Prime Minister:** If the hon. Gentleman looks at the political declaration, he will see that we have referenced those aspects of working—continuing to be able to work collaboratively with colleges and universities across the European Union through initiatives like Horizon and looking at the possibility of extending Erasmus. Those are referenced in the political declaration, but they cannot be part of a legally agreed text until after we have left the EU.

**Richard Graham (Gloucester) (Con):** I warmly welcome the Prime Minister's announcement reassuring over 3 million European nationals in the UK about having their fees for registration rights waived. Although the European Commission's line on not being able to determine member states' views on this is well known, the European Parliament's Brexit co-ordinator has stressed that reciprocity for British citizens in the EU is essential, so will my right hon. Friend ensure that the Government hold them to that pledge? Also, I do not understand what all

the discussion about customs union today is about, because the customs union and the relationship on trade and investment comes at the second stage. What we are trying to get over the line is the withdrawal agreement.

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The European Parliament were very clear that citizens' rights was their key concern in this withdrawal agreement. We have discussed those with them and I will continue to press them to press member states, and press member states individually to reciprocate on the issue of citizens' rights. My hon. Friend is absolutely right: there are two parts to the deal that was negotiated—the withdrawal agreement, which is the legal text about how we withdraw from the EU, and the political declaration on our future relationship. Setting that into legal text is indeed a matter for the next stage of negotiations.

**Peter Kyle (Hove) (Lab):** The Prime Minister is against the people's vote because she says there is not a majority in this place and it would undermine social cohesion. If she wants to know the majority in this place, why does she not test it? May I put it to her that, because she is hardly Mystic Meg when it comes to understanding the will of this place, it would be a good thing for her to do? Also, there is only a very small minority—an ultra-small minority of very, very right-wing people—who are trying to undermine social cohesion in this country in order to prevent a people's vote. When did the Tory party start running away from fascists rather than standing up to them?

**The Prime Minister:** I have to say that I think that comment was beneath the hon. Gentleman. Let me explain again why I say what I do about a second referendum. It is very simple. Throughout my political career I have seen other countries hold second referendums on decisions relating to Europe because the first one did not come out in the way the politicians of the time wanted when it was hugely important that people accepted the result of the first one. This House overwhelmingly voted for our referendum and overwhelmingly voted to trigger article 50, and I believe that we should follow through on those decisions and deliver on the vote that people took in the referendum in 2016.

**Mr John Baron (Basildon and Billericay) (Con):** I suggest that those remainers trying to hijack Government business and the Brexit process believe that people did not know what they were voting for when they voted to leave the EU, but they now seem to be suggesting that MPs did not know what they were doing when they voted to trigger article 50, given that the WTO was always the backstop. Parliament cannot become the Executive and the referendum result must be respected by Parliament. Will the Prime Minister therefore confirm, for the sake of absolute clarity on the Benches opposite, not only that we will be leaving on 29 March—she has made that very clear—but that, if the negotiations fail, we will be leaving on WTO terms: terms on which we profitably trade with the rest of the world?

**The Prime Minister:** We will be leaving the European Union on 29 March. I believe we shall be leaving on 29 March with a good deal. We are working across the House to ensure that we can deliver in negotiation with

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the European Union and that we can find a deal that actually secures the support of this House. I believe that leaving with a good deal is the best outcome for the UK.

**Pete Wishart** (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): The Prime Minister knows that Scotland is different. Scotland overwhelmingly rejected this Tory Brexit and increasingly wants nothing to do with its impending disasters. Surely at some point she must accept that, among all the options we have to consider, Scotland must be asked whether it wants to be part of this ugly, self-defeating, isolated Brexit Britain, or whether it should determine its own relationship with the EU as an independent nation.

**The Prime Minister:** We talk about honouring referendums, and actually there was a referendum in Scotland in 2014 which determined that Scotland should remain in the United Kingdom. That should be honoured by all of us in this House.

**Jeremy Lefroy** (Stafford) (Con): In her welcome statement, the Prime Minister said that

“the Government will consult this House on their negotiating mandate, to ensure that Members have the chance to make their views known”.

When she brings the agreement and the political declaration, in whatever form, back to the House, will she consider including those words in the motion for approval?

**The Prime Minister:** I will certainly look at my hon. Friend’s suggestion. Obviously, when there is a deal that will secure the support of the House, there will be a technical issue about how that motion will need to be worded such that it is clear and meets the requirements of the legislation. I think he is looking for reassurance that the agreement to enable Parliament to have a voice in that negotiating mandate is not simply words from the Dispatch Box and that it is actually delivered on.

**Chris Bryant** (Rhondda) (Lab): Another week gone, and still no plan B. There will be no plan B next week, and probably none the week after. The clock is ticking away. Last week, the Attorney General said:

“If we do not legislate for that legal certainty, as a matter of law alone, thousands of contracts, transactions, administrative proceedings and judicial proceedings in the European Union and this country will be plunged into legal uncertainty.”—[*Official Report*, 15 January 2019; Vol. 652, c. 1024.]

Even if the Prime Minister’s deal had been agreed last week, at the rate we are going she stands no chance of getting all of that legislated for and providing legal certainty by 29 March. Please, please, please just own up: you are going to have to delay 29 March.

**The Prime Minister:** Obviously the Attorney General set out that position, and that legal certainty would be provided by the provisions in the withdrawal agreement that was negotiated with the European Union. The vast majority of the withdrawal agreement relates to those sorts of issues, and what I am working for now is to ensure we can get agreement on those aspects of the withdrawal agreement that people have raised concerns about, such that we can leave with a good deal and ensure that we give that legal certainty to all those

businesses outside. In order to do that, however, it will be necessary at some point for this House to support a deal with the European Union.

**Mrs Sheryll Murray** (South East Cornwall) (Con): It has been reported that President Macron is going to use the threat of the Irish backstop to force the UK into giving French fishing vessels continued access to UK waters. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that we are leaving the common fisheries policy on 29 March? Will she also confirm that she will say, “Non, non, non” to President Macron?

**The Prime Minister:** I can confirm that we are leaving the CFP, that we will indeed become an independent coastal state and that we will be negotiating access to our waters. Of course, for President Macron to suggest that he could use the backstop as a means of requiring us to give access to French fishermen would be counterproductive, because French fishermen would not have any access to our waters under the backstop.

**Jamie Stone** (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): I am sure my views on this matter are well known to the House, so I choose my words with care. A week ago, I asked the Prime Minister what, in the event of the UK leaving the EU, Government fund would replace the European structural funds that have been such a benefit to the highlands for many years. In her answer, she said “the shared prosperity fund”. Will the Prime Minister give me an assurance today that the shared prosperity fund will find its way to the needy highlands and islands and not be—how shall I put it?—creamed off for cherished projects in the south of Scotland or near Edinburgh or Glasgow?

**The Prime Minister:** I will leave the hon. Gentleman to debate the issue of which parts of Scotland require funding. The point of the shared prosperity fund is to ensure that we tackle inequalities between communities. We want a focus on raising productivity, which is important across our country, and we will consult widely on the fund, including the details of how it will operate and its priorities, which will be announced following the spending review.

**Mr Peter Bone** (Wellingborough) (Con): All Conservative Members stood on a manifesto in 2017 that said on page 36 that

“we continue to believe that no deal is better than a bad deal for the UK.”

Given that this House decided by 230 votes last week that the Government’s proposal was a bad deal, if the Prime Minister goes back to Brussels and the EU is not prepared to give a good deal, will she honour that Conservative manifesto commitment and leave on 29 March with a clean, global Brexit?

**The Prime Minister:** Of course, we stood on that manifesto, and I have repeatedly said at the Dispatch Box that no deal was better than a bad deal, but I also believe that it is better for the United Kingdom to leave the European Union with a good deal. I am working with others from across the House to see what will secure the support of this House such that we leave the European Union and that we leave with a deal.

**Clive Efford** (Eltham) (Lab): The Prime Minister has said that there is no majority in this House for a second referendum. She may be right, but there is clearly a majority against leaving with no deal. Is she saying to the House that, rather than provide extra time in order to secure a deal that can pass through this House, she will crash us out with no deal on 29 March?

**The Prime Minister:** If the House does not want to leave with no deal, the House must come together and agree the deal that will secure the support of the House, and that is what we are working on.

**Helen Whately** (Faversham and Mid Kent) (Con): The Leader of the Opposition has told us that he would rule out no deal, but he has also said that he would rule in a second referendum. It seems that his support for unilateral disarmament is rather similar to his approach to Brexit negotiations. I thank my right hon. Friend for, by contrast, sticking to her guns.

**The Prime Minister:** I thank my hon. Friend for pointing that out. It is very important that the Government deliver for people and that we continue to deliver. It is interesting that, although the shadow Secretary of State for International Trade, the hon. Member for Brent North (Barry Gardiner), has referred to the Labour party's position on a second referendum, I do not think the Leader of the Opposition has identified what he believes in relation to a second referendum.

**Christine Jardine** (Edinburgh West) (LD): The Prime Minister said earlier that extending article 50 would just be deferring the moment of decision, but does she not agree that in the current situation, when there is no consensus in the House, it is very difficult to know what the will of the people is now, two and a half years down the road and amid this chaos, lack of leadership and indecision? Perhaps deferring the moment of decision is exactly what we need, so she should consider extending article 50.

**The Prime Minister:** The people made clear their will that we should leave the European Union. It is this House that now needs to identify how we can leave the European Union with a deal that will benefit people across the United Kingdom.

**Charlie Elphicke** (Dover) (Con): My constituents in Dover and Deal who voted leave and remain alike have been in contact to express their concern that Members of this House may be engaged in unconstitutional games and parliamentary tricks to delay Brexit or stop it altogether. Will the Prime Minister confirm that, whatever happens, we will leave the European Union on 29 March and that she will always align with the people against anyone in this House to ensure that the people's will and the referendum vote are carried through?

**The Prime Minister:** I absolutely agree that we should be delivering on leaving the European Union, and we have been clear that that will be on 29 March. Those who wish to use parliamentary procedure to try to reverse the vote of the British people need to think very carefully about what they are trying to do, because there is absolutely no doubt in my mind that this Parliament voted for that referendum and voted to trigger article 50, and that therefore this Parliament should deliver on those votes.

**Diana Johnson** (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): With the clock ticking, and for us all to come together to agree a deal that delivers on the promises made in the 2016 referendum campaign and that rules out the disaster of no deal, why exactly will not the Prime Minister hold indicative votes in this House to establish actually what is the will of the House?

**The Prime Minister:** Once again, the position is set out very clearly in legislation. The Government will bring a neutral motion to this House, and that motion will be amendable. We are working to see what deal will secure the support of the House. Of course, it has to be a deal that we can negotiate with the European Union, because a deal, by definition, has to be agreed by both sides. I believe that the right thing for this Government to do is to listen to Members across the House and to work to find a deal that will secure support.

**Gareth Johnson** (Dartford) (Con): Does the Prime Minister agree that enforcing a second referendum would be the most arrogant thing that this Parliament could ever do? It would be totally wrong to say to the people effectively, "You got it wrong last time. Now go away and have another try." That referendum result was not some kind of "take note" memo; it was an instruction to this House. The instruction is just as valid today as it was the day after the referendum.

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. This House did not say to the British people, "Have this vote and we might think about whether we agree with it and will deliver on it." We said, "It is your decision." The Government campaigned for remain, but the Government leaflet was clear that the result would be respected, and that is exactly what this Parliament should do.

**Thangam Debbonaire** (Bristol West) (Lab): The Prime Minister says that she wants to reach out to civil society and trade unions. May I gently suggest to her that, over the next week, she reaches out to the Musicians Union—I declare my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests—to find out what it thinks a future after Brexit should look like for touring musicians? I also suggest that she listens to remainers in general and tries to do her best to take into account what they think so that she can try to heal this very divided country.

**The Prime Minister:** That is precisely why I believe that it is important that we have a deal that will secure the support of this House—a deal that will respect the referendum, but in a way that protects people's jobs, gives them certainty and protects our Union.

**Nick Herbert** (Arundel and South Downs) (Con): Is it not the case that four fifths of Members voted to trigger article 50, and that in doing so, they consciously—or perhaps semi-consciously in some cases—accepted that no deal would be the default option if we did not leave with a deal? If hon. Members have now changed their mind, should they not be open about that and say that they now want a second referendum or to ditch Brexit altogether? If they do not want that, and they do want an orderly Brexit and to prevent no deal, is not the only course open to them to agree a deal?

**The Prime Minister:** My right hon. Friend sets out the position with impeccable logic. It is indeed correct that four fifths of this House voted to trigger article 50—for

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a two-year process that ends on 29 March this year. If people want us to leave with a deal, they have to agree a deal.

**Gavin Newlands** (Paisley and Renfrewshire North) (SNP): This Government have brought us austerity, the benefit freeze, the two-child policy and the rape clause, all the while cutting tax for the richest in our society, yet the Prime Minister has the temerity to claim that it is a fundamental act of democracy—a second referendum—that will undermine social cohesion in the UK. What evidence does she have for that assertion?

**The Prime Minister:** The hon. Gentleman says this Government brought austerity. This Government had to respond to the significant financial and economic crisis left to us by the Labour Government when we took over in 2010. It is this Government who are bringing an end to austerity, and ensuring that our debt will come down and that we maintain lower taxes. I notice that the Scottish Government have been increasing taxes on people in Scotland. They might want to think very carefully about that before talking about impacts on people.

**Martin Vickers** (Cleethorpes) (Con): I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement, particularly her reference to the backstop. I believe that if the EU was prepared to be somewhat more flexible on that, it could open the door to an acceptable agreement. In recent days, I have been contacted by constituents who are concerned that further opening of the negotiations could weaken our position on freedom of movement. My right hon. Friend has always been very firm on that issue. May I invite her to reaffirm her determination to ensure that there is no relaxation of the current position?

**The Prime Minister:** I am happy to give my hon. Friend that assurance. I have always said that I believe that the desire to bring an end to free movement was one of the things that led to many people voting to leave the European Union. This Government will deliver on that—there will be an end to free movement.

**Wayne David** (Caerphilly) (Lab): In a radio interview yesterday, the Solicitor General said that he thought that agreement on a customs union would provide a way to unify this House. What is the Prime Minister's response to her Solicitor General?

**The Prime Minister:** My response is that the discussions we have been having across the House suggest that opinions on this matter and on what to drive forward are more varied than a simple solution such as the one that the hon. Gentleman suggests.

**Maggie Throup** (Erewash) (Con): I am sure that hon. Members across the House welcome my right hon. Friend's commitment to maintaining workers' rights and environmental standards. Does she agree that we can be more ambitious and lead the way on that, but only if we leave the EU with a deal?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I believe that we can lead the way around the

world on these issues, but to do that, we have to leave the European Union with a good deal and then have the freedom to set very high standards.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): I thank the Prime Minister for her statement and for her endeavours. A poll in Northern Ireland just last week shows that 70% of Unionists are against another vote on leaving the EU. Some 71% of Unionists want Brexit and 66% are against the withdrawal agreement, which was so heavily defeated in this House just last week. Will the Prime Minister confirm that she will not ignore the opinion of Unionists, that the backstop will have to be removed, and that Northern Ireland will continue to be an integral part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, on the same basis as England, Wales and Scotland?

**The Prime Minister:** Obviously it is my position and the Government's position that Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom, and we want Northern Ireland to continue to be able to be that integral part of the United Kingdom. It is right that we deliver on the vote to leave the European Union. The backstop has been identified as a key issue and we will continue to work with the hon. Gentleman and his right hon. and hon. Friends, and with others across this House who have raised this issue, to find a way through that enables us to secure a deal.

**Michael Tomlinson** (Mid Dorset and North Poole) (Con): I congratulate the Prime Minister on her determination to leave the EU on 29 March. Does she agree that this has become a matter of trust between the people and politicians, and that if we fail to deliver and leave on that date, that trust will be damaged irreparably?

**The Prime Minister:** I agree with my hon. Friend that these decisions are about matters of trust, which is why I have been concerned about the proposals for a second referendum. I think that a second referendum would damage that trust between the people and politicians.

**Anna McMorrin** (Cardiff North) (Lab): Brexit is a fantasy based on lies. Nothing about Brexit will make our constituents' lives any better. When will the Prime Minister start standing up for what is right and stop running down the clock? When will she rule out no deal and put this decision back to the people?

**The Prime Minister:** I say very gently to the hon. Lady that I believe she stood in the general election on a manifesto that committed to deliver Brexit, and that is what we are doing.

**Tim Loughton** (East Worthing and Shoreham) (Con): I warmly welcome the Prime Minister's announcement about the waiving of visa fees, but will she assure us that the Home Office will not seek to recoup the cost by jacking up visa and asylum costs elsewhere? In response to some of the points made by Opposition Members, does she agree that it is just not compatible for any Member or party that undertook to respect the referendum result in their 2017 manifesto now to claim that they support a second vote that includes the option completely to disrespect the first one by overturning it?

**The Prime Minister:** I absolutely agree with my hon. Friend. First, we will ensure that, as I have said, those fees will be waived, and those who have already applied or are applying during the pilot will have their fees reimbursed. My hon. Friend is absolutely right about the point in relation to a second referendum. It is so important that we show people that they can have trust in their politicians by delivering on the decision that they took in 2016.

**Stephen Timms (East Ham) (Lab):** I do not doubt that the Prime Minister has tried her level best to secure an acceptable agreement, but she has clearly failed—the scale of her defeat last week was monumental—largely because she has been constrained by the national economic interest. Following that failure, surely it would now be right to offer the people a vote.

**The Prime Minister:** We agreed to give the people a vote and that vote took place in 2016. The people voted to leave the European Union, and this Parliament should accept, as the Government are doing, the importance of delivering on the vote that people gave in the 2016 referendum.

**David Duguid (Banff and Buchan) (Con):** When the withdrawal agreement was made with the EU, President Macron almost immediately made a statement contrary to the text of the agreement, saying that unless the UK agreed to allow EU fishing vessels to have the same access to our waters as they have now, talks on a wider trade deal would fail, leaving the UK in the backstop. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that that was an empty threat, that when she goes back to the EU she will stand firm on her commitment that we will leave the common fisheries policy, and that future access to our fishing waters will not be tied to a deal on trade?

**The Prime Minister:** Yes, I can give my hon. Friend that reassurance. In fact, it is clear in the political declaration that the issue of access to fishing waters is separate from the issue of market access for trade. I am also clear that we will ensure that we leave the common fisheries policy and become an independent coastal state, and that we will be negotiating access to our waters in the future.

**Chris Stephens (Glasgow South West) (SNP):** Before Christmas, the Prime Minister assured me in the House that there were adequate civil servants in each Government Department dealing with Brexit, so will she explain why, according to a written parliamentary answer, the Department of Health and Social Care has 385 fewer civil servants than it had on 23 June 2016? What does that mean for future medical supplies in the event of a no-deal Brexit?

**The Prime Minister:** The two points that the hon. Gentleman raises are not linked. On medical supplies, the Department of Health and Social Care has been working with pharmaceutical companies and others to ensure that arrangements are in place so that medical supplies will be available in the event that we leave with no deal. The Government's position is that we want to leave with a deal. We are working on finding a deal that will secure the support of this House.

**Richard Drax (South Dorset) (Con):** Forgive my voice, Mr Speaker. Does my right hon. Friend agree that, if we have to leave with no deal, we are likely to find a far more conciliatory EU after we have left than we are finding now while we are in it?

**Mr Speaker:** I am sorry to learn of the hon. Gentleman's indisposition, but I hope that he will take it in the right spirit if I say that there is a husky intelligibility about him.

**The Prime Minister:** I am not sure whether it is appropriate for me to comment on my hon. Friend's husky intelligibility at this point, Mr Speaker.

May I say to my hon. Friend that it is important for this country to continue to have good relations with the European Union once we have left? Working to leave with a deal that is agreed by both sides will help in that regard. People have focused on the backstop in the withdrawal agreement and often on the trade aspects, but the security aspects—the arrangements with the European Union to enable us to continue to work together on matters such as dealing with terrorism and organised crime—will be important in the future.

**Mr Paul Sweeney (Glasgow North East) (Lab/Co-op):** Time marches mercilessly on towards 29 March. Given the current trajectory, it is not beyond the realms of possibility that we will end up in a situation on 28 March when the Prime Minister will have failed to agree a deal, but also failed to negotiate an extension to article 50. She will then be faced with two options: to see the United Kingdom crash out with no deal; or to revoke article 50. Only one of those in that situation would be in the national interest, so which choice will she take?

**The Prime Minister:** I am working to ensure that we can agree a deal with the European Union that will secure the support of this House such that we leave on 29 March, but do so with a deal.

**Nigel Huddleston (Mid Worcestershire) (Con):** Does the Prime Minister agree that the first rule of politics is to turn up?

**The Prime Minister:** Yes, I absolutely agree with my hon. Friend. I hope that there are those across this House who will take that message to heart and act on it.

**Dr Rupa Huq (Ealing Central and Acton) (Lab):** Let us not forget that the fact that the Prime Minister is here at all before us today to explain her plan B, which looks suspiciously like plan A, and the fact that we had a meaningful vote at all are only because she was compelled to do so by Back-Bench action, not because of her own good will. I feel that good will, as well as time, is now slipping away. May I suggest to her that to prevent the old "strong and stable" becoming "scared of scrutiny", and to win back good will from Members on both sides of the House, including many of her own Ministers, she should just rule out no deal now? Where there is a will, there is a way.

**The Prime Minister:** If the hon. Lady cared to look at the record in *Hansard*, she would see that far from being compelled to come to this House to give statements on the matter of Brexit, I have regularly come to this

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House to give statements on Brexit. I think the calculation was that, certainly between October and Christmas, the time was 24 hours. I have given more hours since to this House during debates and statements. I have not been reluctant to come to this House to answer questions from Members on the issue of Brexit.

**Rachel Maclean** (Redditch) (Con): Last Friday, 50 of my Redditch constituents joined me here in Parliament on the bus tour and we held our own series of indicative votes. Out of all the options, the one that was overwhelmingly preferred was to leave the EU with the Prime Minister's deal. When I asked whether anyone had changed their mind from leave to remain or remain to leave, not a single hand went up. Does the Prime Minister not think it is amazing that there are Opposition Members who think that they know more about what is in my constituents' minds than my constituents themselves?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend is a very assiduous constituency Member of Parliament. I note that she takes every effort to make sure that she knows the minds of her constituents, and she is very clear from that that we should be leaving and that we should be leaving with a deal.

**Tom Brake** (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD): Why does the Prime Minister continue to claim that the only way to rule out no deal is either to vote for her deal or to revoke article 50? She knows that that is not the case. A third way is to put her deal to the people in a people's vote and let them choose between her deal and staying in the European Union. Why will she not admit that?

**The Prime Minister:** From discussions around the House, it is very clear that when people talk about a second referendum, there are those who talk about putting forward a question on the deal negotiated with the European Union—we still have work to do, as I said earlier, with people who put “remain” on the ballot paper—and there are those who say that the question should be about deal or no deal; that would not rule out no deal. Then there are those who say that a combination of all three of those options should be put to the British people. We put a very clear option to the British people in 2016; they voted, and we should deliver on it.

**Dr Caroline Johnson** (Sleaford and North Hykeham) (Con): The Prime Minister and others have talked about manifesto commitments this afternoon. Our Conservative manifesto said:

“As we leave the European Union, we will no longer be members of the...customs union”.

Will my right hon. Friend confirm that that is still her intention?

**The Prime Minister:** I absolutely stand by the manifesto commitments that we gave. I believe that it is important that we continue to have a good trading relationship with the European Union. I think there are many ways in which we can do that with appropriate customs arrangements.

**Paul Farrelly** (Newcastle-under-Lyme) (Lab): From her remarks this afternoon, it seems clear that the Prime Minister wants this House to vote for a way forward

that is acceptable to her personally, not just to a majority in Parliament. Let me give her a further opportunity to give a straight answer to a very simple question. If there is a majority in the House for a particular way forward next week, will she honour that vote, and instruct her Government to do so? Why has she been unable so far this afternoon to be straight with people, and to give a straight answer to that very simple question?

**The Prime Minister:** I believe that the Government and this Parliament have a very clear instruction: we should ensure that we leave the European Union. That is something that we have a duty to deliver. That is what I am working on, and on making sure that we can do that with a deal that has the support of the House.

**Mark Pawsey** (Rugby) (Con): I wonder if the Prime Minister has seen the Federation of Small Businesses' survey of its members, published today. It shows that business confidence is falling, and that there are concerns that

“The danger of a serious economic shock posed by a chaotic no-deal Brexit is real and imminent.”

The Prime Minister has shown that she understands the need to provide certainty to business, so what assurances can she give us that there will be a deal in place by 31 March?

**The Prime Minister:** I can give my hon. Friend the assurance that I am working with Members across this House to find the deal that will secure the support of this House. As I have said, where changes are necessary—the backstop is one of the issues that has specifically been raised—I will go back to the European Union. I want to see us leaving with a deal that gives certainty to businesses. Of course, the withdrawal agreement gives businesses the certainty of the implementation period, which enables them to prepare for the future relationship that we will have with the European Union.

**Neil Gray** (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP): I welcome the Prime Minister's decision to waive fees for EU nationals, but once again, she is four months behind the Scottish Government. It is clear—I see it again today—that her pig-headed stubbornness and ridiculous red lines have brought us to this position; it is a mess of her making. Why was she not willing to have cross-party talks two and a half years ago?

**The Prime Minister:** I have said previously that we have been listening to the comments made and the views given. We have listened to the views of the Scottish Government and we are listening to the views of the Welsh Government. The House has rejected the deal that we put before it; we will now work to find a deal that can secure the support of the House.

**Stephen Kerr** (Stirling) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that everyone in this House who values our precious Union should remember that the Scottish nationalists will seek to take full advantage of any failure of this House to deliver an orderly Brexit to break up our United Kingdom, and that we should all redouble our efforts to find a way forward that protects and strengthens the United Kingdom?

**The Prime Minister:** I absolutely agree with my hon. Friend. What we again see, and have seen in this House in recent weeks, is Scottish nationalists having only one interest: trying to break up our United Kingdom. Our United Kingdom is indeed precious, and membership of our United Kingdom is in the economic interests of the constituents of all the SNP Members of this House.

**Jonathan Reynolds** (Stalybridge and Hyde) (Lab/Co-op): The Prime Minister is still refusing to countenance any form of new customs union. Putting aside her interpretation of the referendum result on that point, because that is contested, could she give us any examples of specific products that she feels British consumers are currently paying too much for as a result of the common commercial policy—bearing in mind that things like clothing from Bangladesh are incredibly cheap in British shops—because the benefits of leaving a customs union are unclear, but the costs are evidently extremely high?

**The Prime Minister:** The benefit of not being part of the common commercial policy within the customs union of the European Union is that it will enable us to negotiate trade deals on our own behalf around the rest of the world. We are working to ensure that the arrangements—agreements—that are already in place between the European Union and countries around the world will be transitioned to the United Kingdom when we leave the European Union, and then we will work to enhance those trade deals with many around the world.

**Sir Oliver Heald** (North East Hertfordshire) (Con): May I thank the Prime Minister for the change to the fees, which I think could be very welcome across the House? Does she agree that when we had the cross-party meeting of manufacturing MPs, it was clear that there were a significant number of Labour Members who wanted to see a deal? Does she agree that it is really for the Leader of the Opposition actually to try to represent his colleagues, and he should go to these meetings? It is time to talk across the aisle.

**The Prime Minister:** I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for pointing that out. It is indeed the case that there were many Labour Members at that meeting who wanted to see us leaving with a deal. I have invited the Leader of the Opposition to come to talk to me about how we can find a deal that actually secures support across this House, and I think that in representing his Members he should be willing to talk.

**Brendan O'Hara** (Argyll and Bute) (SNP): Despite last week's historic defeat, the Prime Minister still seems hell-bent on indulging in an ill-conceived and potentially catastrophic game of Russian roulette with the lives of millions of people. Given the impasse that we are in, and with time running out, why is she so fearful of having meaningful talks, without preconditions, with others in this place—talks that can include ruling out no deal, extending article 50, and the possibility of a second referendum?

**The Prime Minister:** We are not being fearful of having talks. We have invited people to talk, without preconditions. If the hon. Gentleman is talking about ruling out no deal, there are only two ways to rule out

no deal—either we stay in the European Union or we have a deal. I want to see those talks so that we can ensure that we have a deal.

**Dan Jarvis** (Barnsley Central) (Lab): In her statement, the Prime Minister said that she would “look for further ways to engage...regional representatives in England.” I declare an interest as one of them. What I have not heard her say today, or on other occasions, is how she thinks we can reset the relationship between Westminster and the rest of the country. How does she think that we can do this, and what is she going to do to ensure that people right around our country feel that they can take control of their lives and their own futures?

**The Prime Minister:** We have already been exploring in various ways how we can involve the elected city and regional Mayors in discussions that take place about a number of matters relating to the United Kingdom. When it comes to the shared prosperity fund, the hon. Gentleman will be able to input into that consultation any views that he might have about how we can ensure that the views of all parts of the United Kingdom are reflected in that.

**Geraint Davies** (Swansea West) (Lab/Co-op): Having been the trade rapporteur for the Council of Europe to the WTO, can I gently say to the Prime Minister that in the event of a no-deal Brexit we would end up with our rules being made by a Council of Ministers where we would have less say, administered by a Commission where we would have fewer appointees, and enforced by a panel of judges that would not be democratically elected and would overrule British courts? Is this not a betrayal of the people who voted leave, because no deal would not only invoke a hard border in Northern Ireland but mean losing control? Leavers in Swansea are saying to me that they want a vote on a deal to find out whether the promises being made are delivering on their reasonable expectations—because, frankly, they are not.

**The Prime Minister:** The expectations of ensuring that we have a smooth and orderly Brexit and deliver the opportunities of Brexit are best delivered by having a deal. The work we are doing currently is to see what deal will secure the support of the House, but it will be for Members of the House once again to think about what they say to their constituents if they fail to support a deal that enables us to leave in that smooth and orderly way.

**Dr Lisa Cameron** (East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow) (SNP): Given that the Prime Minister is engaged in protracted discussions with the EU and Members of this House on the backstop, which seem to have been going on for as long as I can remember and are likely to go on for some time, it seems likely that an extension of article 50 will be required. Will she raise that with the EU? By which date does she believe that Parliament would have to agree on a deal for that extension not to be required?

**The Prime Minister:** The hon. Lady's question makes certain assumptions about what will happen. I am working to ensure that we get a deal across the House. I hope

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that all parties will be prepared to enter those talks and to work with us to ensure we have a deal that secures the support of the House.

**Ged Killen** (Rutherglen and Hamilton West) (Lab/Co-op): I welcome the decision to waive the fee for the EU settlement scheme, even if it should never have been implemented in the first place. I have spoken to several EU citizens who are completely unaware of the scheme, and problems with it are already being reported. Does the Prime Minister agree with EU citizens' groups who say that the Government's communication about the scheme is inadequate and that vulnerable people who are unable to prove their right to be in this country could face problems?

**The Prime Minister:** We have been working very closely with groups such as the 3million to ensure that we get the message out about the scheme for EU citizens who currently live here and about their rights. Of course, those rights were enshrined in the withdrawal agreement that was rejected by the House last week. We will continue to work to communicate to people what the scheme is and the requirements, in terms of people being able to show their status and get settled status, and to make sure that people know the decision that has been taken in relation to the fee.

**Chris Law** (Dundee West) (SNP): Both Dundee University and Abertay University in my city have been horrified to learn today that a no-deal scenario is still on the table. Indeed, university leaders have united to tell the Prime Minister that a no-deal Brexit could lead to

“an academic, cultural and scientific setback from which it would take decades to recover”.

Which part of that does the Prime Minister not understand?

**The Prime Minister:** If the hon. Gentleman is concerned about the universities in his constituency and the potential impact of no deal, he needs to ensure that we leave the European Union with a deal. We are working to ensure we get a deal that can be supported across the House. I assume from what he says that when a deal comes back to the House, he will support it.

**Debbie Abrahams** (Oldham East and Saddleworth) (Lab): The Prime Minister has said that she is listening, but I have seen no evidence that she is hearing what people are saying. I want to push her on this point. She said that she is not prepared to table any indicative votes. What will she do with the amendments tabled to her motion in relation to no deal and extending article 50? What are her views on a citizens' assembly?

**The Prime Minister:** Of course, which of the amendments tabled to the motion were subject to a debate and a potential vote of the House would be a matter for Mr Speaker; which amendments are chosen is his decision.

On the hon. Lady's second question, as we negotiate the detail of our future relationship with the European Union across many areas that affect not just businesses but citizens, civil society, trade unions and those involved in security matters, we will see how we can work with people to enable their voice to be heard.

**Peter Grant** (Glenrothes) (SNP): I welcome the Prime Minister's renewed commitment to the Good Friday agreement. I look forward to seeing the results of the inquiry into which Cabinet member—because it can only be a Cabinet member—briefed the press exactly the opposite earlier today. Given that 70%-plus of the people of Northern Ireland voted for the Good Friday agreement, does the Prime Minister intend to have discussions with the political parties in Northern Ireland that represent that 70% majority, or does she intend to decide what is best for Northern Ireland based purely on the views of the only party in that country that wanted the Good Friday agreement to fail?

**The Prime Minister:** We speak regularly—both I and, indeed, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland regularly speak—with all the political parties in Northern Ireland.

**Christian Matheson** (City of Chester) (Lab): If the Prime Minister is so concerned about employment rights and if she is so concerned about environmental protection, why did it take two years and a defeat by 230 for them to be put on the agenda? If it is such a desperate afterthought, which it clearly is, why should we take seriously her protestations about being interested in them now?

**The Prime Minister:** The basis of the hon. Gentleman's question is not correct. He asks about—he references—the commitment that we have in relation to workers' rights. Look at what we have been doing to enhance workers' rights: the Matthew Taylor report, because we recognise the importance of ensuring that the rights of workers in the new gig economy are properly protected. Look at what we have done on the environment in relation to plastics: the 25-year environment plan that we have published. We have been working on these issues. We recognise that Members of this House have raised concerns to ensure that greater assurance is given on those issues, and that is exactly what we are going to do.

**Carol Monaghan** (Glasgow North West) (SNP): Today marks the centenary of the first sitting of Dáil Eireann, established after an all-Ireland vote in the 1918 election. In 1998, the people of Ireland once again expressed themselves in an all-Ireland vote, and the Good Friday agreement was approved. I welcome the Prime Minister's renewed commitment to the Good Friday agreement, but a no-deal Brexit threatens this, so will the Prime Minister now assure the House that she respects the sovereignty of the Irish people, and will she take no deal off the table?

**The Prime Minister:** The hon. Lady will perhaps want to reflect on the nature of the question that she has just asked me and on the way in which she has put that question. May I just say to her that this is not a renewed commitment to the Belfast agreement? We have consistently committed to the Belfast agreement, and we remain committed.

**Drew Hendry** (Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey) (SNP): The Prime Minister will recall that the very first answer she gave at Prime Minister's questions this year was in response to my question about the EU settlement scheme. I warmly welcome the decision to scrap the pay-to-stay element of that scheme, but may I now ask her to go a step further? Will she end the stress

for our EU friends, neighbours and colleagues, save the UK taxpayer money, and scrap the scheme altogether—simply guarantee their rights?

**The Prime Minister:** We are guaranteeing their rights, but we want to ensure that those EU citizens are able, in future, to show that they have that settled status here in the United Kingdom. That is why the scheme is so important.

**Stuart C. McDonald** (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East) (SNP) *rose*—

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald** (Glasgow South) (SNP) *rose*—

**Mr Speaker:** Oh, what a delicious choice—two McDonalds. Of course, E comes before U, but on the other hand, C comes before M. I call Stuart C. McDonald.

**Hon. Members:** Hurrah!

**Stuart C. McDonald:** A very popular choice, Mr Speaker. Thank you very much.

Scrapping the settled status fee is indeed a welcome step, but if the Prime Minister is not going to follow the advice of my hon. Friend the Member for Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey (Drew Hendry), will she at least answer the question of why there are no appeal rights in the new immigration Bill for EU citizens who are refused settled status? Will she also answer: why do the Government continue to insist on an application cut-off date, inevitably meaning that the hundreds of thousands who miss that deadline will end up in a situation very close to that faced by the Windrush generation?

**The Prime Minister:** We have set a significant period of time for people to be able to apply under this scheme. I think that that is the right thing to do. May I just say that the hon. Gentleman may want to talk to his hon. Friends? I have just had a question from one of his

hon. Friends that basically encouraged me to scrap the settlement scheme as a whole. Now the hon. Gentleman is saying to me that the settlement scheme should be extended for even longer.

**Mr Speaker:** I call Stewart Malcolm McDonald.

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** And don't you forget it, Mr Speaker!

The Prime Minister is of course to be commended for waiving the fee, as many have asked her to do, but I want to question her on the phrase she used about an “enhanced” status for the devolved Governments. Will it include her—and I mean the Prime Minister—appearing before Committees of the Scottish Parliament? When we talk about the enhanced status for the Government as opposed to the Parliament, will she tell us what concessions the Scottish Government can look forward to, to prove that that is not just meaningless twaddle?

**The Prime Minister:** As I say, I will be meeting the First Minister of Scotland and the First Minister of Wales—I hope to meet both of them this week—when I will be able to talk to them further about the arrangements that we will have in the future for that enhanced role for the Scottish Government.

On a different topic, may I say to the hon. Gentleman that I understand there was some difficulty—that he was the subject of some difficulties—from a particular part of the political spectrum in this country in his constituency on Friday, and I am sorry to hear that that took place? I understand that the police were able to deal with the issue, but no Member of this House should be subjected to that.

**Mr Speaker:** I echo entirely what the Prime Minister has just said on that matter. I think it will be something that commands universal assent across the House, and I thank her for what she has said.

Indeed, for that matter, I thank all 107 Back Benchers who questioned the Prime Minister, and the Prime Minister for patiently responding.

## Northern Ireland: Security Situation

5.55 pm

**The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Karen Bradley):** With permission, Mr Speaker, I wish to make a statement to the House following the terrorist attack in Londonderry on Saturday evening.

As the people of the city and those visiting were making the most of the renowned hospitality on offer, a crude, unsophisticated but dangerous explosive device detonated as brave Police Service of Northern Ireland officers were clearing the area. CCTV released by the PSNI shows teenagers and others passing by only minutes before the device detonated. It is sobering to think that a truly sickening outcome by those responsible was only narrowly averted.

First, I would like to pay tribute to the police and other emergency services that responded so magnificently in the immediate aftermath of the attack. It was through their urgent actions that we are not facing circumstances in which there could have been casualties or even fatalities. A nearby hotel was busy, a fundraising event was taking place in a hall adjacent to where the device exploded and elderly residents in sheltered accommodation were all within yards of the explosion. Those who planned this attack and placed this crude device in a busy city centre have absolutely no regard for the people who live and work there.

Right hon. and hon. Members will be aware that there are a number of security alerts ongoing in Derry/Londonderry today. We are being kept informed of developments by the PSNI, which is working hard, along with other agencies, to ensure that this sort of mindless disruption is minimised.

Let us be clear, however, that those behind the attack will never succeed. Londonderry is a city that has thrived since the signing of the Belfast/Good Friday agreement 20 years ago—everyone can see that—and one that will continue to grow and develop despite the actions of those who seek to sow discord and division. That is why the city has sent a clear message in the wake of this attack—that these people and these actions have no place in their city. Political leaders, the business sector and those offering hospitality to a growing number of visitors to Northern Ireland have all spoken out to challenge those who seek to continue with these violent and futile acts. The wider community in the city have also united their voices in condemnation, and we should all listen carefully to what they say.

To be clear, the city remains open for business. Londonderry chamber of commerce condemned the attack, but was clear that it would not

“deter us from opening today and getting on with the job.”

The bottom line is that voices across the political, business and community spectrum are united. This is intolerable violence, which has absolutely no place in our society. We all want to look forward and build a peaceful future for Northern Ireland. The small number of people responsible for this attack have absolutely nothing to offer Northern Ireland and will not prevail.

Violent dissident republican terrorists operate in relatively small, disparate groupings. Their campaign of hatred and violence is, unfortunately, nothing new. Law enforcement pressure has reduced the number of national security attacks in Northern Ireland. In 2018, there was

only one national security attack, compared with five in 2017, four in 2016 and a total of 16 attacks in 2015. Although there has been a reduction in the overall number of national security attacks in recent years, vigilance in the face of the continuing threat remains essential. The current Northern Ireland-related terrorism threat to Northern Ireland, or NIRT threat, is “severe”, which means that an attack is highly likely. This attack does not change that threat level.

Although there have been many successes by the police and others, it is clear that dissidents remain intent on killing. In attempting to impose their unwanted control on people across Northern Ireland, these groupings also choose to ignore democracy and consent principles that have been, and will continue to be, central to the political process. The Government have consistently made it clear that terrorism will not succeed and tackling it continues to be of the highest priority. We are determined to keep people safe and secure across the whole of our United Kingdom.

Derry is a vibrant city with a bustling economy and an exciting arts and cultural scene, as demonstrated in 2013 when it was the UK’s city of culture. Success breeds success. That is also why the Government have backed Londonderry and will continue to do so. Building on the £350 million commitment we have made towards a Belfast city deal, the UK Government are equally committed to delivering a comprehensive package of economic support for Derry and Strabane. A city deal for Derry and Strabane will boost investment and productivity, generate jobs and deliver growth and prosperity, and that activity has been supported by a number of visits by UK Government Ministers.

At the Budget, the Chancellor of the Exchequer opened formal negotiations for a Derry and Strabane city region deal. Those negotiations are under way. It is crucial that this unique opportunity is grasped to unlock the economic transformation that the region needs and deserves. But it is not just the UK Government who are backing Derry/Londonderry. From all across the world, businesses recognise Londonderry for the great place that it is to do business. Whether it is financial services firms such as FinTrU or IT company Alchemy Technology Services, new jobs are being created every day in the city.

Finally, and in direct opposition to the kind of ideas and barbarism advocated by those responsible for Saturday’s attack, Londonderry continues to shine as a beacon of culture and progress on the island of Ireland, as a major tourist destination and as a host for world renowned events such as the Clipper round the world race. As Assistant Chief Constable Mark Hamilton said yesterday, it is not dissident republicans who hold the ground in Londonderry—it is the community. Anyone who has any information should pass it to the police or anonymously to Crimestoppers. I commend this statement to the House.

6.2 pm

**Tony Lloyd (Rochdale) (Lab):** I thank the Secretary of State for advance sight of her statement and for giving the statement on an issue that merits parliamentary time. Like her, I am bound to welcome the fact that no injuries resulted from the bomb attack on Saturday, but that was not for want of care from those who planted the bomb. As the Secretary of State said, innocent bystanders were very close. Congratulations are due to

the Police Service of Northern Ireland officers who went forward at personal risk and successfully evacuated the area and hotel. They deserve our thanks. I join the Secretary of State in that message of congratulations.

It is right that the attack should have received universal condemnation across the different communities in Derry, from the Democratic Unionist party through to Sinn Féin. The House of Commons now has an opportunity to add its voice to that condemnation. As a city, Derry has seen enormous progress over the past 20 years. Some businesses will have been affected by Saturday's attack. Will there be, where appropriate, the necessary support for them to get back up and running? We also know, of course, that some 40 families are out of their homes in the Creggan. Can we be assured that all due care is being taken to look after their welfare?

I now turn to the security situation, which has been severe in Northern Ireland over at least the last decade and more. I strongly welcome the 300 extra PSNI officers that the Secretary of State announced recently, but those were Brexit-related additions who will take time to train. The PSNI is still well below its Patten-recommended numbers. Will the Secretary of State talk to the Chancellor so that the PSNI numbers return to the levels necessary to confront the challenges of ordinary policing, as well as the type of situation that the service faced over the weekend?

This United Kingdom of ours faces many different challenges. My own home city of Manchester saw that not so long ago in the arena, and we know about the attacks that took place outside the House of Commons and other attacks. The security services are under some strain. The right hon. Lady will not want to comment directly on the security services, but may we have an assurance that there is an adequacy of security personnel, particularly as far as Northern Ireland is concerned?

We have to consider things that have a material impact when it comes to security. Symbols and words make a difference in Northern Ireland. I was grateful to hear the Prime Minister earlier rule out any changes to the Good Friday agreement; that is right and proper. However, we still hear talk from Members about the possibility of crashing out of the European Union—a hard Brexit, which will mean a hard border across the island of Ireland. That is irresponsible. I hope that the Secretary of State will join me in saying that that cannot be allowed to happen. We cannot give succour through the erection of a hard border to those who would do us harm.

Normal politics do not function at the moment in Northern Ireland. If the reconciliation process that began 20 years ago under the Good Friday agreement is to advance, we need a return to normal politics. If politics cannot offer change and the hope of change, frankly we give an easy gift to those who would do us all harm. We cannot allow that. I say to politicians from Northern Ireland in this House and beyond that it is now time for them to take responsibility and take the venom out of politics. It is time for them to take the risk of beginning to establish the institutions that we need to make democracy work. Take that risk and get the Stormont Assembly back up and running. People have to commit to that.

I gently say to the Secretary of State that she cannot put the return of Stormont into the “too hard to handle for now” box. There has to be some urgency in bringing Stormont back together. May I ask the right hon. Lady

two specific things? First, will she commit now to resuming the five-party talks that could see a return to normalcy and to politics delivering change? That is fundamental in the light of what happened on Saturday. I also want to make her an offer, which she may want to take up. I will travel with her to Derry to meet local politicians in the local community to show that this House of Commons is absolutely unified in its condemnation of terror and its desire to say that there is a better way. Politics must offer that better way.

**Karen Bradley:** I thank the shadow Secretary of State for his comments, including his thanks to the PSNI, and for his steadfastness with the universal condemnation of everyone in the House of the act on Saturday night and other activities. I will be visiting the north-west again soon, as I do regularly. I will check my diary and see whether we can do some sort of joint visit. *[Interruption.]* It looks as if more than one shadow Front Bencher wants to come. The hon. Gentleman made a good point in saying that that would send a clear message across Northern Ireland about the commitment of this House to their safety, security and prosperity.

The hon. Gentleman talked about the security situation and the numbers of PSNI officers. I want to be clear with him that the Government have always protected and provided funding for counter-terrorism-related work in Northern Ireland—£230 million in the last Parliament and £160 million in this one. On top of that, cross-Government spending on counter-terrorism right across the UK will increase by 30% in real terms over this Parliament. With the Home Secretary sat next to me, I can also give the hon. Gentleman the comfort he needs that there is adequate funding, so that our security services and others can do their difficult work.

I want to repeat what the Prime Minister said in her statement. Despite press reports, there is absolutely no desire on the part of anybody in this Government to see anything other than the full upholding of the Belfast/Good Friday agreement—our commitment and those structures and institutions. I, too, want those structures and institutions to be back where they should be. I want politicians in Northern Ireland to be in that Parliament building on the hill in Stormont—busy, active, making decisions and doing the right thing by the people of Northern Ireland.

I want those talks to resume as soon as possible, not least because things such as the North South Ministerial Council are missing—it is not just the institutions. Those are important matters, as are the ones the Prime Minister spoke about in her statement on our future relationship with the European Union and the role of the devolved Administrations in that.

I want to make one final point to be clear that nobody should try to draw any connection between what happened on Saturday night and any of the discussions we are having in the House or with our friends in Europe. The attack on Saturday night is the result of a threat level that has been in place since before the Brexit vote. Those people have been working and trying to carry out these plots and activities for many years. We need to be clear that those activities are not welcome—the people of Northern Ireland do not want that kind of activity on their streets—and that they have absolutely nothing to do with Brexit or anything close to it.

**Mr Owen Paterson** (North Shropshire) (Con): I thank the Secretary of State for her statement, and for its measured and above all balanced tone. I also welcome the comments of the shadow Secretary of State.

The Secretary of State mentioned the PSNI. This could have been a hideous incident and it is very much thanks to the professionalism of the PSNI officers who spotted a suspicious car and then very professionally moved people away that there was no injury. She mentioned the significant funds that the coalition Government gave to the PSNI and the security forces—we thwarted a large number of incidents thanks to that. She provided a very welcome £16 million just before Christmas for another 300 officers but where is that money? Has it been given to the PSNI and when will it be transformed into real officers on the streets?

**Karen Bradley:** My right hon. Friend has significant experience and knowledge of Northern Ireland. He is right to give credit to the PSNI. I have spoken to the Chief Constable a couple of times over the last three days—inevitably—and I too have paid tribute to those individual officers who turned up for what they believed would be a normal Saturday evening shift to find themselves confronted by that incident. Their bravery and actions are why this was not a far worse incident.

It would be better if I write to my right hon. Friend so that I can give him absolutely clarity on exactly where the PSNI funding is and how long it will take to recruit those 300 police officers.

**Gavin Newlands** (Paisley and Renfrewshire North) (SNP): I thank the Secretary of State for advance sight of her statement.

The utterly shameful and cowardly attacks carried out in Derry on Saturday evening, along with the ongoing incidents in the city, are a reminder, if any were needed, that many of the terrorists have not gone away. For the avoidance of doubt, SNP Members utterly condemn these pointless and shameful attacks and welcome the five arrests that have been made thus far. On behalf of the SNP, I extend our thanks and praise for the rapid response of the PSNI and the emergency services to these incidents. Our thoughts are with all those affected, including the delivery driver whose van was hijacked after a gun was held to his head.

Lords amendments to the Counter-terrorism and Border Security Bill will be debated tomorrow in the House, which I look forward to, but other interventions in the House from many on the Conservative Benches, who make spurious and uninformed assertions on the backstop, the border and the Good Friday agreement, risk making an already fragile situation more dangerous if they get their way. I fully accept that Saturday evening itself had little to do with the current situation, as the Secretary of State said. However, as it is, it is clear that the current vacuum at Stormont is not conducive to a stable political situation. The European Research Group approach should not be given any consideration whatsoever.

In response to the shadow Secretary of State, the Secretary of State said that she wanted to restore the institutions that were formed to uphold the Good Friday agreement, but will she outline what steps the Government are taking to do so and what is being done to prevent groups such as the new IRA from taking a foothold?

The frontline of counter-terrorism is community police, community groups and others. What steps is the Secretary of State taking to strengthen frontline resources and services? If positive action is taken on the last two steps, she will certainly have SNP support.

**Karen Bradley:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his support. It is for future activities but I appreciate it.

I have visited the Strand Road police station in Londonderry on a couple of occasions to meet frontline officers—that is such an important part of the work done by the PSNI. PSNI officers from all parts of the community serve in Derry/Londonderry, which is incredibly important because it means that they can be true community officers on the ground, understanding what is happening through their intelligence work. Although there was a coded warning, the PSNI officers had identified the vehicle and had started to take action. The hon. Gentleman is also right to comment on the delivery driver. It must have been a horrendous experience for a pizza delivery driver to find a gun at his head and to be put in that situation. There can be no excuse for the activities of the terrorists on Saturday, which we condemn fully.

On the Belfast/Good Friday agreement, I reiterate what the Prime Minister said earlier. We are steadfast in our support for the agreement, but the hon. Gentleman is right that there is a power vacuum in Northern Ireland. I want it filled. I am not sure that the ERG has a specific policy on it, but it probably agrees with me in wanting to see politicians in Northern Ireland back doing the job they were elected to do, which is making decisions on behalf of their constituents.

**Dr Andrew Murrison** (South West Wiltshire) (Con): It is pleasing to hear that lots of Ministers and shadow Ministers will visit Londonderry in the months ahead. My Select Committee—the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee—will visit in the very near future. There may be no politicians at Stormont, but there will be plenty in the great city of Londonderry.

Does the Secretary of State agree that the most striking thing in the past few hours has been the reaction of the people of the city of Derry, who are clearly revolted by this latest outrage? Will she consider accelerating the negotiations on the Derry and Strabane city deal, because prosperity is exceptionally important in ensuring that such things do not happen?

**Karen Bradley:** I thank the Chair of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee. I am absolutely sure that its members will enjoy themselves immensely in what is a wonderful, welcoming, friendly and vibrant city. He is right that there have been, and will continue to be, a number of ministerial visits, including from my right hon. Friends the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, and from me.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer visited and wanted to meet people to talk about the Derry and Strabane city deal. My hon. Friend is right that prosperity is the answer. If people see a bright future for their city, they want to stand tall and fight for it. They want to stay and work and enjoy jobs and opportunities.

I agree with my hon. Friend that the reaction of the people of Derry/Londonderry has been extraordinary. It sends a clear message that the people of Northern

Ireland do not want a return to the troubles of nearly 21 years ago. They want to go forward with peace on their streets.

**Nigel Dodds** (Belfast North) (DUP): I join the Secretary of State in saying that parties and communities across Northern Ireland are utterly united in their condemnation of this terrible event. I also join her in praising the work of the PSNI and the emergency services, who have provided and continue to provide safety and security on the streets of Northern Ireland.

I also welcome what the Secretary of State said about this being unrelated to the current debate on the EU. It is also somewhat unrelated to what has happened in Stormont. The murders that I referenced earlier, which were committed by those same people, happened during a time when we had devolution and functioning democracy in Belfast at Stormont. Let us not legitimise in any way what these people are about by ascribing to them a cause. These people want to destroy communities on both sides and they want to disrupt. They want to bring nothing positive and have no agenda whatsoever. Therefore, I totally support what the Secretary of State said in that regard.

**Karen Bradley:** The right hon. Gentleman puts the point extremely well. There is no excuse and there can be no justification whatever for those activities. He is right: these are activities that have gone on for far too long. A very small number of people—but determined people—want to cause damage. But he is right: we are all united. It reminds us that there is far more that unites us than divides us. We should all bear that in mind. I thank him for his comments. I agree with everything he said.

**Sir Hugo Swire** (East Devon) (Con): This is a reminder that there are those still at large in Northern Ireland who choose the bomb over the ballot box. I join in all the tributes to the PSNI and the emergency services for yet again doing such a great job. This is nothing to do with Brexit at all, but the geographical location of Londonderry reminds us of the existence of the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, so will the Secretary of State confirm that cross-border co-operation between An Garda Síochána and the PSNI is important and is working and that, as far as they are concerned, in pursuing these people, there will never be a border between them?

**Karen Bradley:** My right hon. Friend is absolutely right that, when you stand in Londonderry, you see the border is there—it is not a distant thing. People are travelling to and fro across that border every day to go to work and to doctor and hospital appointments, and to see family and friends. He is also right about the cross-border co-operation. The co-operation between An Garda Síochána and the PSNI has never been stronger, particularly as the commissioner of the Garda, Drew Hendry, was the deputy chief constable of the PSNI. It was very moving that Drew Hendry attended the national police memorial, which was held in Belfast in October, in his An Garda Síochána uniform to show solidarity with police services across the whole United Kingdom.

**Mr Alistair Carmichael** (Orkney and Shetland) (LD): I, too, thank the Secretary of State for advance sight of her statement. This incident is of a sort that we all

hoped belonged in the past but, in truth, those of us who are briefed regularly by police and security services in Northern Ireland have long known that this was not just possible but likely. The men of violence only have to get lucky once. This, though, should be an opportunity to turn a negative into a positive. It should be the moment when all parties of Northern Ireland understand the importance of giving a democratic response to a provocation of violence. This is why it is important that we have all the democratic institutions in Northern Ireland functioning. Will she inject fresh impetus to that process, if necessary bringing in an outside mediator to get things moving?

**Karen Bradley:** May I correct the record? I said Drew Hendry, but I meant Drew Harris. I apologise for that.

The right hon. Gentleman is right that the terrorists only have to get lucky once. Our security services and the PSNI have to continue to be lucky the whole time. They do incredible work and, from the briefings he receives, he will know just how much hard work happens. The threat level is “Severe”, which means that an attack is likely.

The right hon. Member for Belfast North (Nigel Dodds) made the point that there is no excuse for the situation, but the right hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr Carmichael) referred to the situation at Stormont and is right to say that politics can overcome violence—it overcame violence in 1988 and it will continue to do so. It is important that the politicians now do the right thing. We want to see them back in Stormont and making the decisions that need to be made on behalf of their constituents.

**Mr Laurence Robertson** (Tewkesbury) (Con): I completely agree with the Secretary of State when she completely disassociates any kind of violence from the Brexit negotiations. I recognise that we cannot in any way give the terrorists who carried out this attack any political credibility at all, but surely it would be better if all the parties in Northern Ireland were taking part in discussions at Stormont. Can she confirm that it is only one party that is preventing that from happening because of the red lines it has drawn?

**Karen Bradley:** I do not want to be drawn by my hon. Friend, who as a former Chair of the Select Committee knows politics in Northern Ireland better than most. I do not want to be drawn on the ongoing discussions and debates. All I will say is that I want to see the parties come back together, and we are working to find a mechanism by which we can do that.

**Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson** (Lagan Valley) (DUP): I echo the comments of the hon. Member for Rochdale (Tony Lloyd) on the need for a return to normal politics—I agree with that—but it is not a normal situation when, in part of a democratic country, we have a situation where five parties form an Executive and only one of those five parties refuses to allow the formation of that Executive. Surely, when we get Stormont up and running again, as I hope will happen soon, we need to look at reforming the system, so that it is precisely what the hon. Gentleman described: normal politics.

**Karen Bradley:** The right hon. Gentleman is right when he says that we want to see normal politics, but there is something extraordinary about the situation in

[Karen Bradley]

Northern Ireland. We have bi-party Government at times. That is something unusual; I think it is unique in the world. He talked about reforming the system. That must be a matter for the politicians in Northern Ireland. The UK Government stand ready to support the politicians in Northern Ireland to do what they need to do and what they want to do in order to make politics in Northern Ireland work and to have a sustainable Executive for the long term.

**Bob Stewart** (Beckenham) (Con): Compared with attacks in the past, this blast was somewhat amateur, in so far as the warning was given to the Samaritans in the west midlands and the blast was not that effective, thank God. Does my right hon. Friend agree that we now need to put all our efforts into identifying who these people are, to stop the encouragement of more people joining them?

**Karen Bradley:** My hon. and gallant Friend is right that this was a crude device. He mentioned the Samaritans. I should make the point that the warning was not given specifically to the Samaritans in the west midlands; when the Samaritans were called, the next adviser available happened to be in the west midlands. That is the way in which the Samaritans operate the system to ensure a speedy pick-up for people who call them. He is right, however, that it was a crude device and that we are very fortunate that it was not more successful, shall we say; we have not seen any injuries as a result of it. We should all be grateful for that.

**Owen Smith** (Pontypridd) (Lab): I join the Secretary of State in condemning this reprehensible act. I agree with her and other hon. Members who have said that there is no political excuse for it, but we are now fully two years since the breakdown of power sharing in Northern Ireland. This has been a salutary lesson and a reminder that violence can fill a political vacuum in Northern Ireland. What is she going to do to try to kick-start the talks that the peace process is built on?

**Karen Bradley:** The hon. Gentleman has significant experience in Northern Ireland, having worked there in the 1990s and 2000s and served as the shadow Secretary of State. As he knows, I continue to speak to all the main parties in Northern Ireland to find a basis on which we can bring the talks together. There is no point in just demanding that the parties come together and expecting that that will work. It has to be done on the basis of an appropriate framework and to have some possibility of success. That is what I am working to find.

**Dr Julian Lewis** (New Forest East) (Con): I appreciate the Secretary of State's remark that it only takes a very small number of terrorists to have a disproportionate effect, and I appreciate the significance and sensitivities of ongoing investigations, but can she tell the House whether any arrests have been made—the BBC has already reported that they have been—and, if so, whether any of those arrested are connected with identified Irish republican groups?

**Karen Bradley:** The PSNI has said on record that it has arrested five people, but it would not be appropriate for me to comment further as the investigation is ongoing.

As my right hon. Friend will appreciate, it would also be inappropriate for me to comment further at this stage because of the ongoing security incidents in the city today.

**Mr Gregory Campbell** (East Londonderry) (DUP): I live in Londonderry, 3 miles from the scene of the bombing, and some of my constituents were in the vicinity, although they were thankfully unharmed. I welcome the Secretary of State's statement, particularly her call at the end for information to be given to the police. May I go further and ask her to respond positively to the offer from the Labour spokesperson? She is aware of a group called Unity of Purpose in Londonderry. All of us politicians regularly meet business people and others in the private sector not only to condemn such violence, but to take steps to ensure that information is given to the police and that those apprehended are brought before the courts. A positive response to that offer would be a physical manifestation of solidarity with us all.

**Karen Bradley:** The hon. Gentleman welcomed me to Londonderry a few months ago—it was an honour to be there—and introduced me to several of his constituents. I was very warmly welcomed. His idea about Unity of Purpose is a very good one, and we will look into it.

**Jack Lopresti** (Filton and Bradley Stoke) (Con): The requirement on the PSNI to investigate the past puts pressure on its ability to investigate and police the present. Given the present threat level, does my right hon. Friend agree that we must find a better way to investigate legacy cases in particular?

**Karen Bradley:** I agree with my hon. Friend, and that is why we have consulted on how to reform the system for dealing with deaths in the troubles—to enable the PSNI to police today, not the past.

**David Hanson** (Delyn) (Lab): This attack should be condemned, and I welcome the support given to organisations in Londonderry/Derry promoting peace. The Assistant Chief Constable has said that the New IRA was involved. Will the Secretary of State confirm that it is a proscribed organisation, and that proscription brings with it the potential for intelligence-led policing and could permit other offences, such as that of supporting those who perpetrated this act, to be brought before the courts?

**Karen Bradley:** I can confirm what the right hon. Gentleman has said.

**Paul Masterton** (East Renfrewshire) (Con): The Secretary of State pointed out that Londonderry was the first ever UK city of culture in 2013. Can she confirm, particularly in the absence of devolved government, that the UK Government will step in to provide whatever assistance is needed on the ground to keep the local economy flourishing, as it has been doing in recent years?

**Karen Bradley:** The shadow Secretary of State raised that point, but I did not respond to it, for which I apologise. He and my hon. Friend are right that affected businesses and residents will need support. We will need to consider exactly what is needed and what the UK Government can do to support them.

**Kate Hoey** (Vauxhall) (Lab): The Secretary of State has welcomed, as we all welcome, the overwhelming condemnation of this dreadful car bombing. I also welcome her clear statement that no one can make Brexit an excuse. We all have to be careful about the words we use in Northern Ireland, so will she use this opportunity to say that she regrets talking about border polls in the context of Brexit? Her comments were condemned by Alex Kane, a very eminent journalist who writes for newspapers on both sides of community, as “both stupid and deliberately provocative”.

**Karen Bradley:** He was talking about rumours and supposition; I have never spoken about any of those matters in public.

**Richard Drax** (South Dorset) (Con): As a former soldier who served in Northern Ireland, may I point out the courage of the police and others who responded to this terrible bombing? The IRA and these terrorist thugs have an unpleasant habit of planting follow-up bombs, which are not uncommon. Unlike others, those people run towards these areas, so there is always the chance of the rescuers themselves being blown up. Does my right hon. Friend have any plans to look at the law surrounding the sentencing of these thugs? In my view, those who have no regard for life should spend the rest of theirs in jail.

**Karen Bradley:** I agree with my hon. Friend, who has personal experience in Northern Ireland, about the extraordinary character of the officers in the PSNI. We should all pay tribute to them for serving every day in the face of that threat. On sentencing, I think he is referring to the Northern Ireland (Sentences) Act 1998, which was agreed following the Good Friday agreement and the referendum of the people of Northern Ireland, and relates specifically to troubles-related deaths, not to the criminality we see in Northern Ireland today.

**Conor McGinn** (St Helens North) (Lab): What happened in Derry at the weekend was a disgrace and ran contrary to the wish of the people of that city and Northern Ireland to live in peace. Does the Secretary of State agree that a robust policing and security response is required, and that we need to concentrate now on ending the political vacuum that allows these anti-peace process elements to thrive?

**Karen Bradley:** Of course we need a robust police response, and that is exactly what we are seeing, but we also need a strong community response, and that again is what we have seen. I know that the hon. Gentleman welcomes the way in which the community has united in condemnation of this act. It has no place and is not what the people of Northern Ireland want. On the restoration of devolved government, as has been said, there is no excuse for what happened and there can be no link to the lack of a sitting Executive but, that said, we do need a sitting Executive.

**Kevin Foster** (Torbay) (Con): When one visits Londonderry, it is remarkable to see what a friendly and open city it is. It is not a city that should be defined by a handful of extremists who have never accepted the democratic wishes of the people of Northern Ireland or the peace process, whatever excuse they might now try

to advance for their actions. Does the Secretary of State agree it is vital that our security services are given all support possible to deal with the situation and that the people involved feel the full force of the law?

**Karen Bradley:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We need to make sure the PSNI has the powers it needs to operate, along with the security services, in doing the fantastic job it does. The reduction in the number of incidents is a great testament to the work of the security services and the PSNI, and we want to make sure that that continues.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): I thank the Secretary of State for her statement. How will she ensure the PSNI has enough resources to investigate not simply this despicable incident, but the terrorist cell going by the name of the New IRA? What Home Office support has been sought to make available all the skills and resources needed to uncover and deal with the terrorist cell on British soil? Have any discussions taken place with the Garda Síochána to prevent IRA activity in Donegal, just across the border, in terms of weapons, bomb-making materials and training?

**Karen Bradley:** A number of the hon. Gentleman's questions are of an operational nature and it would not be appropriate for me to comment on operational details, suffice it to say that the Government stand four-square behind the PSNI in the work it does.

**Bill Esterson** (Sefton Central) (Lab): The 300 extra officers announced have been welcomed, including by constituents of mine from Northern Ireland, but they are for Brexit planning. As my hon. Friend the shadow Secretary of State said, the number of officers is still below the number recommended for the PSNI. In the Secretary of State's conversations with the police and security services, how many more police officers do they say they want to deal with the ongoing security threat?

**Karen Bradley:** The PSNI and the security services do a fantastic job every single day in thwarting plots to disrupt life and to cause injury and harm to innocent civilians in the way we saw on Saturday night. As was said earlier, the terrorists need to get lucky only once; we must work relentlessly. The Government consider business cases for additional resources, as they do all such business cases, to determine what is appropriate.

**Ian Paisley** (North Antrim) (DUP): The Secretary of State will know that there is a severe terror threat in Northern Ireland, but only a moderate terror threat here. Will there be any alteration in the terror threat here as a result of Northern Ireland terror that could permeate the national border?

**Karen Bradley:** The hon. Gentleman is right to say that the threat from Northern Ireland-related terrorism in Northern Ireland is severe, but the threat from Northern Ireland-related terrorism in Great Britain is moderate. Those threat levels are assessed independently of the Government. We are governed by the assessments of the security services and others in determining the threat levels.

**Sammy Wilson** (East Antrim) (DUP): The current Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar, has overseen a deterioration in cross-border relations because of his belligerent behaviour towards Britain during the Brexit negotiations. Notwithstanding the hysterical reaction of the Irish Government to Britain's decision to leave the EU, can the Secretary of State assure us that, not just at a police level but at a political level, security co-operation continues?

**Karen Bradley:** All I can say is that relations between the Police Service of Northern Ireland and An Garda Síochána are at an all-time high and continue to be good. They work towards the same ends: to thwart the terrorists wherever they may be operating.

**Mike Amesbury** (Weaver Vale) (Lab): I join in the condemnation from Members on both sides of the House of this appalling terrorist attack, and welcome the strong community response from the good people of Derry. The Secretary of State referred to ongoing negotiations for a city deal. What progress has been made in those negotiations?

**Karen Bradley:** All city regions that apply for city deals must go through a process, but negotiations are ongoing, and work is being done by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Treasury to ensure that the Derry and Strabane city deal can be delivered.

**Emma Little Pengelly** (Belfast South) (DUP): Last week I met representatives of the Department of Justice in Northern Ireland to discuss the fantastic job that police officers and the Prison Service do there in very difficult circumstances, in the face of the incredible threat posed by the terrorists. As the Secretary of State will know, they have not received a pay award for some years, unlike police and prison officers across the rest of the United Kingdom. One reason for that is the absence of any Minister, but another is budgetary. Will the Secretary of State undertake to do all that she can, particularly in the current budget round, to ensure that police and prison officers working in those conditions are given the reward that they deserve?

**Karen Bradley:** The hon. Lady is right to mention not just the PSNI and the security services, but the prison officers who are working under immense pressure and do a fantastic job. She is also right to highlight the decisions that need to be taken by Ministers in Northern Ireland with regard to public sector pay. The UK

Government are currently undertaking budget-related work. There are restrictions and limits when it comes to what I can do as Secretary of State, because many of these matters are devolved, but I note the points that the hon. Lady raises.

**Gavin Robinson** (Belfast East) (DUP): I echo the condemnation that has been expressed, and, indeed, the praise for the police and other emergency services. As my party's Defence spokesperson, may I specifically mention the ammunition technical officers who are deployed all too frequently in Northern Ireland? They were deployed three times a week in 2015 and once a week in 2016, and they are still being called regularly—every week—to a dangerous situation, be that related to bombs, improvised explosive devices, under-car booby traps or hoaxes. I believe it was wrong when, in 2017, the Cabinet Office refused to honour those great servicemen with a general service medal. Given their activities last night, two years ago—when Adrian Ismay was killed in my constituency—and each and every week in dealing with an ongoing terrorist threat, may I ask the Secretary of State to engage with the Defence Secretary and the Cabinet Office to right that wrong?

**Karen Bradley:** The hon. Gentleman refers to yet more incredibly brave individuals who work hard to ensure that we are all safe, and that the people of Northern Ireland, in particular, can sleep soundly in their beds. Sadly, on Saturday night, a number of people managed to get through so that some were not able to do that, which is something that we do not want to see. As for the hon. Gentleman's specific point about recognition for those individuals, I suggest that he takes it up with the Secretary of State for Defence, but I will raise it with my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Cabinet Office as well.

## BILL PRESENTED

### EUROPEAN UNION (WITHDRAWAL) (No. 3)

#### *Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)*

Yvette Cooper, supported by Nicky Morgan, Norman Lamb, Hilary Benn, Nick Boles, Liz Kendall and Sir Oliver Letwin, presented a Bill to make provision in connection with the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union.

*Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time tomorrow, and to be printed (Bill 321).*

## Healthcare (International Arrangements) Bill

*Consideration of Bill, not amended in the Public Bill Committee.*

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Lindsay Hoyle):** I should inform the House that notification has been received that the Scottish Parliament has agreed to the legislative consent motion in respect of this Bill. Copies will be available in the Vote Office.

### New Clause 1

#### ANNUAL REPORT ON THE COST OF HEALTHCARE ARRANGEMENTS

(1) The Secretary of State must lay before Parliament an annual report setting out all expenditure and income arising from each healthcare arrangement made under this Act.

(2) The annual report laid under subsection (1) must include, but is not limited to—

- (a) all payments made by the government of the United Kingdom in respect of healthcare arrangements for healthcare provided outside the United Kingdom to British citizens;
- (b) all payments received by the government of the United Kingdom in reimbursement of healthcare provided by the United Kingdom to all non-British citizens;
- (c) the number of British citizens treated under healthcare arrangements outside of the United Kingdom;
- (d) the number of non-British citizens treated under healthcare arrangements within the United Kingdom;
- (e) any and all outstanding payments owed to or by the government of the United Kingdom in respect of healthcare arrangements made before this Act receives Royal Assent; and
- (f) any and all administrative costs faced by NHS Trusts in respect of healthcare arrangements.

(3) The information required under section 2(a) and 2(b) above must be listed by individual country in every annual report.”—(*Justin Madders.*)

*Brought up, and read the First time.*

6.45 pm

**Justin Madders** (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Lindsay Hoyle):** With this it will be convenient to discuss amendment 1, in clause 5, page 3, line 44, leave out subsections (5) and (6) and insert—

“(5) Any statutory instrument which contains regulations issued under this Act may not be made unless a draft of the instrument has been laid before Parliament and approved by a resolution of each House.”

*This amendment would make all regulations issued under this Act subject to the affirmative procedure and require approval from Parliament before they become law.*

**Justin Madders:** We want to ensure that there are appropriate safeguards with regard to costs, not least because the Bill currently gives the Secretary of State authority not only to facilitate a continuation of existing arrangements, but to enter into any number of bilateral agreements with individual member states, with very little opportunity for parliamentary scrutiny. It also provides the authority to strengthen existing reciprocal healthcare agreements with countries outside the EU, or to implement new ones across the globe, in line with

the Government’s aspiration to develop trading arrangements with countries beyond the EU. There is therefore a potential for the establishment of multiple complex agreements.

New clause 1 addresses the important point that the Bill before us is rightly intended to provide for all reciprocal healthcare arrangements in the future, and to provide for all eventualities. As we know, a no-deal Brexit could lead to a multitude of new bilateral agreements within the EU27, let alone the rest of the world. At this stage, none of us can be clear about how many of those agreements will come into being. We cannot assess their likely cost or impact, and, indeed, the Government’s own impact assessment is inadequate in that regard. It suggests that the cost will be similar to, or lower than, the current £630 million per year.

**Mr Jim Cunningham** (Coventry South) (Lab): My hon. Friend has mentioned potential bilateral agreements with different countries. Does he agree that there could be a problem if our citizens are not covered when travelling to those countries for a variety of purposes, and insurance companies send premiums through the roof? That is always a big factor, even with the current arrangements in Europe.

**Justin Madders:** It is true that there is some concern in the insurance industry about our potential failure to secure bilateral agreements. I think it inevitable that unless those agreements are secured, premiums will rise. That is why the Opposition support the thrust of the Bill.

It is impossible to provide reliable estimates of the costs of the new agreements in advance without knowing who they would be with or what they would cover. The British Medical Association has said that any prediction of costs is likely to be unreliable, and we cannot afford to give the Government carte blanche.

New clause 1 proposes a sensible and very reasonable requirement for the Government to report back to Parliament annually. It would require the Government to provide details of all payments made by the UK Government for all healthcare provided outside the UK to British citizens. It would also stipulate a requirement to provide details of all payments received by the UK Government as reimbursement for healthcare provided by the UK to all non-British citizens. It would also write into law a requirement for the Government to set out any outstanding payments owed to, or by, the UK Government. This would provide an important opportunity to monitor efficiency in this area and may provide an incentive to address some of the concerns raised by the Public Accounts Committee in its 2017 report, “NHS treatment for overseas patients”, which stated that “the NHS has been recovering much less than it should”, and

“The systems for cost recovery appear chaotic.”

Even with the Government’s recent funding announcements, the NHS continues to struggle. I am sure that the Minister would not want to see funds destined for patient care swallowed up by the additional administrative burden created by the introduction of a range of complex charging arrangements and a failure to recover the costs that have been incurred. It is imperative that hospital trusts are not required to shoulder additional financial burdens because of the costs of administering the collection of charges. That is why if the Government are, as the

[Justin Madders]

Minister said in Committee, committed to transparency and parliamentary scrutiny, new clause 1 should be supported.

Turning briefly to the amendment that I tabled, we have discussed previously widely held concerns about the scope of this Bill that are exacerbated by the fact that the powers contained within it to create regulations will, in many cases, be subject only to the negative procedure. The Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee in the other place set out very clearly the potential impact of this Bill should my amendment not be accepted today. It said:

“If...the Secretary of State wished to fund wholly or entirely the cost of all mental health provision in the state of Arizona, or the cost of all hip replacements in Australia, the regulations would only be subject to the negative procedure.”

It added:

“Of course, these examples will not be priorities for any Secretary of State in this country”.

I am sure that is the case, but we must consider how the powers could be used, not just how we would expect and hope them to be used.

There is always merit when examining legislation in considering all potential scenarios as well as the stated intentions of the Government at the time, and in such an unprecedented period of uncertainty it is prudent to consider all eventualities. As the Government have included these powers in the legislation we cannot simply consider the world as it is now, nor how it might be in a year or two—indeed, if anyone knows what the world will be like in two or three weeks’ time I will be very impressed. We need to look at what the world might be like in many years’ time and how the powers in the Bill can be used.

If we require further persuasion about the need for caution, the Committee set out in its report a devastating list of reasons why the negative procedure is inappropriate. It said:

“There is no limit to the amount of the payments. There is no limit to who can be funded world-wide. There is no limit to the types of healthcare being funded. The regulations can confer functions (that is, powers and duties, including discretions) on anyone anywhere. The regulations can delegate functions to anyone anywhere.”

The Committee concluded:

“In our view, the powers in clause 2(1) are inappropriately wide and have not been adequately justified by the Department. It is particularly unsatisfactory that exceedingly wide powers should be subject only to the negative procedure.”

Just for good measure, it went on to describe the powers sought in the Bill as “breath-taking”.

Parliament is not alone in having concerns about the scope of the clause and the lack of clarity about how the powers might be used. In the Committee evidence session, Raj Jethwa, director of policy at the British Medical Association said:

“We would like to see much more emphasis on scrutiny of all the discussions in the arrangements going forward.”—[*Official Report, Healthcare (International Arrangements) Public Bill Committee, 27 November 2018; c. 6, Q14.*]

Picking up on the Committee’s comments, despite the Government having ample opportunity both on Second Reading and in Committee to justify the need for these exceedingly wide powers, I believe that the arguments that they advanced during the passage of the Bill have

not only failed to do so, but have strengthened the case for greater scrutiny. The Minister conceded in Committee:

“The Bill also provides flexibility to fund healthcare even where there is no bilateral agreement, which we might explore using in exceptional circumstances to secure healthcare for certain groups of people.”

That is the nub of it: we know the well-rehearsed and necessary reasons why the Bill is required to secure the continuation of arrangements as we leave the EU, but it is on the record that the Bill can potentially do far more than that. We do not know what those exceptional circumstances are, and we do not know who those groups of people might be, and even if the Minister were able to set out here and now what he was referring to in that statement, he cannot bind a successor to that. The Bill gives the Secretary of State what I might describe as Martini powers: any time, any place, anywhere. If he is to have such wide powers they must at the very least be subject to the affirmative procedure.

The Minister also said in Committee that not only would the Bill encapsulate existing healthcare agreements but that it

“will potentially add to their number as part of future health and trade policy.”—[*Official Report, Healthcare (International Arrangements) Public Bill Committee, 29 November 2018; c. 23-24.*]

That is also a concern. I do not know whether the Minister intended it to come across as it did, but it sounded very much to me as if the Government were intending to couple trade negotiations with access to healthcare. I hope that that is not the case.

Many people have expressed concern over a number of years that the Government appear willing to open up the NHS to American private healthcare companies as part of trade negotiations, but I am not sure that many people imagined that the Government also had designs on opening up the NHS to patients around the world as part of a strategy to secure trade deals with other nations. Perhaps I am wrong about that, but it is clear that the Bill can be used in that way, which is why any arrangements ratified under it need proper scrutiny.

We also to consider the impact of new arrangements on the NHS. Alastair Henderson, chief executive of the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges, said in the Committee evidence session:

“Both clinicians and health organisations are concerned that we could end up with a system that is both administration-intensive and time-intensive.”—[*Official Report, Healthcare (International Arrangements) Public Bill Committee, 27 November 2018; c. 3, Q4.*]

We went through some of the implications of that when discussing new clause 1.

Finally, there is a practical element to this. As we know, under the negative procedure, once an instrument is laid in draft it cannot be made law if the draft is disapproved within 40 days. This would be done via a prayer against, usually by way of an early-day motion. If that is not invoked then the legislation is passed. Under the negative procedure, that is still a 40-day process in the best-case scenario, and if we leave without a deal the Secretary of State in the next three weeks will have to reach agreement with each of the 30-plus other countries, sign those agreements, draft statutory instruments and lay them before Parliament so they are with us no later than Friday 15 February, the last date on which

they could be laid in order for them to be passed by 29 March—and that is assuming they are not prayed against.

If we assume this Bill completes Third Reading today, that gives the Lords about three weeks to complete their consideration—and the Minister will no doubt be crossing his fingers that they do not table any amendments. That seems to be a tall order, and given the Committee's comments on this amendment the Lords may well be minded to send the measure back to us, but in either case it all seems rather a tight, if not unrealistic, timetable. I therefore urge the Minister to think through the practicalities of this; the affirmative procedure could be significantly quicker than the negative one, and it has the advantage of being far more transparent.

The Minister tried to reassure me in Committee that there would be adequate scrutiny by virtue of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010, but I am afraid that that just does not cut the mustard. Under that Act, there is a specified process enabling Parliament to object to a treaty being ratified within 21 days, but that does not automatically lead to a debate and a thorough examination of the issues of concern. The Act simply says that in the event of an objection the Government must issue a statement setting out why they still want to ratify; this process could apparently be repeated ad infinitum, and crucially under the Act there is no requirement for a debate. It would be open to either Government or Opposition to set aside some of their allotted time to facilitate a debate, but there is no requirement to do so. In addition, there are exceptions that enable the Government to ratify treaties outside the Act—for example, if there are “exceptional circumstances”, which of course is a judgment that is within Government's gift. The measure does not cover memorandums of understanding either, and some of the older reciprocal healthcare arrangements fall within that description.

Putting new agreements into force in these extraordinary circumstances is necessary, but we simply cannot accept the clause as it stands. No matter how well-intentioned everyone might be now, once that power has been given away it is not easily taken back. Do Members want us to fund hip replacements in Arizona? Are Members comfortable with access to the NHS being used as a bargaining chip in trade deals? Of course they are not, so why do they not vote for the amendment tonight?

**Martyn Day** (Linlithgow and East Falkirk) (SNP): I suspect this debate will be slightly less contentious than the earlier statements, and probably a lot quicker.

The Bill basically gives powers to the Secretary of State to agree reciprocal deals. However, I believe that we will not get a better reciprocal arrangements than those we currently have. We recognise the need for all these arrangements to continue, and the Scottish Government will do all they can to work with the UK Government to ensure that they do, and of course we note the legislative consent motion that has been granted. Through the Joint Ministerial Committee we believe a common framework system can be achieved that ensures these specific health arrangements can be administered through common agreement between the UK and Scottish Governments. Clearly, Brexit threatens the loss of reciprocal healthcare arrangements for millions in Scotland and across the UK. The Bill's impact assessment makes this conclusion in relation to a no-deal scenario:

“If UK citizens in the EU are treated as 3rd country nationals (i.e. they cease to have rights of movement and access to services in EU Member States, and are treated like citizens coming from non-EU countries) some may face additional financial costs or difficulties accessing healthcare services, with potential implications for their health and wellbeing.”

7 pm

In evidence to the House of Lords European Union Committee, a representative from the Association of British Insurers gave the rough estimate that in a no-deal scenario travel insurance premiums for EU travel could increase by between 10% and 20%. In Committee, we heard from Alisa Dolgova from the ABI, who informed us:

“Firms are currently pricing in the assumption that there will be a withdrawal agreement in place with a transitional period that will allow more time for the Government to enter into a reciprocal healthcare arrangement.”

There will therefore be a significant price to pay if there is no deal. There is real concern that the cost of health and travel insurance could become prohibitively high for many with underlying health conditions, and thus restrict travel arrangements. This concern was well illustrated in Committee by Fiona Loud, the policy director of Kidney Care UK, who advised us about people who undergo ongoing dialysis treatments while travelling abroad. She said:

“We have people who are taking the option to travel now because they have no idea what will happen after 29 March. For them, the ability to travel with confidence—I think there is something in the Bill about people being able to travel with confidence—is something they can do now, and they are not confident yet that they will be able to do that after 29 March.”—*[Official Report, Healthcare (International Arrangements) Public Bill Committee, 27 November 2018; c. 13.]*

She went on to advise that dialysis could cost about €1,000 a week.

Of course it is not just a no-deal scenario that we should be concerned about. The Prime Minister's deal would have hugely damaging implications for our NHS and care services, depriving us of EEA doctors and nurses. The care sector is particularly reliant on EU citizens. The UK Migration Advisory Committee concluded that EEA migrants contribute more to health and social care in financial resources and through work than they consume in services. A November 2018 British Medical Association survey of 1,527 EEA-trained doctors across the UK found that 78% were unconvinced by promises that their rights would be protected in the event of a no-deal Brexit, 37% were unaware of the Westminster Government's settled status scheme and 35% were considering moving abroad. Last year alone, we witnessed the loss of almost 2,500 experienced EEA nurses and midwives across the UK. In exit surveys, many EEA registrants gave continuing uncertainty about their future lives and careers as a significant factor in deciding to leave the register and the UK.

All these concerns would be compounded, should the reciprocal schemes cease and UK citizens return home to receive treatment. The British Medical Association and the Nuffield Trust have estimated that if all those people—mostly pensioners—were to return to the UK, the NHS would need some 900 additional beds and 1,600 nurses to ensure sufficient capacity. All in all, providing this additional healthcare would cost around £1 billion. It would be fair to say that I have a number of concerns. Current progress appears to prioritise pensioners and, welcome though that is, it does not give enough

consideration to children and adults with long-term illnesses. The effect of having no reciprocal agreement in place on sick and/or disabled children of UK citizens living abroad implies that parents and carers will have to either pay for treatment or return to the UK. Those with long-term conditions will be disproportionately adversely affected, in terms of their ability to travel, by the cost of health and travel insurance. Under existing reciprocal arrangements, the average cost of care received by UK citizens in other EEA nations is frequently cheaper than the equivalent care would be if provided by the NHS, meaning that the UK spends less on care funded through existing reciprocal arrangements than it would if that care had to be provided domestically. In conclusion, we will not get better reciprocal arrangements than we already have. Ensuring that all current reciprocal health agreements remain intact and in place must be the bottom line, regardless of what form Brexit takes.

**The Minister for Health (Stephen Hammond):** It is a great pleasure to bring the Bill to its Report stage tonight. Before I address new clause 1 and amendment 1, it might help the House if I set out with clarity what the Bill actually does. It provides the powers to fund and arrange payments for healthcare for UK residents, or indeed former residents, outside the UK as well as to share the necessary data to facilitate this. In a deal scenario, the Bill's powers would support the Government's attempts and motivation to implement a future relationship with the EU from 2021 and bilateral arrangements with individual member states, should the EU agreement fall short. In a no-deal scenario, the powers would ensure that the UK was prepared for any outcome. This could include implementing any negotiated reciprocal healthcare arrangements, which might differ from the current EU arrangements, or making unilateral arrangements for UK nationals in order to assist with accessing healthcare abroad in exceptional circumstances.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Justin Madders) for tabling new clause 1, because it gives me the opportunity to reiterate what I said in Committee about the important issue of financial reporting and facilitating parliamentary scrutiny. I note that, in Committee, the hon. Member for Burnley (Julie Cooper) tabled exactly the same provision as new clause 1, and that it was defeated. I said at the time that I recognised the new clause as a device that Oppositions always used. That does not make it any less relevant, but I explained that the Government were committed to openness when it came to the managing of public money. Expenditure by the Department of Health and Social Care relating to EU reciprocal healthcare arrangements is currently published in this place in the form of annual resource accounts, and will continue to be so. However, given that we do not know the provisions and administrative processes of future reciprocal agreements, the Government are once again unable to accept the proposal. As now, the Department's future expenditure on reciprocal healthcare would be subject to the existing Government reporting requirements.

However, the hon. Gentleman's new clause asks the Government to place a statutory duty on future Administrations to collect and report on data, which we have not yet agreed to exchange with other countries. This cannot be appropriate. The frequency and detailed content of a financial report should and could be determined only when reciprocal healthcare agreements

have been reached. Currently, the UK and other EU member states are able to collect data and report both nationally and at EU level, as provided for in the relevant EU regulations. Spending on EU healthcare is reported as part of the Department of Health and Social Care annual report and accounts laid before this place.

My Department is currently working to ensure that UK nationals can continue to access healthcare in the EU in exactly the same way as they do now, either through an agreement at EU level or through agreements with the relevant member states. In either case, we will have to agree how eligibility is evidenced, the way in which and frequency with which that information is exchanged and, of course, the reimbursement mechanisms that will govern the new agreements.

**Lady Hermon (North Down) (Ind):** I have listened closely to what the Minister has said. It would be helpful if he could offer some reassurance to Irish citizens living in Northern Ireland who, under the terms of the Good Friday/Belfast agreement, are entitled to regard themselves as Irish citizens, British citizens or indeed both. I presume that their rights will continue unchanged in Northern Ireland after Brexit. Am I right?

**Stephen Hammond:** The hon. Lady is completely correct. We explored that in Committee, and discussed the purposes of the common travel area. Indeed, there was an explicit debate in Committee on the arrangements for Northern Ireland. I am happy to confirm that to her.

Each of the agreements that we are seeking to strike could differ from country to country. Such agreements will have to take into account the operational possibilities and limitations of each contracting party, to ensure the smooth operation of reciprocal healthcare arrangements. This should include how NHS trusts in the UK can evidence eligibility for the treatment of non-UK citizens in the most efficient and least burdensome manner. Only when these technical details are known will the Government be able to speak confidently to the specific measures that we can report on for each country. Regardless of the specifics of any arrangements entered into, and as with all departmental expenditure, reciprocal healthcare costs are and will continue to be authorised by the Treasury supply process and to be included in the Department's annual estimates, as well as being included in the annual resource accounts, which are audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General. I said in Committee that I hoped that the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston would be satisfied by that commitment to transparency, and I give that commitment again tonight. With that, I hope that he will feel able to withdraw new clause 1.

Turning to amendment 1, the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston again raised the important issue of appropriate levels of parliamentary scrutiny. The Government clearly recognise the importance of such scrutiny for this Bill and for secondary legislation made under it. The hallmarks of an effective and responsible parliamentary system are the processes by which we draft, consider and test legislation, and the appropriate parliamentary procedure for the scrutiny of regulations made under this Bill is the negative resolution procedure.

The exception to that is where provision within regulations is needed to make consequential changes to amend, repeal or revoke primary legislation. Consequently, the Government are once again resisting that amendment.

As I have said previously, the powers in this Bill provide the Government with both the flexibility and the capacity to implement detailed and complex arrangements concerning healthcare access abroad. The remit of our regulation-making powers is tightly focused. They can be used only to give effect to healthcare agreements or arrange, provide for or fund healthcare abroad. Therefore, the subject matter to which the regulations relate is narrow. I say again that when regulations amend, repeal or revoke primary legislation, they will of course be subject to the affirmative resolution procedure, which is the appropriate level of scrutiny for such powers. However, where statutory instruments do not make changes to primary legislation, and deal with procedural, administrative or technical provisions, they should be subject to the negative resolution procedure, and that is reflected in our approach to this Bill.

We have been clear about our intentions for reciprocal healthcare in the context of exiting the EU. In the short term, our policy is to maintain the current system of reciprocal healthcare with the EU on a transitional basis until the end of 2020. That would happen automatically if there is an implementation period, and it is something that we are seeking to agree individually with member states in the event of no deal.

**Kevin Foster** (Torbay) (Con): I welcome the Minister's confirmation of the Government's intentions behind this Bill. Will he confirm that the nonsense we heard from the shadow Minister about funding hip operations in Arizona is absolute tosh? While the shadow Minister may be enthusiastic about the healthcare system in the United States, will the Minister confirm that we are not?

**Stephen Hammond:** My hon. Friend is right. I said continually in Committee and I say it again now that this Bill is tightly focused in terms of the regulations that can be made under it. We want long-term reciprocal healthcare arrangements with the EU or relevant member states, and that is the Bill's focus.

When the UK negotiates an international healthcare agreement in the future, the most important elements setting out the terms of that agreement would, as Members should expect, be included in the agreement itself. Such agreements are likely to contain all the detail of which Parliament should have due consideration, such as who is covered under the terms of that agreement. In contrast, the regulations implementing the agreement would not include anything fundamentally new. They would contain the procedural, administrative and technical details, such as the types of documents or forms to be used. It is therefore right that regulations issued under this Bill be subject to the negative procedure. That is an appropriate use of parliamentary time. Were we to accept amendment 1, it is likely that this Parliament would find itself debating whether the forms required to process reciprocal healthcare arrangements should be changed. That would clearly be a misuse of Parliamentary time.

I once again reassure the House that Parliament will have the opportunity to undertake appropriate scrutiny of future binding healthcare arrangements. Where we strike a comprehensive healthcare agreement with the

EU or with individual member states, that agreement would be subject to the appropriate parliamentary scrutiny. Part 2 of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 sets out the process under which Parliament can review what are intended to be legally binding healthcare agreements. That provides an opportunity for parliamentary scrutiny in respect of the substance of healthcare agreements. Implementation of such an agreement, if that is by way of regulations under the Bill, will then be subject to its own scrutiny before ratification of the healthcare agreement.

Everyone in this House wants reciprocal healthcare arrangements. Overwhelming support for reciprocal healthcare has been shown throughout the passage of this Bill, including in Committee during the evidence sessions with the expert witnesses. We heard directly from several Members and evidence was presented, and there is a clear desire for current arrangements to continue.

7.15 pm

As future agreements are subject to negotiation or yet to exist, the House will understand why it is not possible to provide draft regulations at this stage. However, I assure Members that, when implementation regulations are needed, we will publish any draft regulations during the passage of this Bill if possible. I thank the Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston for raising this vital issue and for the opportunity to put it clearly on the record that this Government are committed to proper parliamentary scrutiny of reciprocal arrangements. With that assurance, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not press new clause 1 or amendment 1 to a vote.

*Question put.* That the clause be read a Second time.

*The House divided:* Ayes 260, Noes 295.

**Division No. 297]**

**[7.16 pm**

**AYES**

Abrahams, Debbie	Campbell, rh Sir Alan
Ali, Rushanara	Campbell, Mr Ronnie
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena	Carden, Dan
Amesbury, Mike	Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Antoniazzi, Tonia	Champion, Sarah
Ashworth, Jonathan	Chapman, Douglas
Austin, Ian	Chapman, Jenny
Bailey, Mr Adrian	Charalambous, Bambos
Barron, rh Sir Kevin	Cherry, Joanna
Beckett, rh Margaret	Clwyd, rh Ann
Benn, rh Hilary	Coffey, Ann
Berger, Luciana	Cooper, Julie
Betts, Mr Clive	Cooper, Rosie
Blackman, Kirsty	Cooper, rh Yvette
Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta	Cowan, Ronnie
Blomfield, Paul	Coyle, Neil
Brabin, Tracy	Crausby, Sir David
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben	Creagh, Mary
Brock, Deidre	Creasy, Stella
Brown, Alan	Cruddas, Jon
Brown, Lyn	Cryer, John
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas	Cummins, Judith
Bryant, Chris	Cunningham, Alex
Buck, Ms Karen	Cunningham, Mr Jim
Burden, Richard	Dakin, Nic
Burgon, Richard	David, Wayne
Butler, Dawn	Davies, Geraint
Byrne, rh Liam	Day, Martyn
Cadbury, Ruth	De Cordova, Marsha
Cameron, Dr Lisa	De Piero, Gloria

Debbonaire, Thangam  
 Dent Coad, Emma  
 Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh  
 Docherty-Hughes, Martin  
 Dodds, Anneliese  
 Doughty, Stephen  
 Dowd, Peter  
 Drew, Dr David  
 Dromey, Jack  
 Eagle, Ms Angela  
 Eagle, Maria  
 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  
 Gapes, Mike  
 Gardiner, Barry  
 George, Ruth  
 Gethins, Stephen  
 Gibson, Patricia  
 Gill, Preet Kaur  
 Giindon, Mary  
 Goodman, Helen  
 Grady, Patrick  
 Grant, Peter  
 Gray, Neil  
 Green, Kate  
 Greenwood, Lilian  
 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  
 Hendrick, Sir Mark  
 Hendry, Drew  
 Hepburn, Mr Stephen  
 Hermon, Lady  
 Hill, Mike  
 Hillier, Meg  
 Hobhouse, Wera  
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon  
 Hoey, Kate  
 Hollern, Kate  
 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, rh Mr Kevan  
 Jones, Sarah  
 Jones, Susan Elan  
 Keeley, Barbara  
 Khan, Afzal  
 Killen, Ged  
 Kinnock, Stephen  
 Kyle, Peter  
 Laird, Lesley  
 Lamb, rh Norman  
 Lammy, rh Mr David  
 Lavery, Ian  
 Law, Chris  
 Lee, Karen  
 Leslie, Mr Chris  
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma  
 Lewis, Clive  
 Lewis, Mr Ivan  
 Linden, David  
 Lloyd, Stephen  
 Lloyd, Tony  
 Long Bailey, Rebecca  
 Lucas, Caroline  
 Madders, Justin  
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid  
 Mahmood, Shabana  
 Malhotra, Seema  
 Mann, John  
 Marsden, Gordon  
 Martin, Sandy  
 Maskell, Rachael  
 Matheson, Christian  
 McCabe, Steve  
 McCarthy, Kerry  
 McDonagh, Siobhain  
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm  
 McDonald, Stuart C.  
 McDonnell, rh John  
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat  
 McGinn, Conor  
 McGovern, Alison  
 McInnes, Liz  
 McKinnell, Catherine  
 McMahan, Jim  
 McMorrin, Anna  
 Mearns, Ian  
 Monaghan, Carol  
 Moon, Mrs Madeleine  
 Morden, Jessica  
 Morgan, Stephen  
 Morris, Grahame  
 Nandy, Lisa  
 Newlands, Gavin  
 Norris, Alex  
 O'Hara, Brendan  
 Onasanya, Fiona  
 Onn, Melanie  
 Onwurah, Chi  
 Osamor, Kate  
 Owen, Albert  
 Pennycook, Matthew  
 Perkins, Toby  
 Phillips, Jess  
 Phillipson, Bridget  
 Pidcock, Laura  
 Platt, Jo  
 Pollard, Luke  
 Pound, Stephen  
 Powell, Lucy  
 Qureshi, Yasmin  
 Rashid, Faisal

Rayner, Angela  
 Reed, Mr Steve  
 Rees, Christina  
 Reynolds, Emma  
 Reynolds, Jonathan  
 Rimmer, Ms Marie  
 Rodda, Matt  
 Ruane, Chris  
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd  
 Ryan, rh Joan  
 Saville Roberts, Liz  
 Sheerman, Mr Barry  
 Sherriff, Paula  
 Shuker, Mr Gavin  
 Skinner, Mr Dennis  
 Slaughter, Andy  
 Smeeth, Ruth  
 Smith, Cat  
 Smith, Eleanor  
 Smith, Jeff  
 Smith, Laura  
 Smith, Nick  
 Smith, Owen  
 Smyth, Karin  
 Snell, Gareth  
 Sobel, Alex  
 Spellar, rh John  
 Starmer, rh Keir  
 Stephens, Chris  
 Stevens, Jo

Adams, Nigel  
 Afolami, Bim  
 Aldous, Peter  
 Amess, Sir David  
 Andrew, Stuart  
 Argar, Edward  
 Atkins, Victoria  
 Bacon, Mr Richard  
 Badenoch, Mrs Kemi  
 Baker, Mr Steve  
 Barclay, rh Stephen  
 Baron, Mr John  
 Bebb, Guto  
 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  
 Cartledge, James

Stone, Jamie  
 Streeting, Wes  
 Sweeney, Mr Paul  
 Tami, rh Mark  
 Thewliss, Alison  
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick  
 Thornberry, rh Emily  
 Timms, rh Stephen  
 Trickett, Jon  
 Turley, Anna  
 Turner, Karl  
 Twigg, Stephen  
 Twist, Liz  
 Umunna, Chuka  
 Vaz, Valerie  
 Walker, Thelma  
 West, Catherine  
 Western, Matt  
 Whitehead, Dr Alan  
 Whitford, Dr Philippa  
 Williams, Dr Paul  
 Williamson, Chris  
 Wilson, Phil  
 Woodcock, John  
 Yasin, Mohammad  
 Zeichner, Daniel

**Tellers for the Ayes:**  
**Colleen Fletcher and**  
**Stephanie Peacock**

#### NOES

Cash, Sir William  
 Caulfield, Maria  
 Chalk, Alex  
 Chope, Sir Christopher  
 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  
 Davis, rh Mr David  
 Dinenage, Caroline  
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan  
 Docherty, Leo  
 Dodds, rh Nigel  
 Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.  
 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, rh Mr Philip  
 Ellis, Michael  
 Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias

Elphicke, Charlie  
Eustice, George  
Evennett, rh Sir David  
Fabricant, Michael  
Fallon, rh Sir Michael  
Field, rh Mark  
Ford, Vicky  
Foster, Kevin  
Fox, rh Dr Liam  
Frazer, Lucy  
Freeman, George  
Freer, Mike  
Fysh, Mr Marcus  
Garnier, Mark  
Gauke, rh Mr David  
Ghani, Ms Nusrat  
Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl  
Girvan, Paul  
Glen, John  
Goldsmith, Zac  
Goodwill, rh Mr Robert  
Graham, Luke  
Graham, Richard  
Grant, Bill  
Grant, Mrs Helen  
Gray, James  
Grayling, rh Chris  
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, Stephen  
Hancock, rh Matt  
Hands, rh Greg  
Harper, rh Mr Mark  
Harrington, Richard  
Harris, Rebecca  
Harrison, Trudy  
Hart, Simon  
Hayes, rh Sir John  
Heald, rh Sir Oliver  
Heapey, James  
Heaton-Harris, Chris  
Heaton-Jones, Peter  
Henderson, Gordon  
Herbert, rh Nick  
Hoare, Simon  
Hollinrake, Kevin  
Hollobone, Mr Philip  
Holloway, Adam  
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  
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  
Letwin, rh Sir Oliver  
Lewer, Andrew  
Lewis, rh Brandon  
Lewis, rh Dr Julian  
Lidington, rh Mr David  
Little Pengelly, Emma  
Lopez, Julia  
Lopresti, Jack  
Loughton, Tim  
Mackinlay, Craig  
Maclean, Rachel  
Main, Mrs Anne  
Malthouse, Kit  
Mann, Scott  
Masterton, Paul  
Maynard, Paul  
McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick  
McPartland, Stephen  
McVey, rh Ms Esther  
Menzies, Mark  
Mercer, Johnny  
Merriman, Huw  
Metcalf, Stephen  
Miller, rh Mrs Maria  
Milling, Amanda  
Mills, Nigel  
Milton, rh Anne  
Moore, Damien  
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  
O'Brien, Neil  
Offord, Dr Matthew  
Opperman, Guy  
Paisley, Ian  
Parish, Neil  
Patel, rh Priti  
Paterson, rh Mr Owen  
Pawsey, Mark  
Penning, rh Sir Mike  
Penrose, John  
Percy, Andrew  
Perry, rh Claire  
Philp, Chris  
Pincher, rh Christopher  
Poulter, Dr Dan  
Pow, Rebecca  
Prentis, Victoria  
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  
Scully, Paul  
Seely, Mr Bob  
Selous, Andrew  
Shannon, Jim  
Shapps, rh Grant  
Sharma, Alok  
Shelbrooke, Alec  
Simpson, David  
Simpson, rh Mr Keith  
Skidmore, Chris  
Smith, Chloe  
Smith, Henry  
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  
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  
Trevelyan, Anne-Marie  
Truss, rh Elizabeth  
Tugendhat, Tom  
Vaizey, rh Mr Edward  
Vara, Mr Shailesh  
Vickers, Martin  
Villiers, rh Theresa  
Walker, Mr Charles  
Wallace, rh Mr Ben  
Warburton, David  
Warman, Matt  
Watling, Giles  
Whately, Helen  
Wheeler, Mrs Heather  
Whittaker, Craig  
Whittingdale, rh Mr John  
Wiggin, Bill  
Williamson, rh Gavin  
Wilson, rh Sammy  
Wollaston, Dr Sarah  
Wood, Mike  
Wragg, Mr William  
Wright, rh Jeremy  
Zahawi, Nadhim  
**Tellers for the Noes:**  
**Jo Churchill and**  
**Michelle Donelan**

*Question accordingly negated.*

### Clause 5

#### REGULATIONS AND DIRECTIONS

*Amendment proposed:* 1, page 3, line 44, leave out subsections (5) and (6) and insert—

“(5) Any statutory instrument which contains regulations issued under this Act may not be made unless a draft of the instrument has been laid before Parliament and approved by a resolution of each House.”—(*Justin Madders.*)

*This amendment would make all regulations issued under this Act subject to the affirmative procedure and require approval from Parliament before they become law.*

*Question put, That the amendment be made.*

*The House divided: Ayes 261, Noes 298.*

**Division No. 298]**

**[7.31 pm**

#### AYES

Abrahams, Debbie	Berger, Luciana
Ali, Rushanara	Betts, Mr Clive
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena	Blackman, Kirsty
Amesbury, Mike	Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta
Antoniazzi, Tonia	Blomfield, Paul
Ashworth, Jonathan	Brabin, Tracy
Austin, Ian	Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
Bailey, Mr Adrian	Brock, Deidre
Barron, rh Sir Kevin	Brown, Alan
Beckett, rh Margaret	Brown, Lyn
Benn, rh Hilary	Brown, rh Mr Nicholas

Bryant, Chris  
 Buck, Ms Karen  
 Burden, Richard  
 Burgon, Richard  
 Butler, Dawn  
 Byrne, rh Liam  
 Cadbury, Ruth  
 Cameron, Dr Lisa  
 Campbell, rh Sir Alan  
 Campbell, Mr Ronnie  
 Carden, Dan  
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair  
 Champion, Sarah  
 Chapman, Douglas  
 Chapman, Jenny  
 Charalambous, Bambos  
 Cherry, Joanna  
 Clwyd, rh Ann  
 Coffey, Ann  
 Cooper, Julie  
 Cooper, Rosie  
 Cooper, rh Yvette  
 Cowan, Ronnie  
 Coyle, Neil  
 Crausby, Sir David  
 Creagh, Mary  
 Creasy, Stella  
 Cruddas, Jon  
 Cryer, John  
 Cummins, Judith  
 Cunningham, Alex  
 Cunningham, Mr Jim  
 Daby, Janet  
 Dakin, Nic  
 David, Wayne  
 Davies, Geraint  
 Day, Martyn  
 De Cordova, Marsha  
 De Piero, Gloria  
 Debonnaire, Thangam  
 Dent Coad, Emma  
 Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh  
 Docherty-Hughes, Martin  
 Dodds, Anneliese  
 Doughty, Stephen  
 Dowd, Peter  
 Drew, Dr David  
 Dromey, Jack  
 Eagle, Ms Angela  
 Eagle, Maria  
 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  
 Gapes, Mike  
 Gardiner, Barry  
 George, Ruth  
 Gethins, Stephen  
 Gibson, Patricia  
 Gill, Preet Kaur

Glindon, Mary  
 Goodman, Helen  
 Grady, Patrick  
 Grant, Peter  
 Gray, Neil  
 Green, Kate  
 Greenwood, Lilian  
 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  
 Hendrick, Sir Mark  
 Hendry, Drew  
 Hepburn, Mr Stephen  
 Hermon, Lady  
 Hill, Mike  
 Hillier, Meg  
 Hobhouse, Wera  
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon  
 Hoey, Kate  
 Hollern, Kate  
 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, rh Mr Kevan  
 Jones, Sarah  
 Jones, Susan Elan  
 Keeley, Barbara  
 Khan, Afzal  
 Killen, Ged  
 Kinnock, Stephen  
 Kyle, Peter  
 Laird, Lesley  
 Lamb, rh Norman  
 Lammy, rh Mr David  
 Lavery, Ian  
 Law, Chris  
 Lee, Karen  
 Leslie, Mr Chris  
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma  
 Lewis, Clive  
 Linden, David  
 Lloyd, Stephen  
 Lloyd, Tony  
 Long Bailey, Rebecca  
 Lucas, Caroline  
 Madders, Justin  
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid  
 Mahmood, Shabana  
 Malhotra, Seema  
 Mann, John  
 Marsden, Gordon  
 Martin, Sandy  
 Maskell, Rachael  
 Matheson, Christian  
 McCabe, Steve

McCarthy, Kerry  
 McDonagh, Siobhain  
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm  
 McDonald, Stuart C.  
 McDonnell, rh John  
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat  
 McGinn, Conor  
 McGovern, Alison  
 McInnes, Liz  
 McKinnell, Catherine  
 McMahon, Jim  
 McMorrin, Anna  
 Mearns, Ian  
 Monaghan, Carol  
 Moon, Mrs Madeleine  
 Morden, Jessica  
 Morgan, Stephen  
 Morris, Grahame  
 Nandy, Lisa  
 Newlands, Gavin  
 Norris, Alex  
 O'Hara, Brendan  
 Onasanya, Fiona  
 Onn, Melanie  
 Onwurah, Chi  
 Osamor, Kate  
 Owen, Albert  
 Pennycook, Matthew  
 Perkins, Toby  
 Phillips, Jess  
 Phillipson, Bridget  
 Pidcock, Laura  
 Platt, Jo  
 Pollard, Luke  
 Pound, Stephen  
 Powell, Lucy  
 Qureshi, Yasmin  
 Rashid, Faisal  
 Rayner, Angela  
 Reed, Mr Steve  
 Rees, Christina  
 Reynolds, Emma  
 Reynolds, Jonathan  
 Rimmer, Ms Marie  
 Rodda, Matt  
 Ruane, Chris  
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd  
 Ryan, rh Joan  
 Saville Roberts, Liz

Sheerman, Mr Barry  
 Sherriff, Paula  
 Shuker, Mr Gavin  
 Skinner, Mr Dennis  
 Slaughter, Andy  
 Smeeth, Ruth  
 Smith, Cat  
 Smith, Eleanor  
 Smith, Jeff  
 Smith, Laura  
 Smith, Nick  
 Smith, Owen  
 Smyth, Karin  
 Snell, Gareth  
 Sobel, Alex  
 Spellar, rh John  
 Starmer, rh Keir  
 Stephens, Chris  
 Stevens, Jo  
 Stone, Jamie  
 Streeting, Wes  
 Sweeney, Mr Paul  
 Tami, rh Mark  
 Thewliss, Alison  
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick  
 Thornberry, rh Emily  
 Timms, rh Stephen  
 Trickett, Jon  
 Turley, Anna  
 Turner, Karl  
 Twigg, Stephen  
 Twist, Liz  
 Umunna, Chuka  
 Vaz, Valerie  
 Walker, Thelma  
 West, Catherine  
 Western, Matt  
 Whitehead, Dr Alan  
 Whitford, Dr Philippa  
 Williams, Dr Paul  
 Williamson, Chris  
 Wilson, Phil  
 Woodcock, John  
 Yasin, Mohammad  
 Zeichner, Daniel

**Tellers for the Ayes:**  
**Stephanie Peacock and**  
**Colleen Fletcher**

#### NOES

Adams, Nigel  
 Afolami, Bim  
 Aldous, Peter  
 Amess, Sir David  
 Andrew, Stuart  
 Argar, Edward  
 Atkins, Victoria  
 Bacon, Mr Richard  
 Badenoch, Mrs Kemi  
 Baker, Mr Steve  
 Barclay, rh Stephen  
 Baron, Mr John  
 Bebb, Guto  
 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  
 Cartledge, James  
 Cash, Sir William

Caulfield, Maria  
Chalk, Alex  
Chope, Sir Christopher  
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  
Davis, rh Mr David  
Dinenage, Caroline  
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan  
Docherty, Leo  
Dodds, rh Nigel  
Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.  
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, rh Mr Philip  
Ellis, Michael  
Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias  
Elphicke, Charlie  
Eustice, George  
Evennett, rh Sir David  
Fabricant, Michael  
Fallon, rh Sir Michael  
Field, rh Mark  
Ford, Vicky  
Foster, Kevin  
Fox, rh Dr Liam  
Frazer, Lucy  
Freeman, George  
Freer, Mike  
Fysh, Mr Marcus  
Garnier, Mark  
Gauke, rh Mr David  
Ghani, Ms Nusrat  
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  
Grayling, rh Chris  
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, Stephen  
Hancock, rh Matt  
Hands, rh Greg  
Harper, rh Mr Mark  
Harrington, Richard  
Harris, Rebecca  
Harrison, Trudy  
Hart, Simon  
Hayes, rh Sir John  
Heald, rh Sir Oliver  
Heappey, James  
Heaton-Harris, Chris  
Heaton-Jones, Peter  
Henderson, Gordon  
Herbert, rh Nick  
Hoare, Simon  
Hollinrake, Kevin  
Hollobone, Mr Philip  
Holloway, Adam  
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  
Jenkyne, 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  
Letwin, rh Sir Oliver  
Lewer, Andrew  
Lewis, rh Brandon  
Lewis, rh Dr Julian  
Lidington, rh Mr David  
Little Pengelly, Emma  
Lopez, Julia  
Lopresti, Jack  
Lord, Mr Jonathan  
Loughton, Tim  
Mackinlay, Craig  
Macleane, Rachel  
Main, Mrs Anne  
Malthouse, Kit  
Mann, Scott  
Masterton, Paul  
Maynard, Paul  
McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick  
McPartland, Stephen

McVey, rh Ms Esther  
Menzies, Mark  
Mercer, Johnny  
Merriman, Huw  
Metcalf, Stephen  
Miller, rh Mrs Maria  
Milling, Amanda  
Mills, Nigel  
Milton, rh Anne  
Moore, Damien  
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  
O'Brien, Neil  
Offord, Dr Matthew  
Opperman, Guy  
Paisley, Ian  
Parish, Neil  
Patel, rh Priti  
Paterson, rh Mr Owen  
Pawsey, Mark  
Penning, rh Sir Mike  
Penrose, John  
Percy, Andrew  
Perry, rh Claire  
Philp, Chris  
Pincher, rh Christopher  
Poulter, Dr Dan  
Pow, Rebecca  
Prentis, Victoria  
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  
Scully, Paul  
Seely, Mr Bob  
Selous, Andrew  
Shannon, Jim  
Shapps, rh Grant  
Sharma, Alok  
Shelbrooke, Alec  
Simpson, David  
Simpson, rh Mr Keith  
Skidmore, Chris  
Smith, Chloe  
Smith, Henry  
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  
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  
Trevelyan, Anne-Marie  
Truss, rh Elizabeth  
Tugendhat, Tom  
Vaizey, rh Mr Edward  
Vara, Mr Shailesh  
Vickers, Martin  
Villiers, rh Theresa  
Walker, Mr Charles  
Wallace, rh Mr Ben  
Warburton, David  
Warman, Matt  
Watling, Giles  
Whately, Helen  
Wheeler, Mrs Heather  
Whittaker, Craig  
Whittingdale, rh Mr John  
Wiggin, Bill  
Williamson, rh Gavin  
Wilson, rh Sammy  
Wollaston, Dr Sarah  
Wood, Mike  
Wragg, Mr William  
Wright, rh Jeremy  
Zahawi, Nadhim  
  
**Tellers for the Noes:**  
**Michelle Donelan and**  
**Jo Churchill**

*Question accordingly negated.*

*Third Reading*

7.43 pm

**Stephen Hammond:** I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

We have had a productive debate on the Bill, and I am grateful to all Members, including those who recently contributed, who have engaged so constructively with the passage of the Bill and demonstrated a shared

[*Stephen Hammond*]

commitment to protecting the healthcare-access options of UK nationals in the EU. The support shown to the Bill throughout its passage shows the value of reciprocal healthcare. I wish to put on record my appreciation for the consensual approach shown by all parties in the House, and particularly to note the contributions from the hon. Members for Burnley (Julie Cooper) and for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Justin Madders). Not only in Committee but on Report, they raised objections but were very helpful in respect of the passage of the Bill.

Although the Bill is short, it is nevertheless important. The powers it contains will ensure that we are prepared, whatever the outcomes of exiting the EU are, and also that we are able better to implement complex reciprocal healthcare agreements with members and non-member states. Powers under the Bill will enable the UK to fund and give effect to our future relationship with the EU on reciprocal healthcare. The Bill allows us to look to the future. The powers it contains will allow us to implement strengthened reciprocal healthcare arrangements, or new ones with countries outside the EU. It is necessary to provide the Government with the powers to ensure a smooth transition from our current relationship with the EU to the future one.

Let me take this opportunity to thank those Members who served on the Public Bill Committee, in particular my hon. Friend the Member for South West Devon (Sir Gary Streeter) and the hon. Member for Blackley and Broughton (Graham Stringer), who ably chaired the Committee. I reiterate my thanks to those who gave oral evidence to the Committee and to those who provided written evidence, including Mr Alastair Henderson, Mr Raj Jethwa, Ms Alisa Dolgova and Ms Fiona Loud. Their expertise and perspectives were vital in understanding the importance and impact of reciprocal healthcare arrangements to medical professionals, insurers and, most importantly, the patients. I also put on record my thanks to my officials, who have guided me through this process.

As a responsible Government, it is important that we plan not only for every eventuality currently before us but for the future. The Bill is intended to provide reassurance to UK nationals living in the EU or those planning to travel to the EU. Again, I thank Members for their support. I commend the Bill to the House.

7.46 pm

**Julie Cooper** (Burnley) (Lab): First, as the Bill is given its Third Reading, may I thank all Members who have contributed?

We will not oppose the Bill at this stage, as we acknowledge the importance of safeguarding healthcare for the estimated 190,000 UK expats living in the EU and the 50 million nationals who travel abroad to EEA countries each year. That is not to say that the Bill is perfect—far from it. There are issues that for us remain unresolved, and we are anxious about the implications of the sweeping powers that the Bill will give the Secretary of State. We hope that Members in the other place will pick up on some of these concerns.

We are now only 67 days away from formally leaving the EU. On Second Reading—which, coincidentally, was 67 days ago—there was a clear assumption on the Government's part that an agreement with the EU

would be reached and that arrangements would carry on as now. I do not think it is an understatement to say that that is now looking rather less certain.

I said at the time that the Government's own impact assessment seemed seriously to underestimate the consequences of a no-deal scenario. As my hon. Friend the Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Justin Madders) said earlier, the impact assessment set out how the costs of establishing future reciprocal healthcare arrangements on the same basis as now would be £630 million per year. It then went on to estimate that, in the event of a no-deal scenario, the costs would be expected to be similar or less, depending on the number of schemes that were established. It has never been made clear why the costs might be less, unless we stop reciprocating with other countries, and I do not believe anyone expects that.

The British Medical Association and the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health have expressed concern that, should no EU-wide reciprocal agreement be achievable, the significant costs of establishing bilateral reciprocal arrangements with the EU and EEA countries would in future fall on the NHS. Perhaps in the scenario we now face, we will be able to replicate exactly what is in place now, but that is not certain, and the implications are potentially significant. I therefore ask the Minister whether he would mind keeping us updated on the progress in bilateral discussions.

UK state pensioners living abroad account for 75% of the total amount that we spend on reciprocal healthcare, and they will be anxious to know that they will be able to enjoy the same access as they do now. If not, those with chronic conditions or complex healthcare needs may need insurance that is prohibitively expensive—if it can be found at all. The potential implications of that cannot be underestimated. For those travelling abroad, the BMA and others have said that, without a reciprocal healthcare agreement, patients with disabilities would also be among the most affected. Again, for those groups, as much information on progress as possible would be appreciated.

Associated with that is a lack of clarity over how dispute resolution will work in the event of bilateral agreements being necessary. We know from what the Minister has told us that, if we manage to reach full agreement with the EU27, there will still be a limited role for the European Court of Justice, but we do not know what the dispute resolution procedure will be if we do not. Can he confirm whether it is still the Government's position that the ECJ will have no jurisdiction in the event of bilateral agreements being necessary? I am not sure what incentive there will be for other countries to agree to a brand new dispute resolution architecture, and I doubt very much that they would want to pay for one. It seems to me that, sooner or later, the Government will have to come clean with their own Back Benchers that, in this area at least, the ECJ will still have a role to play, even in the event of a no-deal scenario.

Even under the current arrangements, cost recovery is something that we do not appear to have handled satisfactorily and the fault for that lies with the Government alone. In 2012-13, the NHS charged only around 65% of what it could have done to visitors from outside the EEA and Switzerland, and only 16% to visitors from within that area. Although I accept that things have improved since then, they are still far from perfect.

Indeed, as my hon. Friend the Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston mentioned, the Public Accounts Committee said that it was chaotic.

The Law Society of Scotland was clear on the importance of this issue when it gave evidence to the Lords Committee. It said that

“as the NHS has never been very effective in reclaiming the fees owed to it by overseas visitors to the UK, the UK may find itself substantially worse off financially when new arrangements for funding cross-national use of health services are put in place.”

So the Government need to raise their game in terms of cost recovery. If there is an additional administrative burden on the NHS in setting up new systems of cost recovery because of agreements reached, will the Minister give a commitment that NHS providers will be adequately compensated?

Perhaps the issue of reciprocal healthcare matters most on the island of Ireland where the border area has a dispersed population of around 2 million people, with an integrated healthcare system that has to survive whatever the future arrangements end up being. They cannot be failed by this Bill, which is why we believe that there needs to be maximum parliamentary oversight.

This Bill is necessary, but it does seem that the Government have used the opportunity to give themselves powers far beyond those that are necessary to achieve the objective set out under this legislation. They are using every trick in the book to avoid proper scrutiny of their actions. That is part of a disturbing trend that we are seeing across much of the Brexit legislation. It is a trend that does the Government no credit and it is a trend that I believe Members from across the House will come to regret.

7.53 pm

**Dr Sarah Wollaston (Totnes) (Con):** I do not intend to detain the House for long. I support this Bill, but only regret that it is necessary. I wish to tell the House about an email that I received from a friend recently. He told me about his 92-year-old father who was visiting France and had a fall. He phoned my friend, who dialled 999 in this country, and an hour later his father was in hospital—all of that at no cost to his father because he carried a European health insurance card. The close ties that we have involving our reciprocal healthcare are not just financial. They are also about those close links and data transfer. I profoundly regret that this is the kind of thing that people will not realise they have lost until it is gone. That is the great tragedy here. The point is that it is not people like us, who are relatively fit and healthy, who will necessarily lose out by having to spend an extra 10% to 20% on our health insurance costs; it is our constituents who are elderly, who have to have regular kidney dialysis or who have other complex medical conditions, who will simply find themselves uninsurable or having to face prohibitively expensive insurance costs, and who, if they run into difficulties while they are abroad, will find themselves really adrift.

I hope that the Minister will make it absolutely clear to our constituents that, 67 days from now—the chances are looking more likely that we could crash out with no deal—very, very many of our constituents will find themselves in a really dire situation should they fall into difficulties abroad. They need to be given clear and specific advice about their holiday plans. For those of

our fellow citizens who have retired to the European Union and who find themselves in difficulties, I regret that this is a situation for which we will all have to take responsibility in years to come. I hope that the Government will rule out no deal because the consequences will be profound.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Bill accordingly read the Third time and passed.*

## Business Without Debate

### DELEGATED LEGISLATION

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Lindsay Hoyle):** With the leave of the House, we shall take motions 2 to 10 together.

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118(6)),*

#### EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION (CANALS AND INLAND WATERWAYS)

That the draft Merchant Shipping and Other Transport (Environmental Protection) (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2018, which were laid before this House on 27 November, be approved.

#### EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION (NUCLEAR SAFEGUARDS)

That the draft Nuclear Safeguards (EU Exit) Regulations 2018, which were laid before this House on 29 November, be approved.

#### EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION (PENSIONS)

That the draft Occupational and Personal Pension Schemes (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2018, which were laid before this House on 3 December, be approved.

#### EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION (PENSIONS)

That the draft Occupational and Personal Pension Schemes (Amendment etc.) (Northern Ireland) (EU Exit) Regulations 2018, which were laid before this House on 3 December, be approved.

#### EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION (LEGAL PROFESSION)

That the draft Services of Lawyers and Lawyer's Practice (Revocation etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, which were laid before this House on 21 November, be approved.

#### EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION (HEALTH AND SAFETY)

That the draft Justification Decision Power (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2018, which were laid before this House on 23 November, be approved.

#### EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION (TRADE MARKS)

That the draft Trade Marks (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2018, which were laid before this House on 28 November, be approved.

#### EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION (PATENTS)

That the draft Patents (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2018, which were laid before this House on 28 November, be approved.

#### EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION (ROAD TRAFFIC)

That the draft Motor Vehicles (Wearing of Seat Belts) (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2018, which were laid before this House on 29 November, be approved.—(*Jeremy Quin.*)

*Question agreed to.*

## COMMITTEES

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Lindsay Hoyle):** With the leave of the House, we shall take motions 11 and 12 together.

*Ordered,*

## JUSTICE

That Alex Chalk be discharged from the Justice Committee and Robert Courts be added.

## SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

That Neil O'Brien be discharged from the Science and Technology Committee and Mr Sam Gyimah be added.—(*Bill Wiggin, on behalf of the Selection Committee.*)

## Coty Site (Seaton Delaval)

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—(*Jeremy Quin.*)

7.56 pm

**Mr Ronnie Campbell** (Blyth Valley) (Lab): I held an Adjournment debate on this subject just over a year ago, when this factory closed. The factory was originally owned by Shulton. It made Old Spice aftershave, which anyone who is as old as me will remember. This was the company that made that product, and still made it up until the factory's closure. Of course, it went on to make Hugo Boss, which cost about 40 quid a bottle.

The factory closed under poor circumstances. There was a merger: Coty, an American company, had a 48% share and Proctor & Gamble a 52% share. A year after the merger, the factory closed. The company had factories in Spain, France and Germany. It also had a factory in Tipperary in Ireland, which closed along with ours. I believe that it also has one somewhere in Kent—in Ashford, I think.

The owners decided to close down the Seaton Delaval factory, which was making a good profit. Proctor & Gamble had invested £21 million in the new factory. We could not understand why they wanted to close it, until we looked into the deal and found that it was cheaper to sack British workers than it was to sack Spanish, German and French workers. It was down to the capitalist system—that was the way that it worked. The Americans wanted to take over the company and to get rid of some of the competition, and the cheapest one was, unfortunately, Seaton Delaval at that particular time. It was at least 20% more expensive to sack German workers and at least 7% more expensive to sack French workers.

The factory has been standing empty since it closed. I do not know whether it has deteriorated, but I am told that it is still in good shape. Heather Mills, who, as everyone will know, was married to Paul McCartney, is becoming a very decent and entrepreneurial businesswoman. She has already opened a couple of factories: one is in Seaton, producing vegan food. Vegan food might not be appetising to some of us in this Chamber, but it certainly is among the young people. From what I have heard, there are 3.5 million vegans in this country at this moment in time. Of course, that says a lot. Something is clearly going on here, because some of this food is pretty tasty. I have never tasted it, but my hon. Friend the Member for Wansbeck (Ian Lavery) says that he has had one of Greggs' sausages. I may never have tasted vegan food, but my granddaughter has. She buys it and says it is quite tasty now—not like it used to be in the old days, when it was horrible stuff. Now they put all sorts of spices in, and they do a good job.

Heather Mills wants to expand. She wants to use the Coty factory so that she can export—she has another factory making food for this country. The problem is that the owners are asking a lot of money for the Coty factory and the price is too high. She wants to invest a lot of money in it. The investment needed to get the factory up and running is about £4 million; after fitting it out with all the machinery, we are talking about £6 million. We can see that she needs a lot of money. I do not know what the owners are asking for the factory, but I know it is a lot.

We want to be careful here. I found out that Canada is investing \$153 million in vegan food. Remember we have a trade agreement with Canada—well, Europe has. Canada wants to become a world leader in vegan food. If Heather Mills wants to outdo Canada, we need to help her with costs.

The last time I spoke about this here, the Minister who responded was someone who later resigned over Europe—I cannot think of his constituency.

**Ian Lavery** (Wansbeck) (Lab): It could have been any of them.

**Mr Campbell:** Yes. He has gone, anyway.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): I was in contact with the hon. Gentleman before the debate, and—

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Lindsay Hoyle):** Order. Mr Shannon, I am sure that you have a direct link to the debate and that that is why you are here to help us.

**Jim Shannon:** Does the hon. Member for Blyth Valley (Mr Campbell) agree that the Government have the ability to intervene in such cases? An empty factory could open and therefore create jobs. There must be consideration of the local economy, and perhaps the Government could indirectly help the constituency.

I tried vegan sausage rolls in Westminster Hall's Jubilee Room last week, and the taste convinced me. It was hard to tell between the vegan roll and a sausage roll; I had both, and that is my honest opinion—and I love sausage rolls.

**Mr Ronnie Campbell:** That is an example of why I will have to change my food habits. I do not know what the local Indian takeaway will do when I go in and ask for vegan food. I do not think it will work. I will have a try, anyway.

There were a lot of jobs in the factory when it was run by Coty and Procter & Gamble, and they were all lost—at least 500 permanent and a lot of part-time jobs. The part-time jobs went to local people—married women doing a little bit of extra work. Those jobs were not replaced, but I understand that most of the older men got redundancy. I am not saying it was a bad deal. They got a good redundancy package, and most of them went on to get a job—that was the last information I had. The hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) makes an important point about investment in places such as Seaton Delaval.

Let me repeat what the Government said the last time this was debated:

“The Government are supporting the economy of the north-east by providing £380 million of local growth funding and improving infrastructure, skills, innovation and transport. That funding will lever in £300 million of public and private investment, and will create about 8,000 jobs.”—[*Official Report*, 20 April 2017; Vol. 624, c. 873.]

That was what I got the last time I was here, when the factory was closing. I am hoping that that is still on the table, and that the Minister can at least give some indication of whether we can help Heather Mills' VBites—that is the name of the company, and Heather is its leading light. The jobs would be very important for this part of the world, with so many having been lost there.

**Ian Lavery:** Will my hon. Friend briefly explain how many jobs could be created, and what that would mean for the economy of south-east Northumberland?

**Mr Campbell:** I am told that the main factory, which is good and has been invested in, would provide from 500 to more than 600 jobs for those preparing the food. As a knock-on, the rest of the factory would be made into start-up businesses. There are five or six small areas for start-up businesses, which is a good idea. I am told that if it takes off, we are talking about over 1,000 jobs. We should think about that venture, because vegan food is taking off. I am delighted to hear about vegan sausages; I must try them, seeing that everybody else has. I must try vegan food—I am sure I will one of these days—but I do not think the Indian restaurant has vegan chefs; that is the problem.

Seaton Delaval went through a bad patch last year when it lost all those jobs, especially the part-time ones. It wants them back. I drive past the factory often, and it is a shame to see that nice factory, which has had a lot of investment put into it, standing empty. I would like to see the Government giving a bit of encouragement and help. If their statement from my previous debate means anything, they should help.

8.6 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (Jake Berry):** It is a great privilege to appear before you this evening, Mr Deputy Speaker. You will not be able to get a sausage roll, vegan or not, between the ambition that the hon. Member for Blyth Valley (Mr Campbell) has for his constituency, and my ambition for the area. I will self-declare: I am not taking part in Veganuary, and I am not a vegangelist—the vegan equivalent of an evangelist—but I have tried a Greggs vegan sausage roll. It tasted to me much like any other Greggs sausage roll: not very nice.

I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on securing this debate on an important subject for his constituents. As he mentioned, it is not the first time he has done so: he brought it to the House in 2017. When a factory closes after 50 years at the heart of a community, all our thoughts should be with the people who worked there. I am very pleased to hear from the hon. Gentleman that many—96%, according to our measure—of those who worked in the factory have obtained new employment. Mr Deputy Speaker, you, like me, represent a manufacturing area. You will know that many people who work in manufacturing plants are concerned when they hear about redundancies, which affect not just them, but their family, their mortgage, their children, and all their hopes and ambitions for the future.

I understand that the hon. Member for Blyth Valley was absolutely instrumental in putting together the local response group when the redundancies were first known about.

**Mr Ronnie Campbell:** And the county council.

**Jake Berry:** The hon. Gentleman worked with the local authority, the county council, my Department, the Department for Work and Pensions and other Government agencies. I am informed that following the sterling work of the hon. Gentleman and others, 96% of former employees of the factory said that their transition from

[*Jake Berry*]

their former workplace was a success. However, that is not in any way to downplay the stress and disruption that families faced.

Turning to the future of the site, as the hon. Gentleman rightly points out, it was the place where Old Spice was manufactured. Its advertising slogan was, from memory, “The mark of a man”, but they also had this rather wonderful slogan on their bottle: “If your grandfather hadn’t worn it, you wouldn’t exist.” That shows that the advertising campaigns of the 1970s were slightly different from today’s. Thinking about the 1970s, beards are back in fashion, and apparently nationalisation is back in fashion in some parts of the House. Socialism is also back in fashion, allegedly, but not with my constituents. Perhaps Old Spice is due a comeback.

The hon. Gentleman is right that it is extremely important that this site remains vacant. He brings new information to me and to my Department about the interest of Heather Mills in acquiring the site for one of the exciting new businesses of the future—providing vegan food. I will certainly agree to go away with my team and make contact with Heather Mills. I must admit, as someone from Liverpool, that I was on the other side regarding the divorce, but I do know that through that divorce she obtained £24 million from Sir Paul McCartney, and she requires £10 million to deliver on her factory. All that aside, it is a new opportunity for the site and to create the desperately needed, secure, highly paid jobs that for me, as the northern powerhouse Minister, are about delivering the northern powerhouse.

As for the money going into the north-east, since the hon. Gentleman’s last debate we have seen the successful conclusion of the north of Tyne devolution deal. I worked very closely with people on a cross-party basis to secure what I am certain is a hugely exciting opportunity for the boroughs north of the Tyne that, across the lifetime of the deal, will see £600 million invested in the area. That is information new to this debate. I hope that he will reach out to the Mayor, Norman Redfearn, who was appointed temporarily until elections next May. The fact that no one has yet been elected should not discourage the hon. Gentleman from talking to the north of Tyne boroughs and the combined authority about ways in which they can lever in some of the £600 million—£20 million a year—that they are going to receive as part of this exciting deal.

Talking about economic renaissance, particularly of our manufacturing, the hon. Gentleman should look for inspiration—quite a long way down the road, but down the road none the less—at the work Ben Houchen is doing as the Mayor of Tees Valley. Like all the best people seeking to drive the northern powerhouse forward, he is working across political lines. He has been successful in setting up the first mayoral development corporation outside London for decades. On a recent visit to the SSI site, which many people would know as the former Redcar steelworks, I was pleased to announce £14 million of additional funding, which is part of the regeneration and redevelopment of that site, creating the highly paid, secure jobs that we all want to see in the northern powerhouse.

The hon. Gentleman talked briefly about the contribution that the LEP could make. He will be aware that £3.4 billion has already been invested across the north of England as part of the growth deals, with £379.6 million going into the north-east. The north-east has one of the highest performing LEPs. That is why—it is almost a victim of its own success—all of that £379 million is currently committed. That does not mean that if projects are underspent or do not proceed there will not be an opportunity to talk to the LEP about redirecting any underspends from the existing money. [*Interruption.*] The hon. Gentleman says that he has a meeting with the LEP. I encourage him to use that meeting to see whether that is possible.

In general, I believe that we are in a golden period for investment in the north-east. It is a hugely exciting time, with a Mayor in Tees Valley and a Mayor north of the Tyne. I hope that regardless of our political allegiances, we can lay aside our differences and say that our mission here in the House of Commons is to ensure that people across the north of England—north-east, north-west, Yorkshire and the Humber—benefit from the Government’s plan, the northern powerhouse. In one sentence, that is a plan to create better education, and better social and economic outcomes, across the north of England, so that no other generation will believe that their best hope and opportunity lie in getting the train to London, but can stay in the north of England, which all of us in the Chamber, virtually, have the privilege of knowing is the best place in this country to have the privilege of living.

*Question put and agreed to.*

8.14 pm

*House adjourned.*





# Westminster Hall

Monday 21 January 2019

[MR CHARLES WALKER *in the Chair*]

## College Funding

[*Relevant document: Oral evidence taken before the Education Committee on 10 October 2018, on school and college funding, HC 969.*]

4.30 pm

**Daniel Zeichner** (Cambridge) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House has considered e-petition 229744 relating to college funding.

I am moving the motion on behalf of the Petitions Committee. It is a pleasure to serve when you are in the Chair, Mr Walker. I should just say that, formerly, before I came to this place, I worked for Unison, one of the trade unions representing staff in colleges, and I am a member of Unite.

I will read the petition submitted by Charlotte Jones, a student at Brockenhurst College in Hampshire, but first let me congratulate those who have promoted it, including the thousands who lobbied Parliament a few months ago; commend the excellent work done by organisations such as the Association of Colleges, the Sixth Form Colleges Association, the University and College Union and Unison; and congratulate the almost 70,000 people who have signed the petition. It is great to see so many hon. Members in Westminster Hall today. I cannot believe that they are all fleeing the main Chamber, for one reason or another, at the moment. I hope that it is because of their enthusiasm for the subject under discussion here.

The petition is entitled:

“Increase college funding to sustainable levels—all students deserve equality!”

It states:

“We call on the Government to urgently increase college funding to sustainable levels, including immediate parity with recently announced increases to schools funding. This will give all students a fair chance, give college staff fair pay and provide the high-quality skills the country needs.

Funding for colleges has been cut by almost 30% from 2009 to 2019. A decade of almost continuous cuts and constant reforms have led to a significant reduction in the resources available for teaching and support for sixth formers in schools and colleges; potentially restricted course choice; fewer adults in learning; pressures on staff pay and workload; a growing population that is not able to acquire the skills the UK needs to secure prosperity post-Brexit.”

I shall start by asking the Minister a simple question: why? Why are 17 and 18-year-olds in colleges and sixth forms worth so much less than younger pupils or university students?

**Toby Perkins** (Chesterfield) (Lab): My hon. Friend is starting to make a very strong case about further education. In answer to his question, my belief is that we have a Government who fundamentally do not understand what further education is for. We have a Government full of people who have never experienced the further education sector, which is why they so undermine it.

**Daniel Zeichner:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I shall develop a very similar case in a moment, but I suspect that it goes wider than Government, because I suspect that the Minister and most others who speak today will agree that it is simply shameful that the divide has been allowed to grow. I suspect that the Minister will blame the Treasury, and I have some sympathy for that position, but I guess that others will say that the problem goes deeper. The near invisibility of further education and now, apparently, other colleges to people in this place is not a new phenomenon. Arguably, it is at the heart of our current political problem—a divided country, with too many people left behind and ignored. No wonder the education divide mirrors the EU divide almost exactly. That is why I argue that it is in everyone’s interest—everyone’s—that this huge injustice be tackled.

Let me go into some more detail regarding the petition and then move to discussing the national picture, alongside some examples local to me, and the impact of the current funding squeeze. As I said, the petition calls on the Government

“to urgently increase college funding to sustainable levels”

in order to

“give all students a fair chance, give college staff fair pay and provide the high-quality skills the country needs.”

The petition notes:

“Funding for colleges has been cut by almost 30%”

over the past decade, stretching resources, support and the staff available.

**Mike Hill** (Hartlepool) (Lab): In Hartlepool, we have three excellent 16-plus providers: Hartlepool College of Further Education, Hartlepool Sixth Form College and the English Martyrs School and Sixth Form College. Some of their cuts since 2010 have gone up to 62%. Does my hon. Friend agree that we need urgently to address funding in order to avoid the irreparable damage that that might do to our colleges?

**Daniel Zeichner:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I suspect that we may be going on a regional tour of colleges over the next 25 minutes or so. The picture that my hon. Friend paints is familiar across the country; indeed, it is all too recognisable across the nation. I represent Cambridge, a place that is rightly associated with excellent education and where higher education often dominates the agenda and discourse. Somehow that makes the contrast all the more stark between the focus on higher education policy—and, frankly, the resources—and that which goes to further education. Many of us remember the huge national outrage when tuition fees for university students were introduced and later trebled, but when fees were introduced in further education, where was the outrage? Where were the marches? In my patch, it was just me and a handful of local trade unionists out there talking about it—thanks, Peter Monaghan and others from Cambridge. Some people noticed, but the vast majority did not. Was the matter considered newsworthy? Hardly at all.

**Liz McInnes** (Heywood and Middleton) (Lab): I would like to add to the points that my hon. Friend is making. Where was the outrage when the education maintenance allowance was taken away? That seriously affected students

[Liz McInnes]

in further education, many of whom were unable to afford the bus fare even to get to college and receive an education.

**Daniel Zeichner:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. That issue is almost worthy of a whole debate in itself, but the problem is not just the removal of the education maintenance allowance, of course. Where was the outrage in the country about the near collapse in the number of mature and part-time students? People can read about that in the pages of the specialist press; I think that we all know why it does not reach any further.

**Mr David Lammy** (Tottenham) (Lab) *rose*—

**Daniel Zeichner:** I see my right hon. Friend ready to make some strong points.

**Mr Lammy:** On that excellent point, does my hon. Friend agree that we need to hear from the Government not about bringing back grammar schools, but about funding night schools? If, indeed, we exit from the European Union, should we not be giving people in our seaside towns, northern industrial areas and parts of London the skills to compete in the economy that we are going to have?

**Daniel Zeichner:** Characteristically, I completely agree with my right hon. Friend. Of course, he has been campaigning on these issues very powerfully; I just hope that people are listening.

Let me give some of the numbers. According to the House of Commons Library, in 2010 the average funding allocation was £4,633 per student. The 16 and 17-year-old funding rate has been frozen at £4,000 since 2013-14. The rate for 18-year-olds was cut to £3,300 in 2014-15 and has remained frozen since then. Funding per student aged 16 to 18 has seen the biggest squeeze of all stages of education for young people in recent years. By 2019-20, funding per young person in further education will be about the same as it was in 2006-07—only 10% higher than it was 30 years earlier.

**Rushanara Ali** (Bethnal Green and Bow) (Lab): Does my hon. Friend agree that the £3.3 billion of cuts in further education since 2010 is utterly devastating and, given the higher proportion of working-class students attending further education colleges—I was one of them—does he agree that this Government are hell-bent on making life a misery for working-class people in this country?

**Daniel Zeichner:** My hon. Friend makes the point very powerfully. As I said, I see the divide in my own city. She is absolutely right.

**Gareth Snell** (Stoke-on-Trent Central) (Lab/Co-op): My hon. Friend rightly mentioned the £4,000 rate freeze. He might like to know that, had the rate increased by inflation since 2013, the figure would be almost £4,300 today; that is just if it had kept pace with inflation. For cities such as Stoke-on-Trent, there would have been about £2.5 million more funding for further education. What does my hon. Friend think that we could have done with that money?

**Daniel Zeichner:** My hon. Friend makes a very powerful point. When many of us go into institutions and ask, “What could you have done and what would the difference have been, had you had these resources?” the response is very telling. I am sure that we will hear similar accounts from others. I will come on in a moment to some of the implications of the numbers.

**Rebecca Pow** (Taunton Deane) (Con): The hon. Gentleman is making a powerful case. Just to put a positive spin on it for this Government in the beginning, my local college listened to me and it is very pleased about the bus passes for 16 to 18-year-olds. That has made a great deal of difference for its students.

On the point that the hon. Gentleman is making about the finances, the two colleges in my area—the excellent Richard Huish College, which is in the top 10 in the country, and Bridgwater and Taunton College, which also does an excellent job—have both raised concerns about finances. They find that the cuts mean that they cannot offer staff as much as systems outside FE can, and that it is difficult to recruit. Might the hon. Gentleman comment on that? In the light of the fact that schools outside that system got a 3.5% pay award, which is hugely welcome—I know that those teachers welcome it—does he agree that we should look at the FE system and at least bring it into parity?

**Daniel Zeichner:** Strangely enough, I will come on to staffing issues in a moment. I suggest that the hon. Lady addresses those points to her colleagues on the Government Benches, because they are in a position to do something about it. Young people will be even more enamoured with free bus passes for people up to the age of 25.

Spending per student in school sixth forms will be lower than at any point since 2002. Although there are some minor scraps of comfort around funding for meals and certain subjects, and extra hours for T-levels, they do little to address the cuts that we have seen.

The issues are slightly different for sixth-form colleges offering A-levels and further education colleges offering a number of different qualifications, but the problem of cuts is universal. Our friends at the Sixth Form Colleges Association have tirelessly campaigned on that with their “Raise the Rate” campaign, which has attracted the support of many MPs. They are calling for the national funding rate—the rate of funding per student—for 16 to 18-year-olds to be raised to at least £4,760 per student, including 18-year-olds, and for it to be kept in line with inflation year on year.

**Nic Dakin** (Scunthorpe) (Lab): Is my hon. Friend as puzzled as I am that, at £3,300 each, 18-year-olds are the cheapest people in the world to educate, given that, in my experience, people on an additional year are actually the most demanding to teach?

**Daniel Zeichner:** My hon. Friend makes a very important point. Those students suddenly and miraculously become much more expensive when they turn up at university; it is amazing.

**Mrs Anne Main** (St Albans) (Con): I am sorry that I cannot stay for the whole debate, but I am chairing a Committee later. The hon. Gentleman may mention it

later in his speech, but I wanted to put on record the important matter of special needs funding. Oaklands College in my constituency has 200 pupils with special needs funding, and that puts huge pressure on the college. I am fully aware that there are cutbacks to be made, but sometimes services just have to be provided for people who have particular needs and need to get their life back on track.

**Daniel Zeichner:** I could not agree more with the hon. Lady, and I will come to that point in my speech. I want to turn to some of the effects of this underfunding, which is significant and has damaging consequences in sixth forms. In total, 50% of schools and colleges have dropped courses in modern foreign languages as a result of funding pressures, with A-levels in German, French and Spanish being the main casualties. That would seem to be the wrong way to go, especially when we are talking about global Britain.

Over one third of sixth forms have dropped science, technology, engineering and maths subjects, while two thirds have reduced student support services, such as mental health support, which we know is increasingly required. There are also, in many cases, limited careers advice services, and that also has a damaging effect. Two thirds of schools and colleges have moved from a four-subject offer to a three-subject offer, significantly reducing students' choice and ultimately narrowing their options after study. For state schools with sixth forms offering post-16 study, the underfunding affects the education of all students, because, as we know, such schools frequently cross-subsidise post-16 education with funding that is meant for 11 to 16-year-olds.

Given that this country, quite rightly, requires its young people to participate in education or training until the age of 18, it seems quite incredible that across all 16 to 19 provision we reduce investment in education so sharply at the age of 16, from £5,341 for a 15-year-old to just £4,000 for a 16-year-old.

**Andy Slaughter** (Hammersmith) (Lab): My hon. Friend is making an excellent speech. Does he agree that the level of cuts is so extreme that very dramatic steps are being taken? Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College is one of the biggest in the country, but it has cut its A-levels completely. It has also cut back on English for speakers of other languages, because funding has not been available. It is now redeveloping its sites to release land, just to keep itself going. How can we plan for the future of FE, when there is so much uncertainty and so little finance available?

**Daniel Zeichner:** As always, my hon. Friend makes an excellent point. It is very difficult for people working in the sector to plan ahead. With years of area reviews, and all the rest of it, it has been a tough time. At the moment, the situation ahead does not look that good.

Further education colleges provide our communities with access to skills across the board. We see even more diverse challenges there. Although, in their response to the petition, the Government acclaimed their commitment to the adult education budget, in reality the initial teaching and learning funding allocations for adult further education and skills in England fell from a baseline of £3.18 billion in 2010 to £2.94 billion in 2015-16—a reduction of 14% in real terms—and more

for the non-apprenticeship part of the adult skills budget. Since then, there has been an increase in funding for apprenticeships, but that really cannot make up for the thousands of people across the country who have suffered as a consequence of these cuts, and who want to upskill and reskill, as technology changes our jobs and our lives.

What about those who work in colleges? College staff were mentioned earlier. Staggeringly, college teachers are paid on average £7,000 a year less than those in schools, according to the University and College Union. In conjunction with busier jobs and fewer resources, this is stretching staff to breaking point, as any of us who go into colleges will hear.

**Mike Amesbury** (Weaver Vale) (Lab): On that point, 57 members of staff were recently made redundant at Warrington and Vale Royal College in my constituency when the Northwich campus was closed. It is facing funding pressures of about £4 million as a direct result of this under-resourcing.

**Daniel Zeichner:** My hon. Friend is right and sadly there is a familiar story of not only redundancies, but insecure contracts. The level of morale is really challenging for so many staff. Unison's head of education, Ruth Levin, pointed out that colleges have faced underfunding, leading to job cuts, course closures and larger class sizes "for many years". She went on to say:

"Pay in further education has fallen by more than 21% in real terms over the past nine years".

It is clear that further education colleges have been hit the hardest in recent years, and it is simply not possible to continue down this road of less funding and more demand.

**Alex Sobel** (Leeds North West) (Lab/Co-op): Further education colleges are being asked to implement T-levels, but the T-level system, even though it has not started yet, is already in crisis. The exam boards are taking the Government to court. The colleges are saying that they are unable to cope with the level of funding. Employers are unaware of them. Will that not add to colleges' burden?

**Daniel Zeichner:** My hon. Friend raises some important points. I guess it will be for the Minister to respond. In a sector that has seen constant change and churn over many years, there is sometimes a yearning for stability.

On that note, the Prime Minister's review into post-18 education and funding, chaired by Philip Augar, was announced last year and is eagerly awaited—although I guess the Prime Minister might have other things on her mind at the moment.

**Louise Haigh** (Sheffield, Heeley) (Lab): My hon. Friend is making the point about pay and the impact on recruitment and retention. Does he agree that it is especially acute for specialist areas? Sheffield College has seen significant growth in the delivery of higher apprentices in engineering and manufacturing, but it is really struggling to recruit in those specialisms. It has run four recruitment campaigns, but still finds it almost impossible to recruit. These are areas that are crucial for the future of our economy. We need to ensure that they have full parity of pay, so that we can attract the best and the brightest into this sector.

**Daniel Zeichner:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising that. I was not aware of that, but I must say that recruitment is a continual problem in high-cost areas such as mine. Given the levels of pay, that is hardly surprising.

Returning to the Augar review, I fear that we will probably have much the same story. I suspect that there will be warm words about further education. However, certainly in terms of the coverage, I expect, yet again, the world's focus to be on higher education and universities. Important though those things are, I fear that there are unlikely to be real solutions for colleges, but we live in hope—we shall see.

**Peter Aldous (Waveney) (Con):** The hon. Gentleman just made an interesting point, but in coastal communities such as the one that I represent, which includes Lowestoft Sixth Form College and East Coast College, colleges are vital for the link from education to the workplace and in improving social mobility. We probably need a change in mind-set in this country with regard to how we fund post-16 education.

**Daniel Zeichner:** The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. Only a few days ago we were discussing that in the east of England all-party parliamentary group. Would it not be wonderful if we could have cross-party consensus on this kind of change?

Even the Further Education Commissioner told the Education Committee that further education funding is “unfair” and “sparse”. I have seen this at Cambridge Regional College, an FE college in my constituency, which I visit regularly. I see the excellent work that staff do with students and apprentices from right across the east of England, but the college remains under-resourced and overstretched.

The principal of Cambridge Regional College, Mark Robertson, told me that

“colleges train 2.2 million people annually, and ... further education students aged over 19 generate an additional £70 billion for the economy over their lifetime. However, colleges and schools are facing increased pension costs and colleges have not yet had assurance that this increased cost—of around 2% of all income—will be funded.”

That makes no economic sense to me. With colleges adding such huge value to the economy, why are we hitting them so hard?

A similar situation can be found at the fantastic sixth-form colleges in Cambridge, Hills Road Sixth Form College and Long Road Sixth Form College, and in the sixth-form provision at Parkside Community College and Netherhall School. All the teachers at those colleges and schools tell me the same thing; indeed, I see it for myself week after week when I visit them. There are brilliant, hard-working, energetic young people, but increasingly they feel that the system is stacked against them.

Hills Road Sixth Form College is often cited as one of the best state sixth-form colleges in the country, but staff there have told me about the impact of cuts on their provision. Today, the college has £100,000 less to spend on additional learning support for students who need it than it did in 2010. It has been forced to offer fewer subjects and many students take fewer subjects. The average class size has grown by two students, while per capita student funding has dropped by over £1,000.

**Sandy Martin (Ipswich) (Lab):** Ipswich was very pleased to welcome opportunity area status, which we were granted by the previous Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for Putney (Justine Greening), to try to improve the not very good social mobility in our area. However, there is no way that we will improve social mobility if we do not have the necessary facilities in place, and in particular the skilled and competent staff to help provide the opportunity for additional social mobility.

**Daniel Zeichner:** My hon. Friend and near neighbour is absolutely right, and that is a key issue for the east of England, which is often seen as a prosperous and successful region, but its skills shortages have been a problem for a long, long time and they need to be addressed.

I will also quote Yolanda Botham, the principal of Long Road Sixth Form College, another excellent college in Cambridge. She tells me:

“The current level of funding has meant for Long Road that we have had to reduce our curriculum offer. We no longer provide A-level German, for example. We have had to reduce the broader opportunities and enrichment opportunities that we can provide, limiting the number of trips and experiences we can offer, which really matter for social mobility. Visits and trips show what's possible and enable students to see beyond their immediate horizons.”

She says that it is particularly galling to note that

“our private school neighbours, charging £17,000 annually, do not have to pay VAT, yet we do.”

**Catherine West (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab):** Does my hon. Friend agree that it seems a bit perverse in the days of Brexit to be cutting back on foreign language provision?

**Daniel Zeichner:** Indeed it is, but this place is full of ironies on a daily basis, is it not?

Yolanda Botham said that for her college

“that £200,000 extra a year could really make an important difference, such as supporting through subsidy more students to take advantage of university summer schools and other opportunities.”

That is exactly the kind of point about social mobility that colleagues have been making. She continued:

“An increase in funds would allow us to better cater for the mental health needs of our students and so, over time, maybe reduce the demands on the NHS. This is in increasing need amongst young people.”

**Cat Smith (Lancaster and Fleetwood) (Lab):** My hon. Friend is making an excellent speech. Recently, I met principals from the Lancashire Colleges network, including the principals of Blackpool and the Fylde College and of Lancaster and Morecambe College. The point they really emphasised to me is that this situation goes beyond subject provision. Further education colleges are absolutely on the frontline of supporting young people through what can often be very challenging mental health needs, at a time when the NHS cannot cope and cannot meet those needs fast enough. Does he agree that FE colleges provide far more than just basic qualifications in education and support young people through what can often be a very challenging time?

**Daniel Zeichner:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. That is a message we hear in both colleges and universities: the demands on them are rising. If, at the same time, they have to cut back to just their core provision, who

helps the students and what happens next when those problems arise? The cost of meeting them moves somewhere else.

That colleges have to pay VAT has been a long-running problem for sixth forms, and it really is a kick in the teeth for headteachers who are doing their best to balance their budgets, while competing with private schools that are exempt from VAT.

The problems go wider still. The chief executive of Cambridge Academic Partnership, the multi-academy trust that runs Parkside Sixth Form College in Cambridge, spoke to me about the impact of cuts on the international baccalaureate. He said:

“The International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme is recognised across the world as a rigorous qualification, and it is well regarded precisely for the breadth of its curriculum. IB students distinguish themselves by undertaking study across the academic disciplines at a more advanced level. Therefore, they leave further education with an impressive knowledge base that spans their native tongue, a foreign language, the Humanities, the Sciences, Mathematics, and the Arts. Within each of those disciplines lies a plethora of subjects from which students can tailor their Diploma according to the nuances of their interests and future plans. State centres that offer the IB qualification do so due to their commitment to developing well-rounded students, equipped to contribute across all sectors of society.”

Of course, after all that there is a “but” coming.

**Faisal Rashid** (Warrington South) (Lab): Will my hon. Friend give way?

**Daniel Zeichner:** Ah, my hon. Friend is going to interrupt at the “but”—very good. Yes, I am happy to give way.

**Faisal Rashid:** I am very grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way. Last Friday, I visited Barrow Hall College in my constituency of Warrington South. It was so refreshing to see so many young people engaged politically and exhibiting so much potential—I could see their potential. Sadly, however, I fear that all too often that potential is being squandered by a further education system that is drastically underfunded. Does he agree that we should all support the “Raise the Rate” campaign, to ensure that young people receive the investment they deserve?

**Daniel Zeichner:** I very much agree. I also applaud my hon. Friend’s enthusiasm, which is the enthusiasm that can be seen in colleges. However, there is also that slight sense of shame when one sees the problems that they are facing.

After the “but”, the chief executive of Cambridge Academic Partnership told me:

“When funding is limited, the skills set that we wish to provide to our students is impacted. Registered IB centres wish to offer students sufficient choice between subjects to give them a learning experience that complements their interests and strengths. A lack of funding reduces that choice because sustaining the breadth of teaching expertise required becomes impossible. It is crucial that school funding reflects the importance accorded to a broad curriculum. If centres are forced to eliminate subjects, it either deters students from undertaking the programme, or undermines the principles of the qualification itself: to be principled, broad-minded and internationally minded.”

Post-16 education is vital to the UK’s prosperity, and at a time when many fear that the Government’s stance on immigration is making access to skills more uncertain,

it is foolish to under-invest in young people’s education and training. To be competitive in a global marketplace, the UK must adequately resource the education of future generations. If the Home Secretary acts on the policy proposals in his immigration White Paper, which already threaten the economy as they will restrict access to skills so dramatically, it is essential that we push education and skills right up the agenda, or we will face a crisis that could take many years to resolve. We should be preparing now for that, as providing people with the skills that the country needs takes time, resources and support.

I will conclude by offering an alternative. Labour’s 2017 manifesto made a real offer for education—a national education service. There would be free, lifelong education in further education colleges, enabling everyone to upskill or retrain at any point in life. The manifesto noted:

“Our skills and training sector has been held back by repeated reorganisation, which deprives providers, learners and employers of the consistency they need to assess quality. Labour would abandon Conservative plans to once again reinvent the wheel by building new technical colleges, redirecting the money to increase teacher numbers in the FE sector”.

I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool South (Gordon Marsden), who is on the shadow Front Bench, will have more to say, but our manifesto commitment is a real offer for the further education sector and for students. It has to be a strong offer; we cannot go on like this. We cannot go on without being able to say why we as a country so undervalue our 16 and 17-year-olds. I hope that the Minister will be able to provide an explanation.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Charles Walker (in the Chair):** Order. A huge number of Members are seeking to catch my eye. If every speaker sticks to six minutes for their speech, they should all get in.

4.58 pm

**Robert Halfon** (Harlow) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Walker. I welcome the Minister, who is my successor in the role. I know that she has a passion for further education.

We know that FE is vital for our economy. Done well, it can tackle three huge deficits: our skills deficit, our social justice deficit and our social capital deficit. Our colleges are vital assets. They are institutes that should be at the heart of every community. Although we are talking about funding today, I will take this chance to praise my local college, Harlow College, which is one of the finest colleges in the country. It has had a significant amount of funds to develop an advanced manufacturing centre, a new maths school and an aircraft college at Stansted airport, one of the first of its kind in the United Kingdom. I know that some funds are coming to our colleges, and that is one reason why I have visited Harlow College more than 65 times since I became a Member of Parliament. Nevertheless, the chasm in funding for education either side of a student’s 16th birthday has now widened to 24%.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies has given FE the dubious accolade of “biggest loser” in education, noting that it is the only area to fall in real terms, year on year,

[Robert Halfon]

for more than 10 years. By 2020, we will be spending the same amount in real terms on educating and training 16 to 18-year-olds as we were in 1990. People might be forgiven for thinking that that is an accidental failure of policy making; the truth is that it is much worse. On 31 January 2017, the Minister for Schools told the Education Committee that in 2010 the Government decided to prioritise spending on five to 16-year-olds—on the grounds that it had a more demonstrable impact on life chances—than on post-16 education, when presumably it would be “too late”. But people develop at different points on the education ladder of opportunity and, for some, FE can be the chrysalis stage between the caterpillar and the butterfly.

**Mr Iain Duncan Smith** (Chingford and Woodford Green) (Con): A recent report by the Centre for Social Justice showed that only 15% of people in the UK who start work at entry level will ever rise above that level, and that is one of the lowest percentages in the developed world. Does my right hon. Friend agree that colleges such as the excellent Waltham Forest College are key if people are to upskill and change skills, and that we should not, therefore, write people off at the age of 16, 17 or 18, or even 35 or 40? Colleges such as the ones that he and I have mentioned are in a real position to help people to achieve that, and therefore, in some senses, they are more important even than universities.

**Robert Halfon:** My right hon. Friend is absolutely right. Colleges are very important for social justice because they help to give people from disadvantaged backgrounds the chance to climb the education ladder of opportunity, even though we know that life chances are largely influenced during the time before a child starts school. The Education Committee, which I chair, will soon be producing a report on that subject.

FE colleges are the economic trampoline that our country badly needs. With one in 10 degrees now achieved in colleges, there is huge potential for FE to drive the revolution in degree apprenticeships that the Education Committee called for in our recent report on value for money in higher education. The introduction of T-levels is a good sign that the Government are getting behind FE rather than perpetuating its status as a poor relation of secondary and higher education, but the excellent investment in T-levels is not the same as core investment in FE. The £500 million provided for T-levels is additional funding for a new initiative. T-levels are of a scale and seriousness far beyond those of the relatively small-scale targeted funds, which are eye-catching in a Budget but will not lead to lasting long-term change.

Before embarking on costly new projects, such as national colleges and institutes of technology, the Government need to consider whether existing providers could deliver their policy objectives. We often announce new initiatives when we should really bring together and strengthen what we already have. On 10 October last year, as part of the “Love Our Colleges” campaign, we held a special session with the Association of Colleges, the National Union of Students and the Sixth Form Colleges Association. James Kewin from the SFCA told us:

“Too much of what we see in 16 to 19 now starts with the press release and works back...policy by press release is quite damaging and the much more mundane reality is we just need a higher rate of funding.”

That is exactly what the Education Committee wants to see, and it is why last April we launched our inquiry into school and college funding to examine where the truth lay in the polarised debate between those who say that education funding has been subject to swingeing cuts and those who claim it has gone up in recent years. Yes, our colleges need more money—starting with the core funding rate of £4,000 per student—but it is even more important that the Department for Education comes up with a long-term strategy for schools and colleges. If the NHS can have a 10-year plan and £20 billion extra, why can education and our colleges not have a 10-year plan and the money they need?

In the written evidence to our inquiry, the real-terms reduction in post-16 funding was deemed to be inexplicable after the raising of the participation age to 18, especially when one accounted for the fact that, as has been highlighted, the cost of providing education—particularly technical education—between the ages of 16 and 18 is higher. That is evidenced by the fact that charges for post-16 education in the independent sector have gone up rather than down.

In truth, changing all that will involve self-restraint on the part of policy makers and Ministers. We will need to resist the temptation to tweak and fiddle. We will need to focus on the outcomes that we want in 10 to 20 years’ time, not on what might be attractive over a shorter timetable. Yes, the Committee is hearing evidence that is critical of the Government’s approach, but we are trying to help the Minister and to be as supportive as we can of the Department as it enters into negotiations with the Treasury for the next spending review period. A Select Committee trying to help the Department it oversees is certainly swimming against the tide, but I hope that our report will lead to much more investment in FE colleges and a new, long-term approach. For too long, FE has been called the Cinderella of education, but we should remember that Cinderella became a member of the royal family, and she did not crash the carriage. We need to banish the ugly sisters of snobbery and underfunding.

5.5 pm

**Laura Smith** (Crewe and Nantwich) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Walker, and to take part in this incredibly important debate on further education funding. It is obvious that the matter is of great importance to my constituency, as we were one of the top 10 constituencies in terms of responses to the petition.

In my constituency we are lucky to have two sixth-form colleges in Nantwich—Brine Leas and Malbank—and we are extremely lucky to have the college I attended in Crewe. The college has changed dramatically since I was there. Not only has it changed its name to Cheshire College South and West, but the building underwent an incredible transformation during the last Labour Government and we are now proud to have a modern facility with fantastic resources, unlike the creaky 1960s tower block I enrolled at.

Cheshire College South and West provides a variety of courses, boasts its very own award-winning student-run restaurant called “Academy”, and has a hair salon, a theatre and an incredible fitness centre. The college sits in a residential area of Crewe, which is a post-industrial town that suffers from high levels of poverty, with

people trapped in work that simply does not pay. The college provides opportunities to many local schoolchildren and to the community in general, offering space for community groups, meeting rooms for businesses and experiences that people otherwise simply would not have.

It sounds too good to be true. There always is a “but” with these things, and the big “but” is exactly the reason we are here today: Cheshire College South and West faces huge funding challenges. I am here to highlight that and to make the Minister aware of how devastating it would be to my community to lose that excellent education provision. Sadly, we are already seeing the university I attended, Manchester Metropolitan, withdraw its university campus from Crewe; that is a huge blow. We cannot allow FE opportunities to shrink for my constituents as well.

A key point that really illustrates the funding pressures in FE is that in real terms, funding for 16 to 18-year-olds is back to its 1990 level. To put that into context, I was five years old in that year, Margaret Thatcher resigned and Nelson Mandela was released from prison. How can it be that 29 years later funding has gone so far backwards? I have been informed that while costs continue to increase, our college will face considerable funding pressures next year, causing a potential negative impact of more than £1 million. The college will undoubtedly make cuts, and we all know that cuts come in the form of jobs. That will be devastating not only for those who are dedicated to teaching, but for the opportunities available to our future generations, not to mention the impact on our local economy.

It is important also to make it clear that pay is a major issue both for staff and for the colleges for which they work. Two thirds of college leaders cite an inability to match pay expectations as a major barrier to recruiting skilled staff.

**Stephanie Peacock (Barnsley East) (Lab):** I congratulate my hon. Friend on her powerful argument. The picture she has painted is very similar to the situation faced by Barnsley College. I recently met with staff there, who highlighted that the college is really struggling to recruit in core subjects. To make matters worse, students often come to the college below the standard that they should be at when they leave school.

**Laura Smith:** The situation that my hon. Friend and I are talking about is reflected in all constituencies, and that is why we are here today. The University and College Union has made it clear that funding reductions have meant that many colleges have had to make difficult decisions about what to fund. For students, those restrictions have meant fewer hours for teaching and support and a more limited range of study choices. For staff, pay has fallen in value by 25% in real terms since 2009. In cash terms, that means a £2,484 pay cut for those at the bottom end of the scale, rising to more than £9,000 for experienced lecturers and even more for those higher up the scale. For colleges that have failed to implement the recommended pay rises, the fall has been even greater. Since 2010, some 24,000 teachers have left the further education sector. That is around a third of the total teaching workforce.

Why is this happening? The Conservatives have ruthlessly cut funding for FE colleges and reduced entitlements for adult learners. That has led to diminishing numbers of courses and students, and has plunged the FE sector

into crisis. The Labour party recognises that FE is an essential part of our education system that plays an important role in young adult education and lifelong learning. I firmly believe that after nearly 10 years of neglect, only the Labour party will correct the historic neglect of the FE sector by supplying the investment that teachers deserve. After all, it was the Tories who scrapped education maintenance allowance, which supported disadvantaged young people to stay in college—something that was so important to students in constituencies such as mine.

However, while this Conservative Government remain in charge of policy, I appeal to the Minister once again. I have already written and asked questions on this matter. First, what recent assessment has she made of the adequacy of Government funding for further education colleges in England? Secondly, what assessment has her Department made of the level of pay inequality between schools, universities and colleges in the education sector? Thirdly, what assessment has she made of the recent letter from Her Majesty’s chief inspector to the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney South and Shoreditch (Meg Hillier), which raised concerns about significant under-investment in the further education sector? I sincerely hope that the Minister can provide answers to those questions at the end of the debate.

**Mr Charles Walker (in the Chair):** Thank you, colleagues, for your immaculate timekeeping.

5.12 pm

**Sir John Hayes (South Holland and The Deepings) (Con):** I refer Members to my entry in the Register of Members’ Financial Interests. For most of my lifetime—perhaps all of it—a misapprehension has pervaded and affected the application of Government policy. That misapprehension has been that people can only gain esteem and fulfilment through academic accomplishment. As a result, practical learning has been perpetually neglected by Governments of both parties.

It was in that spirit and against that backdrop that, as a shadow Minister in the mid-2000s, I began debating these issues and considering them carefully. Indeed, I worked with the hon. Member for Blackpool South (Gordon Marsden), who chaired the all-party skills group at the time and is the shadow Education Minister today, to look at how we could elevate practical learning. To do so, it was necessary to challenge many of the assumptions that had permeated previously—assumptions that were given life by the previous Government’s much-vaunted ambition to send 50% of people to university. I always thought the problem with that ambition was what it said about the other 50%, who did not go to university but went into practical subjects, further education and all kinds of other learning. We had some success. We grew apprenticeship numbers to their largest level in modern times—perhaps of all time. We protected the budget for adult learning, working with the right hon. Member for Twickenham (Sir Vince Cable), who was Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills when I was the Minister for further education, skills and lifelong learning.

However, that success is now in jeopardy. I have to challenge the Minister about the decline in apprenticeship numbers that has resulted, in part, from a misunderstanding

[*Sir John Hayes*]

of the new levy—I am not against the levy as a matter of principle, but its implementation has been problematic—and the decline in adult learning in particular. I say that for the following reasons: first, there is a strong utilitarian case for further education and training, which is about feeding the economy with the skills it needs for us to prosper. That is a given, and I think all Members in this Chamber would agree with it. Secondly, there is a case for communal health being part of the value of practical learning. When people learn and gain new competencies, they grow and become better citizens, seeing themselves as more useful to those around them.

**Dr David Drew** (Stroud) (Lab/Co-op): Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that one of the most valuable things that further education does is to allow people—whether they be native to this country or a migrant—to improve their language skills, including by learning a foreign language? That was always one of the ways in which FE colleges reached out and gave people opportunities.

**Sir John Hayes:** As the hon. Gentleman knows, FE colleges train 2.2 million young people and adults. The courses they run range from fundamental issues such as the acquisition of good English, as he suggests, to the most advanced skills. They also provide an opportunity for people to learn throughout their lives. FE is the principal vehicle by which people upskill and reskill in the way my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Mr Duncan Smith) described, and that is essential if we are to fuel the economy with what it requires. It is simply not enough to train people who are entering the workforce: we have to look at how people who are in the workforce already can adapt what they can do to suit changing economic circumstances.

**Rebecca Pow:** Will my right hon. Friend give way?

**Sir John Hayes:** I will give way very briefly, as I am conscious of time.

**Rebecca Pow:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that FE colleges, particularly Bridgwater and Taunton College in my constituency, are really important in delivering the apprenticeship programme? That college has just won a Lion award, as it is doing such a good job. Although the Government's apprenticeship programme must be commended, especially the Minister's work, does my right hon. Friend agree that for the programme to really be successful, we must address the issue of funding for our FE colleges, because they are so valuable to its delivery?

**Sir John Hayes:** Yes, I agree. When I was the Minister responsible for apprenticeships, we not only boosted their number, but increased their quality. For the first time, we put in place statutory definitions of what an apprenticeship constituted. We moved away from the programme-led apprenticeships that had been a feature of the previous regime. We said that apprenticeships had to last a set amount of time, had to be linked to real employment, and had to confer real skills needed by the economy. My hon. Friend is right that apprenticeships matter, as long as they are of the right quality and are substantial, and that is what we built. However, I have to say that the levy has not been successful in maintaining

that number. There are all kinds of questions about the apprenticeship levy, and I am sure that the Minister will want to answer those questions when she sums up.

As I have listed the virtues of further education and practical learning, I will finally say that it leads to personal fulfilment. The case for education can be made in terms of utility, or in terms of communal health and wellbeing, but ultimately it should be made for its own sake. People are more joyful, more contented and better for the learning they gain in FE colleges across this country, and we should be proud of that.

I will end here, Mr Walker, because you have sanctioned me not to speak for too long, which will come as a disappointment to my many admirers in the Chamber—mainly on the Opposition Benches, actually. I will finish by saying this: we plant trees for those born later, and we fund, fuel and furnish skills for them too, for in building those skills we build all of our futures.

5.19 pm

**Laura Pidcock** (North West Durham) (Lab): I have considerably fewer admirers than the right hon. Member for South Holland and The Deepings (Sir John Hayes). [HON. MEMBERS: "No!"]

This is a pertinent debate, and I thank everybody who made it possible: the college sector, sixth forms, the University and College Union, and members of the public. It is a topic that is close to my heart and that of the community I represent, as we in North West Durham have recently witnessed the direct impact of funding cuts for 16 to 18-year-olds. Last year, Wolsingham School was forced to close the doors of its sixth-form college to local pupils; we hope that closure is temporary, but it is a very serious situation. Many factors were cited, but essentially it boils down to the fact that rural schools, which are well loved by the community, were starved of funding for many years, particularly at the top age range.

In another part of my constituency, management and staff at Derwentside College are working incredibly hard to maintain standards in the midst of relentless real-terms cuts to their budgets and decreasing per pupil funding. In addition, because of the college's large number of apprentices, it has been disproportionately hit by the effects of the apprenticeship levy. While the levy was supported across the board, it has been bureaucratic in its implementation and has hit numbers in key areas. All that uncertainty has taken place in the context of real-terms pay cuts for the incredibly dedicated staff. I have no doubt that that picture is being replicated across the country. Derwentside College is a wonderful college. It is so warm and welcoming. It is extremely important for my community that the resource is kept, because it is a place of safety and refuge from the harshness of everyday life, where people can study and learn for their future.

I agree with what was said in an earlier intervention; I genuinely think that the Government do not really care about further education. It was pointed out that working-class students disproportionately engage in further education, and perhaps that is why there is little care for the sector.

The crisis has been coming for many years, and the Government have been warned over and over again. Sixth-form funding for 16-year-olds has been frozen since

2013-14. For 18-year-olds, it was reduced to £3,300 in 2014-15. There is no logic or justification for the cuts or the levels of funding. It is hard not to conclude that further education has been an easy target. The sector is now beyond stretched—it is at breaking point. In real terms, funding for 16 to 19 education has declined by 22% since the coalition Government were elected. Over the same period, there has been an increase in student numbers and a decrease in teaching staff across the sector. Sixth-form colleges have been trying to perform miracles, and enough is enough.

The Government need to understand very clearly the result of the cuts. Courses are being stripped, restricting the options for what my constituents can entertain as a future career. An inadequate and very expensive transport system—I keep banging on about this, but transport is pivotal for people in my community—means that people cannot easily travel elsewhere for their education. Staff workload is increasing and because of austerity and cuts elsewhere, such as in public health services, colleges are seeing increasing numbers of students with mental health and wellbeing difficulties. That is no wonder when poverty is entrenched.

I know that some people go into Derwentside College with no food in their bellies and no money to buy food. Lecturers—those dedicated staff—make sure that those young people have a meal in their bellies so that they can study. That is not accounted for in any spreadsheet or funding formula. Some schools have been allocated funding to deal with mental health problems—it is still not enough—but colleges have been left out in the cold and not had any additional funding for that.

Thinking about the staff, college pay has fallen in value by a quarter since 2009 according to the University and College Union. In cash terms, that translates to a £2,484 pay cut at the bottom point of the scale. That is a shocking and disastrous way to treat professionals in the sector. Teachers in further education colleges earn on average £7,000 less than teachers in schools. What is the result? It is no shock that since 2010, approximately 24,000 further education teachers have left the sector, which is around a third of the total workforce.

Across the country, students and their families, the communities they come from and their future employers value the work that colleges do. Never mind asking the Government to love colleges; if only they would listen. The crux of the matter is—this was mentioned before, and I agree with the point—that the snobbery around further education colleges has to end. They are as important as any other sector. The Sixth Form Colleges Association claims that to increase student support services to the required level, to protect minority subjects and to increase non-qualification time—for example, extracurricular activities—the Government would have to increase national funding for 16 to 18-year-olds by £760 a student a year in the 2019 spending review. That is the bare minimum just to allow colleges to stand still or survive. I suspect that for a more expansive view of the college sector, we will need a change of Government. That cannot come too soon for the sector.

5.25 pm

**Mr Marcus Fysh (Yeovil) (Con):** It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Walker. I congratulate the many members of the public who have signed the

petition on this extremely important matter. I want to set the scene by talking about what happens in Yeovil. We have an incredibly successful college. It does a fantastic job for its students and it very much wishes to be at the heart of skills development in the south-west, to work with other colleges and the local enterprise partnership, and to make a contribution, which it is well set to do.

The Minister will be aware that some of her officials have been working with the college to help develop various elements of the apprenticeship scheme, which has been a great success, and to think about what happens with T-levels. One feature of my part of the south-west is that it is a hub for defence industrial manufacturing and for the STEM skills that go with that. The college does incredibly well and is an exemplar of how to involve businesses—they often need skills that do not come out of universities in the same way as colleges—in developing programmes for apprenticeships and T-levels, and thinking about how they might look in the future.

On Thursday, I was at Leonardo, our helicopter manufacturer—the only end-to-end aircraft manufacturer that the UK still has—and I met the team that has been working with Yeovil College to help develop the apprenticeship scheme. They were incredibly enthusiastic about the college and what it can do not only for the company, but for the wider community.

**Sir John Hayes:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way. I asked him to do so only because he has spoken so eloquently about Yeovil College, and I should say a word about Boston College in my constituency. I met the students, governors and principal of it last week, but I neglected to mention them in my earlier contribution. They do a superb job.

**Mr Fysh:** I thank my right hon. Friend for, as always, making an eloquent contribution to the debate.

In my visits to Yeovil College over the years, it has become apparent that despite having a great amount to contribute and doing an incredible job, it suffers from having to do so on a shoestring. It has found budgeting difficult. For historic reasons, the fabric of the college could certainly do with improvement, and I have seen evidence of that.

As I am sure Members are well aware, the college system does not have the ability to avail itself of capital grants in the same way that schools and other parts of the education system can. That means that colleges have to make everything out of their basic income, which is a real disadvantage. When we add in the fact, which we heard from other Members, that revenue funding for further education students is a lot less than for university students or secondary school students, colleges are put at a disadvantage in trying to deliver programmes.

Part of the problem with the proposed T-levels system is that there is a lot of extra teaching, but for no more money. Perhaps we can have another look and work together as a group to approach the Treasury and make the case that if we are to get behind T-levels, as I am sure we should for all the other reasons we have heard, there must be adequate funding so that our colleges can do a proper job of delivering for the people who, as we have heard, really depend on them.

[Mr Fysh]

I thoroughly approve of thinking about colleges as places where adults' skills can be developed. We heard about that earlier. As we talk about trade deals around the world, and given the speed at which industry is changing in the current technological age, there will be a great demand—probably an increasing demand—for retraining during people's working lives. It is essential that our colleges play a central role in that. Maths already gets extra funding. Perhaps T-levels should be treated in the same way, because we could really get behind that. Underfunding our colleges degrades individuals' choices. In Yeovil, for example, there is a great demand for secondary school-type places in the further education college. It does a great job in its sixth form with A-levels, and that is the only provision in Yeovil. There are no choices, so it is really important to the town that we get this right.

It is great that the petition has raised the issue. It is very important to everybody in my constituency to have a well-functioning Yeovil College that can deliver for the industry of our area and take our local economy from A to B.

5.32 pm

**Stephen Lloyd** (Eastbourne) (Ind): It is a privilege to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Walker. The number of people here today shows how much value we put on the FE sector across the parties. I certainly feel that very strongly. The right hon. Member for Harlow (Robert Halfon) reminded us that funding has been going down in real terms for the past 10 years. That is one of the reasons why today's debate is so well attended and it reminds us that, frankly, all of us have our hands dirty on this front.

Further education in my constituency and across the piece is something I was involved in when I was first elected as a Member of Parliament in 2010 to 2015. I chaired the all-party group on FE and lifelong learning. I was also the first MP to launch the 100 apprentices in 100 days challenge, which was very successful and was copied by 200 other MPs over the ensuing years. I got to know the FE sector far better than I knew it before, not just locally but, more importantly, nationally. I became an absolute convert. Ever since that time, I have been committed to the belief that the FE sector, for academic A-levels and BTECs on the vocational side, provides a really important function in giving millions of our fellow citizens from 16 upwards an opportunity that they would not have had before.

Funding has been frozen for various historical reasons. I remember having long conversations with the then Secretary of State, my right hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Sir Vince Cable). Believe it or not, he fought like hell to fight off the then Chancellor to try to get as much cash as possible. That was one of the areas where the Liberals and the Tories sometimes had a slight distinction, although I appreciate the words of the right hon. Member for South Holland and The Deepings (Sir John Hayes), who was a Minister at the time. We believed profoundly and passionately in the strength of FE and we had a battle. We won some and we lost some, as we all know, which is the nature of politics.

Where are we at today? We are reaching crisis level. The hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr Fysh) mentioned how someone teaching A-levels at an FE college, such as the Eastbourne campus of East Sussex College in my

constituency, will on average be earning £7,000 less per annum than someone teaching GCSEs at one of the excellent local secondary schools down the road. I beg the Government to understand and appreciate that that is not sustainable. I go as far as to say, as I mentioned earlier, that it is not just the Government's fault. We have all dropped the ball to one degree or another over the past 10 or 15 years.

There is an opportunity now for the Government to demonstrate to the House, the FE sector and the millions of people of all ages who attend FE colleges around the country that they can change tack. In my own constituency, they could demonstrate that to the tremendous teachers at East Sussex College's Eastbourne campus, who have been teaching A-levels to a high standard, despite the shocking real-term cuts to their salaries over the past few years.

I look forward to the Government acknowledging that there is a real problem. I look forward to their making a commitment today in this Westminster Hall debate to come up with additional funds, perhaps in the March Budget. I look forward to the Government not simply saying empty words, but demonstrating that they understand the strength of feeling within this Chamber that FE is not sustainable in its current form. I also look forward to the Government not seeing the half a billion for T-levels as solving the problem, because, as the right hon. Member for Harlow reiterated, T-levels are a different set of qualifications. I support T-levels. The concept is excellent, but that issue is not the same as the issue of the many thousands of teachers around the country, including in my own constituency, teaching A-levels on salaries that are so much worse than in the local schools. It is no wonder that almost 25,000 people have left the profession over the past couple of years. I look forward to hearing real beef and vegetables from the Government: real details about what the extra funding will be.

5.38 pm

**Andrea Jenkyns** (Morley and Outwood) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Walker.

Every young person should have access to an excellent education, and further education colleges play a vital role in achieving that. In my constituency of Morley and Outwood, 111 people, including myself, signed the petition. I made the decision to sign it because I recognise that more needs to be done to address and highlight this important issue. As co-chair of the all-party group on education and vice-chair of the social mobility all-party group, I understand the importance that education has as the best way to improve one's lot in life. That is why the issue is so important and why I felt compelled to sign the petition.

The Government will have raised funding for school pupils aged five to 16 by more than 50% in real terms by 2020, compared with 2000. That is to be praised and is a record we should be proud of. However, from looking at the House of Commons Library figures, it is clear that funding for the 16 to 19 age group has fallen. The Institute for Fiscal Studies' annual report on education spending in England stated that the equivalent of 16 to 19 student spending has fallen from £6,208 in 2010-11 to £5,698 in 2017-18. The average funding per student for the 16 to 19 age group is now less than that for secondary school-aged students and for higher education students. The IFS estimates that it is about 8% lower

than spending per pupil in secondary schools. I hope that parity is something the Government will consider in their response to the debate.

The fact that local authority maintained schools, academies and sixth-form colleges have to pay VAT was mentioned. Schools and academies are subsequently reimbursed for those costs through VAT refunds; however, no such scheme exists for sixth-form colleges. That is another area that I hope the Government are looking at, because it has been argued that that anomaly places sixth-form colleges at a disadvantage.

The Sixth Form Colleges Association claims that the average sixth-form college lost about £385,000 in 2015-16 because of that anomaly, and in November 2018 the Association of Colleges argued that the Treasury should use the opportunity afforded by Brexit to extend the VAT refund scheme to all publicly funded sixth-form level education. Again, I hope that the Government are looking closely at Brexit and any dividends that it could offer.

It is not all bad news, and the Government deserve praise where it is due. Investment has been announced to strengthen education for 16 to 19-year-olds in certain academic areas. As we have heard, a further £600 for additional students participating in level 3 mathematics will be available, and two payments of £600 may be made if, for instance, a pupil is taking two years of maths study. Moreover, it was announced in the 2017 autumn Budget that £40 million of funding has been allocated to establish centres for excellence in mathematics. Ministers have also made £300 million of restructuring funding available to colleges, and half of that has already been spent.

However, I feel that my right hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Robert Halfon), in his role as Chair of the Education Committee, was accurate in saying:

“Successive governments have failed to give further education the recognition it deserves for the role it plays in our national productivity puzzle.”

The Prime Minister has said that austerity is coming to an end. I hope that the Government are looking closely at this area, because it certainly needs to be addressed. We need to invest in our young people if we are to achieve our ambitions for our economy. I agree with the “Raise the Rate” campaign when its advocates say that if we are to meet our

“objectives for a strong post-Brexit economy and a socially mobile, highly educated workforce”,

we need to increase funding in this area. This is not the time to point fingers and play party politics—not with our young people’s future. Let us now increase college funding to sustainable levels and see greater parity with secondary schools.

I thank the education leaders in my constituency, including the fantastic Elliott Hudson College, which I recently visited, for the great work that it does in educating our constituents, both young and old.

5.42 pm

**Yvonne Fovargue** (Makerfield) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Walker.

I welcome this debate; the number of signatures shows how important the issue is. It is really important to people in my constituency because we do not have school sixth forms, so students have no choice but to go

to a sixth-form college. Wigan and Leigh College offers the vocational route, and does it very well, but I will concentrate on the two outstanding colleges in my constituency that offer academic qualifications for students who might want to go on to higher education. It is their problems with the chronic and sustained underfunding that I will talk about today.

In the last two years, Winstanley College has been named Educate North’s college of the year, Merseyside Educate’s most inspirational 16 to 18 provider and, in April 2017, the *Times Higher Education* sixth-form college of the year. In addition, it has been rated outstanding by Ofsted for the past 17 years, and has the matrix standard for excellence in support and guidance. It has no problems attracting students. This year, 16 students were offered places at Oxbridge, but it has had to cease offering German A-level. The principal said to me:

“We are lucky that, so far, we have not have to do more but we cannot carry on like this.”

Difficult decisions will be made in the future.

**Mr George Howarth** (Knowsley) (Lab): My hon. Friend will be aware that children and young people from Knowsley travel to Winstanley College to do their A-levels and very much appreciate the education they get.

**Yvonne Fovargue**: Indeed, they travel from all over the north-west to attend Winstanley College. To have that college say that it does not think it can carry on offering those excellent qualifications is a tragedy for social mobility in the area.

St John Rigby College is the other college in my constituency. It is also an award-winning college. I am pleased to say that the title of Educate North’s sixth-form college of the year happily stayed in Makerfield, as it passed from Winstanley to St John Rigby, which has also won the award of most inspirational 16 to 18 provider.

The principal feels that, although students continue to get excellent qualifications, their experience is not as rich as that of their counterparts a few years ago, because every year something has to be removed from what was previously provided as part of the overall educational experience. Students are getting less specialist teaching than they did three years ago. St John Rigby is a highly inclusive college that really supports its students through the academic route, but students are now taught their specialist subjects for 20 minutes fewer per subject per week than three years ago. That is nearly three weeks’ worth of lost teaching per academic year.

There are increased class sizes, with approximately two extra students per group than four years ago. The college tries to support every individual student, but increased class sizes reduce the amount of time teachers can spend with students. They also increase the workload of the teachers, giving them more marking and making them less accessible out of lessons. Enrichment opportunities have decreased.

The college has maintained its focus on employability skills and career pathways, but that has been possible only because of the cuts that I have mentioned. The activities that have declined are the recreational activities, which play an important part in student wellbeing and mental health. St John Rigby has chosen to put its primary investment into teachers and quality of learning, but its capital investment has reduced to half of what it

[ Yvonne Fovargue ]

was four years ago. There has been a decline in the college infrastructure and the estate. That cannot continue much longer.

The principal said to me:

“It feels as though each and every year we are faced with an unpalatable decision of which priority (which just about survived the previous year’s prioritisation exercise) can no longer be provided”.

That is simply not good enough in an area where social mobility is extremely low. How are my students from the Wigan borough supposed to continue to have high aspirations and become more socially mobile when their access to further education courses, and support from the staff who teach those courses, is being continually restricted by lack of funding? More broadly, with the challenges of Brexit, how are we going to produce the competitive and educated workforce of the future if there is systematic underfunding of post-16 education?

Those colleges are doing their best to support students who wish to take an academic route. Investment in T-levels and vocational education should be applauded, but it does nothing for Winstanley and St John Rigby, and for those students who want to take a different route. Therefore, for the sake of our future, the Government have to look at raising the rate of 16 to 18 education to £4,760 per student and, crucially, keeping the rate at least in line with inflation.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Charles Walker (in the Chair):** Order. If everybody keeps to six minutes, we should get there. I call Mr Wragg.

5.48 pm

**Mr William Wragg (Hazel Grove) (Con):** Thank you very much indeed, Mr Walker. As ever, it is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship. I congratulate the hon. Member for Cambridge (Daniel Zeichner) on leading the debate, in which I am pleased to speak. I endorse the sentiments of the petition and put on record my support for the “Raise the Rate” campaign.

For a number of years, I have pressed the cause of increasing the schools funding budget—a topic I have often raised. It is important to remember equality for all students, both pre and post-16, for which the petition rightly calls. We need to look at ways to increase college funding to sustainable levels to give parity. The bottom line is that the sixth-form and college sector needs more money. That will give all students a fair chance, give college staff fair pay and provide the high-quality skills that the country needs.

This issue attracts significant interest among my constituents, of whom 130 have signed the petition. I have recently had meetings with Danny Pearson, the principal of Aquinas sixth-form college, which serves my constituency so well. I also know that the principals, teachers and students at other local colleges—Cheadle College, Marple Sixth Form College and Stockport College—are keen that urgent action be taken. They will be following the outcome of this debate closely.

Sixth-form funding was made subject to restrictions in 2011 and 2013. The national funding rate for 16 and 17-year-olds, which is by far the biggest component of the 16 to 18 funding formula, has remained frozen each

year since 2013-14. As well as the funding disparity between pre-16 and 16 to 18 education, colleges face particular disadvantages in comparison with schools, which have their VAT costs refunded and receive the teachers’ pay grant. All sixth-form providers are being asked to do more by the Government, from implementing the Prevent strategy to meeting the Gatsby career benchmarks, but sadly those requirements are rarely accompanied by additional funding.

Taken in the round, the impact on colleges’ ability to deliver the quality of education that students deserve is significant. I fear that the situation is affecting the Government’s ability to achieve their ambitions for the economy and social mobility. Worryingly, it is also narrowing the curriculum: the funding impact survey carried out by Raise the Rate’s partners showed that 50% of schools and colleges have dropped courses in modern foreign languages, 34% have dropped STEM courses and 67% have reduced student support services or extracurricular activities, with limitations to mental health support, employability skills and careers advice.

**Mr Jim Cunningham (Coventry South) (Lab):** I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Daniel Zeichner) on introducing the debate. As well as Coventry College, we have a special needs college in Coventry that does excellent work but is struggling financially and in its resources. In combination, they have faced cuts of up to about 27%. Does the hon. Member for Hazel Grove (Mr Wragg) agree that that is a major factor affecting the quality of apprenticeships? Companies such as Jaguar Land Rover in the west midlands industrial base want to expand, but for that to happen, they need the skills.

**Mr Wragg:** I certainly agree. I am pleased to have afforded the hon. Gentleman the opportunity to place on the record the work of colleges in Coventry.

It is a timely coincidence that the Education Committee, of which I am a member and which my right hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Robert Halfon) always chairs most ably, is conducting an inquiry into school and college funding and has taken evidence from the post-16 sector. When we asked what was at the top of their wish list, witnesses agreed that the first priority is higher core funding, the second is separate funding for increases to teachers’ pay awards and pensions, as occurs in schools, and the third is increased funding for the capital expansion of colleges.

We also heard that the college sector would much rather have a boost to core funding than a continued run of new initiatives. Some witnesses spoke of an initiative mania and suggested that narrowly targeted uplifts can do more harm than good, because they displace the real issue. For instance, plans to invest in technical education, although welcome, will do very little for the vast majority of sixth-form students who study an A-level or applied general course. I am afraid that more money for T-levels is not, in itself, the solution to sixth form and college funding.

To ensure that schools and colleges can continue to deliver high-quality, internationally competitive education, the “Raise the Rate” campaign is calling for the national funding rate for 16 to 18-year-olds to be raised by £760 per student at the forthcoming spending review and in line with inflation each year thereafter, as the hon. Member for Makerfield (Yvonne Fovargue) mentioned.

Recent research has found that that is the minimum additional funding required to increase student support services to the required level, including improving students' mental and physical health. It is needed to protect subjects that are at risk of being dropped, such as modern foreign languages. It will increase non-qualification time and extracurricular activities, work experience and university visits, which are vital for preparing students for the world of work or higher education and are key drivers of social mobility. Furthermore, it is important that the rate rise comes in addition to—not instead of—the funding that may be required by schools and colleges to meet new costs, such as increased employer contributions to the teachers' pensions scheme.

I know that my right hon. Friend the Minister is a big supporter of the further education sector and wants the very best for pupils. We have seen that support take different forms; I am sure her winding-up speech will remind us about the new per pupil premium funding for level 3 maths, the £40 million of funding to establish centres for excellence in maths, and the investment in T-levels. However, I encourage her to go beyond those initiatives and ask the Chancellor for the desperately needed raise in the rate of core sixth-form funding. I can think of no better Minister to negotiate on behalf of the college sector, and I wish her well in the spending review.

**Mr Charles Walker (in the Chair):** I call Wera Hobhouse. I am still quite keen on the six-minute limit.

5.55 pm

**Wera Hobhouse (Bath) (LD):** I cannot think of an issue more important than education. At the heart of a functioning society is the education system, but ours is being cut to the point where it is barely fit for purpose. Further education is the worst-funded part of the already cash-strapped system—the only part of the education budget to have had year-on-year cuts for the past 10 years.

I know that it is fashionable to blame the coalition Government. However, coming from a different cultural background, in which practical education is much more valued, I must say that the malaise is much deeper and has gone on for a lot longer. What we are looking for is a culture change that gives further education the same value as university education. That is what we need to achieve, and I hope that we will get cross-party support for it.

[MR PETER BONE *in the Chair*]

As the Institute for Fiscal Studies recently pointed out, funding for 16 to 19-year-old education has fallen by 8% and the adult education budget has been cut by 45%. These are massive, massive cuts that severely affect students, staff and everyone in the further education community. More than 24,000 teaching staff have been lost from the sector since 2009, and 90% of colleges report difficulties in attracting the staff they need. The sector is hemorrhaging talent and expertise—it really is a criminal waste of potential.

I was asked to attend this debate by a constituent who has significant experience in the field, both as a student and as a teacher. She says:

“People who emerged from school with few qualifications are now training and working as nurses, paramedics, social workers, vets, and many valuable careers because they had their chance at an FE college. It is this knowledge that keeps me working in the field despite dwindling resources and diminishing financial rewards.”

Further education is vital to social mobility, to training people for key worker roles, and to the principle that this country invests in its people, regardless of their background. In Bath, we are lucky to have a very well-performing college, Bath College, which demonstrates time and again that young people do not have to go to university to do well in life. Businesses in Bath need young people who are work-ready, with specific skills, and Bath College provides just that. However, like most further education colleges, it is really struggling. This morning, the principal, Laurel Penrose, told me:

“The strain is telling on staff and the offer and delivery is starting to be compromised because we cannot invest in the infrastructure and develop the capital enhancements we need to remain at the industrial standards required by our technical subjects. We are a unique educational sector, one that is recognised for our flexible approach and one with many of the solutions needed to address the skills deficit being experienced by this country—but we cannot grow or invest because of the funding.”

I really hope that the Minister is listening to all of us across the House. Some of Mrs Penrose's staff went out on strike late last year; I supported that strike, but it could have been completely avoided if the sector were funded to allow staff pay equal to that in other parts of the education sector. The Government are failing to properly fund further education, and it sends a very strong message. As a country, we need to get over the idea that university is the only option for people who want to do well in life. Further education colleges have an important role in the education mix in this country. The Government should take that role seriously, and not just with words.

Liberal Democrat support for lifelong learning is very strong. As has been mentioned, our leader—my right hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Sir Vince Cable)—is a passionate supporter of further education. He has launched the Independent Commission on Lifelong Learning, which is investigating the best ways to make sure that adults have access to learning and retraining throughout their lives. This could take the form of giving each person in this country a learning account, which they could use for education in the way they want. I very much hope that that is being looked into further.

Well-funded education is vital. We need to place opportunity in the hands of individuals and give them the tools that they need to make the most of their lives and reach their full potential. Without proper resources, we are failing a large number of people across our communities, and we must do a lot better. Further education has been the Cinderella of the education system—I remind everybody that Cinderella was always the hardest-working member of her family. We should value the immense contribution to this country made by FE colleges and their past, current and future students. We must value the sector and fund it properly.

6 pm

**Peter Heaton-Jones (North Devon) (Con):** It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship for the remainder of this debate, Mr Bone. I have been lobbied strongly, repeatedly and effectively by the excellent further education college in my constituency, namely Petroc. The staff, pupils and management team have been assiduous in ensuring that they get their message across. It is an excellent further education college and has two campuses. I am proud to say that the main one is in Barnstaple in my North Devon constituency, and it has a second

[Peter Heaton-Jones]

campus in the neighbouring constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Neil Parish). Between them, they educate or train about 10,000 people across all age groups every year.

As part of the communication that I have had with the college, I received a letter only a few weeks ago. It is worth quoting the principal's statement on the college and the work it does. Diane Diamond, the principal and chief executive officer of Petroc, says:

"As a leading further education college, you will know that we are an essential part of the region's education system. Whether it's through top-class technical education, apprenticeships, A-levels, basic skills or lifelong learning, we help people of all ages and backgrounds across Devon and beyond to make the most of their talents and ambitions. Rooted in the local community, I feel we are crucial in driving social mobility and providing the skills to boost local and regional economies."

I agree with Diane; she is absolutely right. I would add one thing: further education colleges such as Petroc play a vital role in driving the Government's industrial strategy, and they are really important. They have lobbied me on two main issues, which I want to represent to the Minister. First, the general sense is that funding for students in the 16 to 18 further education sector has not kept up; it has fallen in real terms since 2010, which compares unfavourably with both the 11 to 16 sector and the post-18 sector. That sense of an unlevel playing field has come through loud and clear in what Petroc has said to me. It suggests that further education is, I am afraid to say, the poor relation, especially when we look at the work that the Government are doing to improve funding of, for instance, the secondary schools sector. I have had many conversations about this with Ministers at the Department for Education. I feel that we are making progress there, but we are not making progress with the FE sector.

The second issue that Petroc raised with me is that the salary of lecturers and teachers in FE colleges has not kept pace with the pay of those who teach the same age groups—16 to 18-year-olds—in sixth-form colleges. This seems slightly perverse, because there are more 16 to 18-year-olds studying at further education colleges than at secondary schools that still retain a sixth form: roughly 600,000 versus 400,000. Once again, we do not have a level playing field.

Petroc has two asks, which I echo. The first is to look into increasing the funding of FE colleges at a sustainable level, as called for in the petition. The second is to consider providing some exceptional, ring-fenced funding to cover the costs of a fairer pay deal for the lecturers and teachers who work so hard in the 16 to 18 further education college sector. Petroc has had significant investment in recent years, and I want to stress that it has great new facilities. It has been my pleasure to visit the college many times and see the fantastic work it does. It has great results and is a fine, growing institution. I have been closely involved with many of Petroc's initiatives; I have attended graduation ceremonies, and I sit on the board of the Health and Care Academy, which is a great initiative that Petroc runs in conjunction with the North Devon Healthcare NHS Trust.

We know there are many competing demands on the Government's finances. I know the Minister cares deeply for the further education sector and fights very strongly for it, but I would not be doing my job if I did not

reflect the very strong representations that I have received from Petroc College, which have been echoed by hon. and right hon. Members of different parties. The name of this campaign is "Love Our Colleges." I know the Minister loves our colleges and I ask her to spread that love a little more effectively, particularly in the direction of North Devon.

6.6 pm

**Jim Fitzpatrick** (Poplar and Limehouse) (Lab): It is a pleasure to see you presiding over our business this afternoon, Mr Bone. I am delighted to follow the hon. Member for North Devon (Peter Heaton-Jones).

What has been striking in this debate is the consistency of the message from Members of different parties—not just, predictably, from the Opposition, but from the loyalists on the Government Benches. They include the Chair of the Education Committee, the right hon. Member for Harlow (Robert Halfon); the chair of the all-party parliamentary group on education, the hon. Member for Morley and Outwood (Andrea Jenkyns); previous Ministers of State at a number of Departments; and other colleagues who know the Minister much better than I do, and who speak of her commitment to further education. I hope she gets the message as strongly as it has been delivered, takes it back to reinforce the work that she is doing in the Department, and reinforces its battle with the Treasury to get the required funding.

I am grateful to Alison Arnaud of the Tower Hamlets campus of New City College for her briefing on local impacts; to Vanessa Donhowe of the Sixth Form Colleges Association and the "Raise the Rate" campaign for briefing on the national effects; and to the Library, as ever, for their assistance. I would like briefly to mention three issues: the overall funding rate, the specific rate for 16 to 19-year-olds, and the staffing pay levels. All have been mentioned in pretty much every single speech by colleagues.

As has been stated, the overall level of funding for 16 to 19-year-olds in schools, sixth-form colleges and FE colleges is allocated by the Education and Skills Funding Agency, using a simple national funding formula. A new formula based on learner numbers has been used since 2013-14 and replaced the old formula, which was based broadly on the number of qualifications taken. Based on figures in the ESFA account, expenditure on 16 to 19-year-old education decreased by about 11% in cash terms and 21% in real terms between 2010-11 and 2015-16. The 2015 spending review settlement included protection of the core adult skills participation budgets in cash terms at £1.5 billion. Prior to that, spending on the adult skills budget fell by 32% in cash terms between 2010-11 and 2015-16.

On spending on 16 to 19-year-old education, the Library briefing reports that the Institute for Fiscal Studies 2018 annual report on education spending notes that

"spending per student in an FE or sixth-form college is now about 8% lower than spending per pupil in secondary schools, having been about 50% greater at the start of the 1990s."

It concluded that 16 to 18 education in England

"has been the big loser from education spending changes over the last 25 years"

as spending fell more quickly during the 1990s and grew more slowly in the 2000s. It is

"one of the few areas of education spending to see cuts since 2010."

It reports several underspends. Spending on 16 to 19 education was £135 million lower than forecast in 2014-15, and £132 million lower in 2015-16. In 2016-17, spending was £106 million lower than expected, meaning that 1.8% of the budget was not spent. Sector spokespersons have raised concerns about budget underspends at a time of funding reductions, and have argued that the money should be used by the 16 to 19 sector and not redeployed to other ministerial priorities. I would be grateful if the Minister commented on that.

In Tower Hamlets—this affects young people in my constituency and in that of my hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Bow (Rushanara Ali)—the minimum funding for a secondary school place is about £1,500 above what New City College gets per learner. On staffing pay, the Library also states that the School Teachers Review Body 2018-19 recommendations for paying allowances was an uplift of 3.5%, but as we have heard, the grant does not include further education and sixth-form colleges. That comes while the average national pay differential between a school teacher and an FE teacher is around £5,000; nearer to £7,000 in London; and there is an even wider gap in sought-after subjects such as maths.

The Minister will have seen the statistics published by the “Raise the Rate” campaign, which have been mentioned by other hon. Members. Fifty per cent. of schools and colleges have dropped courses in modern foreign languages; 34% have dropped STEM courses; 67% have reduced student support services, with significant cuts to mental health support, employability skills and career advice; and 77% are teaching pupils in larger class sizes. I would also be grateful if the Minister commented on that.

In conclusion, less money per pupil goes to colleges than to sixth forms in schools. There is less pay for teachers in colleges than for those in schools, and the overall funding for 16 to 19-year-olds and mature students is dropping overall in real terms. In February 2018, the Prime Minister announced that there would be a Government-led review of post-18 education, which would be supported by an independent panel. The panel should be publishing its report at an interim stage, with the Government concluding the review this year—I would be grateful if the Minister got us up to speed with the timetable for that review. I look forward to the Front-Bench responses to the excellent contributions we have so far heard in the debate.

6.11 pm

**Nic Dakin** (Scunthorpe) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Bone. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Daniel Zeichner) for getting the debate off to such a good start, and I congratulate the students from Brockenhurst College on their work to ensure that the debate took place.

We need not only to love our colleges, but to treasure and invest in them, because they are at the heart of our communities. They have connections to industry and commerce, help to power our communities, and are also engines of social mobility. All the evidence shows that colleges—more than any other institution—transform social mobility. For those reasons alone, we should do everything that we can to support them.

With the rise of the participation age, it is absolutely nonsensical that a youngster at the age of 16 to 18 should be funded 23% less than a youngster at the age of 15. That makes no sense at all, and the debate draws attention to that. I am really pleased to see the strength

of opinion from across the House and that hon. Members know and understand the importance of the colleges in their communities. Today, that message has come through loud and clear to all of us.

The Minister really cares about colleges and is a passionate advocate for them, which we welcome, but she needs to deliver. In her response, she must tell us where the underfunding of colleges sits in the Department for Education’s priorities with the Treasury—is it first, second, third, or 27th? We need to be honest about that. I think people in this Chamber would agree that it would be the No. 1 priority if the Department really cared about social mobility and delivering the skill agenda that we need as we leave the European Union.

Skills are central. One of people’s main concerns during the referendum was the issue of migrant labour. If we are to tackle that problem, we need to invest in skills. Who better to invest in those skills than our colleges? They make the difference. For my pains, I ran a college for a number of years, which was probably a more challenging job than being a Member of Parliament. The challenges that principals face today are much greater than those that I confronted in 2010.

Principals can only balance certain things and manage certain variables. One of those variables is the curriculum. Hon. Members have talked about how the curriculum is shrinking, and that includes student support and enrichment, as well as the breadth of curriculum and the disappearance of STEM subjects, languages and so on. Another variable that we have talked about is the workload of teachers, who have to teach more periods, and therefore have larger classes. Class size is another variable. Only a certain number of variables can be played around with: class size, teacher workload and the curriculum. Principals handle and manage all those things. We are reaching breaking point.

Although we welcome the action on T-levels and additional support for maths, T-levels will not come through until 2022 and will not affect young people now, and the other changes are small beer. We need to ensure that the rate is raised for those doing the central work.

**Melanie Onn** (Great Grimsby) (Lab): I echo my hon. Friend’s comments. I say on behalf of my colleges—Franklin College and Grimsby Institute—that his points are exactly right. The additional cost burdens of things such as general data protection regulation, which have not been factored in, all add to the costs pressures on colleges.

**Nic Dakin**: I thank my hon. Friend for her intervention. One of the great colleges in my constituency, John Leggott College, which I was proud to lead, contacted me this week and said that the staff pay increases would be a real challenge for colleges. If the pension increases remain unfunded, that will represent the equivalent of six teacher posts. North Lindsey College also raised the issue of support for apprenticeships. It has had a massive 30% increase in apprenticeships this year to deliver on the Government’s priority of apprenticeships. It is concerned, however, about the potential cap to the funding of apprenticeships, which would really damage the investment that has been made in them.

I hope the Minister will give us reassurances that the strength and development of apprenticeships will not be badly affected by those changes. We need to raise the rate, treasure and invest in our colleges, and recognise that they are a key part of our future.

6.17 pm

**Grahame Morris** (Easington) (Lab): I thank the Petitions Committee for facilitating this important debate and thank my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Daniel Zeichner) for introducing it. I apologise for my intermittent coughing; I am afraid I have Brexit fever—it has affected us all in different ways. I shall persevere and press on regardless.

I will highlight some particular points that apply to my own college, East Durham College. I thank its excellent principal, Suzanne Duncan, and all the staff, for their hard work and dedication to the students in my constituency, and for giving me an insight into the funding issues that East Durham and other FE colleges face. I agree with many of the points made by hon. Members on both sides of the Chamber about the unfair nature of funding. I hope that the Minister will address those points in her response.

The funding cuts for East Durham College, like many other colleges, have meant real-term cuts in staff pay, fewer teaching hours for students, bigger class sizes and less choice. The Department for Education has demanded more from teachers for the same funding, which has resulted in substantial additional workloads on top of delivering work experience, maths and English GCSE re-sits, and the careers strategy obligations. I am told that adult education funding is being cut by 45%.

Clearly, further education colleges are an essential part of England's education system. Whether through top-class technical education, basic skills or lifelong learning, colleges help people of all ages and backgrounds to make the most of their talents and abilities. My college, based in Peterlee, is rooted in the local communities. It previously served the mining industry. It has developed and moved on, and is crucial in driving social mobility and providing the skills boost to the local and regional economy.

It is fundamental—indeed, it is essential in constituencies such as mine—that colleges are properly funded. We heard that college funding was cut by around 30% between 2009 and 2019. I listened to the contributions by the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr Fysh) and the right hon. Member for South Holland and The Deepings (Sir John Hayes). I do not know whether they have experienced the same problems, but we have fewer hours of teaching and less support for young people, and we have seen a drastic reduction in learning opportunities for adults. We know the value of staff pay has fallen by more than 25%, and many Members have pointed out that college teachers earn £7,000 a year less than their colleagues who teach in schools. This situation simply is not sustainable, and it ultimately impacts college students, staff, businesses and the wider community.

I met the lobby group from Love Our Colleges, a coalition of trade unions, students, college leaders and people with a particular interest in colleges. As time is short, I will not go through its manifesto, but I hope the Minister studies it. As a result of this Government's austerity policies, every part of the public sector is asking for more money. Many have good cases, but the case for funding post-16 education is simply that if we as a nation are going to fill our yawning and ever-widening skills gap, there is only so much we can do with what little colleges currently receive. Last year's IFS report confirmed that the FE sector has been hit worse by

austerity than any other part of the education sector. Spending on FE and adult education has fallen by almost £3.5 billion since 2010.

Several hundred of my constituents are among the signatories to the petition, which indicates the value we place on our college. I thank the students who launched the petition, and I hope the Minister can provide them with some comfort that FE providers will be properly funded and protected. I do not want her to be remembered as the Minister responsible for kicking away the ladders of opportunity that many in the Chamber took for granted when they were students. Education is an investment. I hope the Government commit to ensuring that every student receives a high-quality and comprehensive education.

6.22 pm

**Stephen Morgan** (Portsmouth South) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Bone. Last Friday, I spoke to the principal of Portsmouth College, which I had the privilege of attending. What he told me was seriously concerning, and I am proud to be here to speak up for that college.

If we walked into a college in Canada, we would see sixth-formers receiving 26 hours of tuition per week. In Singapore, that figure is 27 hours, and in Shanghai it is 30 hours. We give our sixth-formers 15 hours of tuition per week. We owe our young people so much more. How can we expect future generations to compete on the world stage when we give them far less than their counterparts across the globe? If we want this great nation's future to be as bright as its past, we need to invest in our young people.

Colleges educate nearly 65% of those who go on to higher education. Located both geographically and symbolically at the heart of our communities, colleges are a driving force for social mobility. All that is being put at risk. As we heard, colleges have had to deal with average funding cuts of 30% and soaring costs over the past 10 years. The effects have been severe. Those who attend state-run colleges have spent on them a third of what is spent on those who attend independent schools. In the past 10 years, qualifications in health and social care, engineering and plumbing have fallen by nearly 70% and, perhaps most significantly, IT qualifications have fallen by almost 90%.

The consequences are dire for everyone in our country, not just for our young people. Think of a world where we have hospitals but no nurses, where we can no longer construct buildings such as the Shard, the Spinnaker tower in Portsmouth or the Clifton suspension bridge in Bristol, and where we can no longer protect this country from the ever-growing cyber-security threats we face. That may sound bleak, but those will all be very real scenarios if we do not increase spending on sixth-form colleges.

Amanda Spielman, Her Majesty's chief inspector, recently expressed her concern about college funding to the Public Accounts Committee, on which I sit. She wrote:

"My strong view is that the government should use the forthcoming spending review to increase the base rate for 16 to 18 funding."

Again, it seemed the Government had heard enough from experts; they chose not to take her advice. Instead, the national base rate for 16 and 17-year-olds was fixed at £4,000 per student, which obviously does nothing to account for the inflationary pressures and cost increases that our colleges face every year.

The solution to this problem is simple: we need to raise the funding rate from £4,000 per sixth-form student. Failure to do so would mean fewer young people realising their dreams, would dramatically affect the economy and would undermine our nation's capability in a global market. A small increase in funding would have an immeasurable effect on the nation's future and would be a minor price to pay for its financial security. I am not alone in asking the Government to increase funding; it is what the staff of colleges such as Portsmouth College tell me they need, and Her Majesty's chief inspector has said it is essential. College principals around the country have come forward in support of this fantastic petition. We need to safeguard the future of our country and our young people. We need to raise the rate for fantastic colleges such as Portsmouth College.

6.26 pm

**Gareth Snell** (Stoke-on-Trent Central) (Lab/Co-op): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Bone. Pretty much all of what I was going to say has been said, but in the great tradition of this place I am going to say it anyway.

My constituency is served by three excellent colleges: Stoke Sixth Form College, under the leadership of Mark Kent; Stoke-on-Trent College, under the leadership of Denise Brown; and Newcastle College in the constituency neighbouring mine, under the leadership of Karen Dobson. All three of those colleges provide the basic parts of the social mobility engine in north Staffordshire. If it were not for those colleges, young people across my constituency and north Staffordshire would find their options very limited. Some of the finest minds in north Staffordshire have been through those colleges—not least the Minister's Parliamentary Private Secretary, the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent South (Jack Brereton), who was a student at the sixth-form college.

As well as providing a first-class education for the young people in my constituency, those colleges provide a whole host of life skills and support. That is not reflected in the current level of funding. When the Minister is able again to argue with the Treasury about the rate, I hope she factors in that this is about not just how much we spend per pupil for their education, but the other things colleges provide, which are not accounted for anywhere else in their budgets. The sixth-form college in the middle of my constituency is essentially the extension of a social work practice. It deals with the trials and tribulations of almost all the pupils there. In a community with cohesion and deprivation issues, in which parents struggle with literacy and numeracy and there are young mums with children, the colleges provide a safety net for a whole host of people who otherwise would not be able to access education.

In north Staffordshire, we struggle particularly with mental health provision. Claire Gaygan, the vice-principal of the sixth-form college, told me that in one year there were 70 referrals to the local child and adolescent mental health services but only one appointment was received. That means 69 young people are not accessing the mental health services and support they need. I know the Minister cannot fix that overnight, and I know it is not something she does not take seriously, but too many young people in our colleges need additional support that simply is not being provided.

I pointed out earlier that had funding increased by inflation instead of being frozen, an additional £308 per pupil would be being spent in colleges across the country. I am told by the Library that there are around 8,500 young people between 16 and 18 in Stoke-on-Trent. A quick bit of maths tells us that that would amount to around £2.5 million across the three colleges in north Staffordshire, which would make a big difference to the life chances of the young people I represent.

I fear we are getting to the point where this is a zero-sum game. We had a lot of talk from many Members this afternoon about teachers' pay, and the funding for high schools and further education. The reality is that we should not be pitting the funding for those up to the age of 15 against that of 16 to 18-year-olds. We certainly should not be trying to level down; we should be levelling up and recognising that if colleges are well funded, universities will have good-quality applicants who can go forward to take on high-quality graduate jobs.

If colleges are well funded, the skills gaps that we face in our communities, particularly those such as Stoke-on-Trent, can be met with ease. If we have well-funded colleges, we will attract the best and brightest staff, who in turn will inspire the next generation to go on and do the jobs that we know are important. Stoke-on-Trent is a city rich in talent and aspiration, but it sometimes struggles to turn that into tangible outcomes. The colleges in my constituency are among the few places that are working to nurture that talent and aspiration. When I visit the colleges in my constituency—I am sure the same is true for all other Members at the colleges in their constituencies—I see the bright young faces of people who have met an inspirational teacher or leader, who has helped them to take the next step towards achieving something great for themselves and their families.

In my constituency, all too often the first generation of a family is accessing further education. The young people who are going to college now are breaking with the things that have gone before, and they have a chance to go on and do better than their parents and grandparents. Often, they come back and inspire the next generation. I have met far too many young people who have gone on to further education and taken qualifications at a more challenging level only because their brother or sister went on such a programme. They have seen what their brothers, sisters and cousins can achieve, and they have emulated and replicated it. The more we can do to stimulate that sort of interaction, the better we can be in providing a college system that works.

That comes with funding. As my hon. Friend the Member for Scunthorpe (Nic Dakin) said, we need to love our colleges. We need to spread that love further, but we cannot spread it more thinly. There simply has to be more love to go around. Investing in our colleges is about investing in our future, in our young people and in the future of our country. I know the Minister takes it seriously. The responses I have received to my education questions show that she knows this is a battle that needs to be had with the Treasury. All of us here today are willing to stand with her as she has that battle for the funding that we need.

6.31 pm

**Emma Hardy** (Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Bone. I feel as though we can achieve something

[Emma Hardy]

that is perhaps unachievable at this moment in any other issue or in other areas of the House—that is, a little bit of consensus and cross-party working. Perhaps that will set a good example to other right hon. and hon. Members, because it is achievable.

So far, all the contributions have been supportive of FE. In the grand tradition mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent Central (Gareth Snell), every argument has been made. We have all heard the powerful and persuasive reasons why FE matters so much, and I will not use every moment I have to repeat them all. There is, however, an argument that has not been made as much. Members have talked powerfully about the skills shortage and the need to address it—I will mention the particular difficulties around implementing the NHS 10-year plan in a moment—but colleges have another role, which has been completely downplayed, and that is to be the heart of the community.

For some people, such as adults with learning difficulties, colleges are a social place. For adults who may be struggling with their mental health, or for people whose lives have not worked out in the way we would all have liked, colleges can offer social interaction, a place to go and a purpose for getting up in the morning. I have heard that from constituents who have struggled with their mental health, but who wanted to go and complete their course. A really nice gentleman, who has some learning difficulties, loves to show me all his certificates, which he carries around in his backpack, because he is very proud of them. I know that the college is often just finding reasons to allow him to keep going, because he has a wonderful time there and it is a social event for him. The argument for skills is pivotal, but I put it to the Minister that we should also have an argument for colleges being part of the community. Is it really so bad for society that for some people, colleges are a social place where they can go and interact with others? Can we look at the funding streams to address that? At the moment, it feels as though there is no funding for a course if there is no qualification at the end of it.

**Sir John Hayes:** What a delight to hear the hon. Lady say that. She is making the case for continuing lifelong and community learning, some of which does not necessarily have an economic purpose. Politicians have become so insecure and emasculated that they are reluctant to make a case for things that cannot be measured in precise terms. She is making a case for joy, and education should be about joy. That is why it is such a tragedy that adult community learning has declined since the days when the right hon. Member for Twickenham (Sir Vince Cable) and I defended its budget.

**Emma Hardy:** I completely agree with the right hon. Gentleman that that has declined. I know that because after giving birth, a friend of mine wanted a reason to get out of the house and not have the baby with her for a while, so she managed to sign me and herself up for salsa classes. I was quite disappointed because I was taller and had to be the bloke, so now I can salsa but only if I take the male role in the pair. This was something that my friend did after giving birth, when she wanted to get out of the house and find something else to do. I fear we are losing that role for colleges.

I return to the point about the NHS and the skills shortage. The 10-year plan for the NHS is welcome, but in a report the director of the Royal College of Nursing said:

“This report confirms our greatest fear – that the impressive ambition of the long term plan could be derailed, simply because we do not have the nursing staff to deliver it.”

The Minister might be expecting me to plug the fact that Hull College has set up a nursing apprenticeship, which I think is really exciting. In a different debate at a different time, with pretty much the same Members, I spoke about the need for progression from level 2 to a degree apprenticeship to be clearly defined and mapped out, so that each individual can see how one moves on to another. That is exactly what has been done at Hull College, which has taken people at 16 years old from a level 2 qualification in health and social care and given them a pathway right through to a nursing degree apprenticeship. I have mentioned to the Minister before that we need to have a clear pathway and progression mapped out, from levels 2, 3 and 4 all the way up.

The Education Committee visited Germany to look at lifelong learning. Quite a few people have mentioned the challenges of automation—it is both a challenge and something to be excited about—that present problems around lifelong learning and how to upskill people in this country. In Germany, they are already starting to do that in a programme called Industry 4.0, which is happening across the country. I feel as though we are already quite far behind, and they have moved on with this. We do not want to be a country that is left even further behind, especially after Brexit.

**Robert Halfon:** The hon. Lady and I work together on the Select Committee. She is making one of the best speeches of the afternoon, particularly when it comes to the importance of FE as social capital. When FE colleges in areas that have very little economic capital are weakened, the community is destroyed. What she says about Germany is incredibly important. She will know that 50% of German students go on to do further or technical education, as do 70% of Swiss students, because we went to both those places. Those countries have Governments that are investing in FE and giving it equality with academic education, and we should closely follow their example.

**Emma Hardy:** It will be no surprise to the right hon. Gentleman that I completely agree with him, and I share his passion for that. In a previous debate on the subject, I made the point that if we want such parity of esteem, we need parity of outcome. Germany’s model has no dead ends. If someone starts on a vocational route, they can move across, between vocational and academic, and back. They can get to degree level through a vocational route, if they want to. That is why I feel as though T-levels are a distraction, as I have mentioned to the Minister before. That is, unfortunately, where we disagree.

To conclude, of course I support “Raise the Rate”. It is crucial that we have more money for our pupils. I am proud that the Labour party has an inspiring national education service vision for everyone to get behind. I put on record my thanks to all the staff at Hull College and at Wyke Sixth Form College—which is where I went, so I especially like that one—for all their hard

work and for everything they do for all the pupils in Hull. I implore the Minister to consider that skills, progression and future matter, but so do a sense of belonging and a sense of community; those are the other things that FE provides.

6.39 pm

**Catherine West** (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Bone. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle (Emma Hardy) on the excellent speech she gave just now, and my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Daniel Zeichner) on introducing this important debate. There is no doubt that with a little more time and spending for FE, we could be less worried about loneliness, which is a current policy concern.

There is no such thing as a job for life, and with the possibility of an election in the air there is nothing dearer to our hearts than the sense that MPs may not have a job for life either. Who knows whether any of us may end up at our FE college at a not-too-distant time, seeking extra courses?

There has been poor retention in apprenticeships for several years, and we all know how crucial it is to get the apprenticeship workstream right. To date that has not happened, but my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle mentioned how important it is, from the beginning of the course, to make the pathway clear so that students can see what happens at the end, and more students can be retained on their apprenticeships. It is a pleasure to have some students here with us in Westminster Hall.

I want to thank Kurt Hintz, the principal of the College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London, which is now part of a consortium of three or four colleges—the largest FE provider in London. There have been pluses and minuses for the teaching in north London as a result of that. Personally, I think the college achieved more before, when it could focus on a smaller population group, but we are where we are. A number of teachers have come to see me, including in the autumn, when the University and College Union organised a parliamentary tour to see MPs. A teacher of English as a second language, who is incredibly committed to what she teaches, pointed out that whereas an average secondary school teacher is paid £37,000, she is paid only £30,000. Many hon. Members have made the case for raising the rate and cancelling out that discrepancy.

Some hon. Members have pointed out that a 67% drop in the welfare workstream, and in extracurricular activity, arts and music, means a much diminished offer to students. I have seen from my casework how much work welfare officers do in the college and how they keep students at college, which is crucial to their mental health.

**Mr Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): I attended an FE college, and it saved my life. I was struggling in the chemical industry and had lost my way. Going to FE college saved my life and career. I was a mature student, transferring, and the welfare and the support was wonderful. I just want that for every student in every FE college; they are the heart of our skills environment in this country.

**Catherine West:** My hon. Friend has repaid his debt to the college sector by committing himself to lifelong learning and apprenticeships. That includes the importance of learning as a part of industrial strategy, especially for towns, where colleges do important work in many pockets of deprivation, in England in particular.

I want to mention the gender and black and ethnic minority pay gaps. Someone who does not get a strong offer in college is likely to enter the workforce on lower pay. That surely has something to do with the fact that so many women and black and ethnic minority members of the workforce are paid less. The Department should surely look into that and rectify it.

Some Members have raised the question of STEM. The 24% drop in the STEM offer in the college sector is a terrible step backwards. What is being done to tie up the FE sector with huge public procurement projects such as Crossrail, the super-sewers project and High Speed 2? Could not some of the money be spent in colleges, to make links? When a big project such as the Thames tideway tunnel finishes, could that tunnelling expertise not then be lent to another high-value expensive public procurement exercise elsewhere?

I know that other hon. Members want to speak. We must redouble our efforts and together with the Minister, who I know is committed to this area, as well as the Chairman of the Education Committee, put pressure on the Treasury and make the case for lifelong learning.

6.45 pm

**Toby Perkins** (Chesterfield) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Bone. I congratulate the petitioners who got the petition going, and every one of the 70,000 people who signed it. It shows that when people get behind the further education sector, it can make an impact here. The quality and number of contributions to the debate says it all.

I want to talk about the impact of further education in my family. My son recently completed his second year mid-term exams at the University of Hull, but when he left school at the age of 16 no one would have expected him to go to university. It was the contribution of the further education sector—specifically Chesterfield College—that enabled him to go on to do well at university. Many of us recognise that a lot of children do not do well at school, and further education can have a transformative impact on them. I am worried that the education system is becoming a one-chance saloon. Adolescents can, as we all know, go through all kinds of crises. It is important that they get a second chance.

Chesterfield College plays an incredibly important role in the community, and not just through the services it provides at various levels to the 10,000 people who attend it. It is also as an employer and as a customer of Chesterfield's businesses that it needs support. It also played the crucial role of providing my Christmas card this year—something that I am sure all those who received it will not have forgotten.

Further education is important for children who did not do all that well at school, but who have huge potential for academic study after their love of learning is developed by the sector. It also provides an important service to children who did well at school but want a different kind of study. It provides a kind of education with more freedom, much more like the university experience. It is also important for children who want to pursue non-academic study and to develop skills.

**Wera Hobhouse:** The hon. Gentleman makes a powerful point. I was a secondary school teacher. The focus on university education has such an impact on the whole school system that I believe if we considered greater parity, there would be a positive effect on teaching at key stages 3 and 4. It would make things far more interesting for a vast number of young people.

**Toby Perkins:** I agree entirely. A diverse education system is incredibly important for any country that wants to be competitive in the global race. I am worried that we are leaving far too many people behind, which I think is the point the hon. Lady is making.

Further education is important for many people with special educational needs who leave school but are not yet ready for the world of work, and who want to develop their skills. It is important to see education as not purely about the jobs people will do, but about their development in a variety of ways. That relates to FE's role in supporting people who are recovering from a crisis. The right hon. Member for South Holland and The Deepings (Sir John Hayes) spoke about that.

Often the move to do a further education course is a step towards the world of work. It might be a flower-arranging course, first aid or any number of things that do not end up being a job, but that offer a starting point for people who are at a moment in their lives where they need something to give them a sense of hope. Of course, further education is also important for people looking to boost their skills and accelerate their career development.

Further education colleges play a core role in providing apprenticeship starts, particularly in the small business sector, where businesses do not have all the skills that our major employers have. I am worried that much of the progress made in the last 12 or 15 years on apprenticeships is being lost because of the apprenticeship reforms. Apprenticeships are not just about the Rolls-Royces of this world, and colleges play an important role in enabling apprenticeships to happen in our small business sector. I am also worried about the huge numbers of experienced lecturers who are leaving the sector, which other hon. Members have spoken about. We heard from the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Stephen Lloyd) that 25,000 have left the profession. That is a huge number of dedicated, skilled, experienced people lost from this crucial sector.

Today's debate is about loving our colleges; we have had the call and we have heard from Members of Parliament on both sides of the Chamber that we all love our colleges, but it is important that the Government give some meaning to those words and ensure that the money backs that love. We can all speak about the importance of further education, but it is important that, when the Minister gets to her feet, she demonstrates that the Government are willing to show that love with some cold, hard cash.

6.51 pm

**Mr George Howarth** (Knowsley) (Lab): It is always a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Bone. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Daniel Zeichner) for introducing this important debate.

I should begin by saying a word about my own background. When I first left school, I served an engineering apprenticeship—that was some years ago now, so I

hope nobody will expect me to do any feats of engineering. The crucial thing about the training system at the time, although it was far from perfect, was that we got both on-the-job training in the workplace and the academic or technical side of things on day release to college, which I had the benefit of throughout my apprenticeship.

Those who worked in a relatively small workplace, as I did, only gained a narrow range of skills, because there are only so many things to learn in one place, but the great thing about college was that that range was augmented. We got transferable skills from going to college and taking the various qualifications that were available. It is important that we bear that in mind, otherwise we are training people to work in one workplace with no prospect of ever moving on to another.

Time forbids me to go through all the statistics that hon. Members have quoted at length, but I will say that we know, as has been said on both sides of the Chamber, that we have seen the number of apprenticeships fall and the amount of funding that colleges get—per pupil and overall—fall over the past 10 or so years. That cannot be right. I have had some briefing from St Helens College and Knowsley Community College, and from the City of Liverpool College, telling me that the apprenticeship system is so unnecessarily complicated that it gives them a headache. City of Liverpool College tells me that it has to deal with 14 different funding pots for apprenticeships. That is ridiculous. I hope the Minister will look at that problem and try to find some way of short-circuiting that complicated funding system.

Before I finish, I will briefly refer to points that have already been made by my hon. Friends the Members for Stoke-on-Trent Central (Gareth Snell), for Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle (Emma Hardy) and for Hornsey and Wood Green (Catherine West). Colleges are reporting huge increases in the mental health problems they have to deal with—those statistics have already been quoted—and there is a problem. Colleges must be able to help people with mental health problems get the training or education they need, but to do that they need the resources. In the context of constantly diminishing resources, they just do not have the capacity to do the sort of work that is necessary.

This has been a good debate and I am grateful to have had the opportunity to take part in it. I hope that when the Minister comes to reply, she will address the funding problem that so many hon. Members have mentioned. I hope she will look at simplifying the apprenticeship funding system and take into account the comments that have been made about mental health problems.

6.55 pm

**Ruth Cadbury** (Brentford and Isleworth) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Bone. I too congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Daniel Zeichner) on introducing this Petitions Committee debate today. I will try not to repeat the many points that have been made by hon. Members on both sides of the Chamber.

On her first day, the Prime Minister promised to tackle the “burning injustices” of society, with the implication that everyone in Britain, whatever their background and age, would be able to succeed. Here we are confronted with another example of deed not following word: the cuts to our further education system.

In December, I visited West Thames College in Isleworth in my constituency, which was largely rebuilt thanks to the decision of the Labour Government in 2010 and now has amazing student and technical facilities from that major capital build. The college provides a wide variety of courses, including world-renowned specialist hair and make-up degrees, whose graduates get jobs in the west end and in the film and TV industry; a range of vocational courses designed in conjunction with local employers, such as in aviation and logistics, where we have a local skill shortage; and courses in English as an additional language to enable young people recently arrived in the country to make progress in education and employment. There is specialist support for those who need additional support to access mainstream courses, and specialist courses for students with severe or complex disabilities. There is also a programme for 14 to 16-year-olds who have not coped in school for various reasons, such as health or family problems.

When I visited in early December, I met a number of students on a variety of courses—students such as Page and Rosie, who were aged 18. Each had struggled for different reasons when younger and had missed a lot of school, but West Thames is providing them with the focus to catch up on their core skills and giving them career hopes—Page in bridal hair and Rosie in car mechanics. I met 32-year-old Katrina, who is doing an access to social work course. As the lone parent of a disabled child, she has struggled to pursue a career or even, at times, to get a job. She told me how the course will enable her to apply to university and hopefully achieve her dream of becoming a professional social worker.

Uplifting as their stories are, the students on the different courses raised concerns with me about problems they had experienced recently: cuts to the teaching hours that are needed to cover the breadth of the curriculum on their courses; cuts in courses such as employability, which are so important in helping them to get a job; concerns about the provision of up-to-date specialist equipment and software, because they are changing all the time and the college needs to keep up with the changing needs of employers; and overstretched special needs and mental health support. The college is also suffering from the decimation of adult learning, with fewer and fewer adults able to attend the college.

**Matt Western** (Warwick and Leamington) (Lab): I was lucky enough to benefit in 2008 from retraining through adult education. Does my hon. Friend agree that the great benefit of further education is the richness and breadth it can provide, and the diversity of courses that does not exist anywhere else? We are seeing 30% cuts at Warwickshire College Group, which has 29,000 students and provides a huge benefit across Warwickshire.

**Ruth Cadbury:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The decimation of adult courses has been brought about partly through the ending of student support for over-19s. The students and colleges are dealing with that cliff edge, which comes when students reach 19. Aviation and ICT course students told me that more than half the students left at the end of level 2, because they no longer got funding. They therefore missed out on level 3, which is the best gateway to jobs.

West Thames College, like many others, has lost 30% of its funding in the last 10 years, while costs, as other hon. Members have said, have been rising. Students

told me that they respected their tutors greatly and could not understand how they earned £7,000 less than equivalently experienced schoolteachers. The West Thames principal, Tracy Aust, made it clear to me that this situation, with all these problems, is not sustainable and ultimately impacts not only on students but on staff, businesses, our communities and our wider economy.

How can Government Members wring their hands about UK productivity and then oversee the decimation of the education and skills training that is fundamental to the productivity that this country so badly needs? How can they wax lyrical about social mobility and then withdraw or underfund the options that enable people to aspire and achieve?

7 pm

**Lilian Greenwood** (Nottingham South) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Bone, and to hear so many excellent contributions.

It is no secret that this Government are presiding over rising inequality in education. All 26 schools in my constituency face real-terms cuts to their budgets; university tuition fees have risen threefold; and maintenance grants and education maintenance allowance has been scrapped, hitting students from the poorest and most deprived households the hardest.

Colleges are a beacon of hope and opportunity in our local communities. As John van de Laarschot, chief executive officer of Nottingham College, says:

“Rooted in local communities and with broad and deep links to local employers, Further Education Colleges like ours help people of all ages and backgrounds to make the most of their talents and ambitions through top-class technical education, basic skills and lifelong learning. We play a crucial role in driving social mobility and boost local and regional economic competitiveness.”

But colleges are dealing with sustained under-investment that is nothing short of a financial crisis.

Recently, the Institute for Fiscal Studies crowned further education “the biggest loser” in education over the last 25 years, and no wonder, as its research has revealed that since 2009 college funding has fallen by 30%, and funding per sixth-form student has fallen by 21% since 2010-11. Of course, we may soon say goodbye to European funding, which often helps colleges over the line.

This is all happening at a time when colleges’ costs have increased substantially. As has been recognised, the 16 to 18 budget has been frozen by this Government for seven consecutive years at £4,000 per student. A recent report by the Children’s Commissioner states that by the end of this decade, as a country we will be spending the same amount of cash per 16 to 18 student as we were in 1990. That simply cannot be right, especially when we know that the years from 16 to 18 are such a critical time in young people’s lives. It is the time when they often need the most support and when they face multiple pressures. From sitting or perhaps resitting some of the most important exams of their lives to deciding whether to apply to university or seek an apprenticeship, they are getting to grips with adulthood and making choices that will often shape their whole future. Too many students of that age face mental health problems, but a survey by the “Raise the Rate” campaign has found that many colleges are having to make significant cuts to mental health support just when it is most needed.

[Lilian Greenwood]

The continuing budget freeze, teamed with rising costs, means that ultimately colleges are being asked to do more with less. Nottingham College is currently working with a total income of £86.8 million—a 26% reduction since 2012-13. In the last year alone, it has rationalised sites and closed an on-site nursery. Of course, this is not happening just in my constituency. As we have heard, college students all over the country face less choice in the curriculum on offer and reductions in teaching and learning support, and they are often unable to access the same extracurricular activities, work experience opportunities and university visits as their peers in private and selective schools.

Adult further education, which plays a vital role in increasing social mobility, is also dependent on the success of our colleges, but funding has fallen by 45% in nine years, and enrolments of adult students have dropped from 5.1 million to just 1.9 million over the same period. Learning is not just for the young; it is something for all of us and we should be able to access it throughout our lives. As the nature of work changes, we need to be ready to reskill and retrain, to adapt to new technologies and take up new opportunities. The Government say that they are committed to increasing social mobility, yet funding for vocational and adult education has been decimated. Gone are the days of taking an evening class at a local college after work. The second chances that life-changing lifelong learning courses provide are being destroyed. As has been recognised, that not only makes people's lives less fulfilling; in many cases, it just makes them less fun.

It is not just college students and potential learners who are affected by the lack of funding. Since 2009, college staff have seen their pay fall by 25%. According to the UCU, teachers in further education colleges earn on average £7,000 a year less than teachers in schools, often for the same work. No wonder that they have been leaving the further education sector in their droves. Since 2010, 24,000 have left, which is one third of the total teaching workforce. In Nottingham College alone, there has been a 34% reduction in teaching staff since 2012-13; the number has gone from 937 down to 616. Hard-pressed staff simply cannot be expected to continue doing more for less.

I am proud to speak today on behalf of Nottingham College's 40,000 students and 1,500 staff. There is of course some good news: the new City Hub campus will provide excellent learning facilities and transform a brownfield city centre site.

We are asking the Minister to increase funding to sustainable levels. Will she give a guarantee of real-terms funding rises for the coming five years? Will she commit to extending the pupil premium to cover post-16 students? Will she ensure that everyone can access lifelong learning, particularly those who have not achieved a level 3 qualification? Will she ensure that colleges can offer their staff a decent pay deal this year and in the years ahead? We in this Chamber all love our colleges; I hope that our colleges love the Minister's reply.

7.7 pm

**Paul Farrelly** (Newcastle-under-Lyme) (Lab): I did not intend to speak because I was a long time in the main Chamber for the Prime Minister's Brexit statement,

so thank you, Mr Bone, for giving me the opportunity. It is a perfect segue, because the chief executive of Nottingham College, John van de Laarschot, used to be the chief executive of Stoke-on-Trent City Council, next to my area. He is a good man, and I count him as a friend.

The Minister will know well from the correspondence that we have had over the last year that Newcastle-under-Lyme has an excellent college—I hope that she will visit us sometime soon. Its principal, Karen Dobson, was awarded an OBE in the new year's honours list, in recognition of her efforts and those of her team. I played my part in getting a £5 million contribution from the old Advantage West Midlands to make the construction happen, because there was no better argument for investment in regeneration than investment in people's futures and in their further education.

I want to make one wider point, with the Chair of the Education Committee here, to the Minister. In Newcastle, since the reorganisation in the 1980s, there is only one school, St John Fisher, a Catholic school, that has a sixth form; everybody else goes to the college, more or less. Therefore, excellent though the college is, this is not simply a matter of choice. My plea to the Minister is that, be it on per-pupil funding or on teachers' pay, the playing field between school sixth forms and FE colleges simply must be levelled. Not only is the current situation unfair to pupils and teachers; it discriminates against areas like mine in north Staffordshire, Newcastle and Stoke-on-Trent, which have a different school and college structure. I hope that in the coming days, weeks and months, as the Minister goes in to bat in the Treasury, her Parliamentary Private Secretary, the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent South (Jack Brereton), will pursue that argument with her vigorously.

7.9 pm

**Gordon Marsden** (Blackpool South) (Lab): It is an enormous pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Bone, and that of your predecessor in this debate, the hon. Member for Broxbourne (Mr Walker). It has been an absolute joy—to echo the right hon. Member for South Holland and The Deepings (Sir John Hayes)—to be in this debate and to hear the unanimous view about what needs to happen in this sector. The Minister has been showered not only with an avalanche of statistics but, more importantly, with evidence of the life-enhancing chances that further education and skills can bring.

The case has been made with an eloquence and urgency that demands a response not only from the Minister—I am sure it will be good—but from the Secretary of State for Education, because he needs to put his shoulder to the wheel in the discussions with the Treasury. I know that the Minister will do her best in that area, but if the Secretary of State for Education does not get that money through and if the Chancellor does not come back and respond to the abject failure in his Budget, none of them will be forgiven. That is the crux of what we have been talking about.

I do not have the ability to praise all the hon. Members who made speeches, but I certainly praise the 70,000 people who signed the petition. I praise all the excellent briefings from the Association of Colleges, the Sixth Form Colleges Association, Unison and the UCU, and all the individual colleges, principals and staff, as well as the many individual students, whom hon. Members have quoted. I pay particular

tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Daniel Zeichner), who spelled out to the Minister in simple, cogent and thoughtful terms the challenge of a divided country that has been left behind; the challenge to make this a newsworthy crusade, which it has not been in the past; and the challenge simply to understand and to question why this has happened.

When EMA was abolished in 2010, £555 a year was being spent; why do we now have 16 to 19 bursaries at only a third of that value? Why, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Tottenham (Mr Lammy) said, has the concept of night schools been left behind? Why has this funding been frozen at £4,000? Those issues have not just dropped into the Minister's tray; they have been in the trays of the four Skills Ministers that I have shadowed since 2011.

I cannot touch on everything that has been said, but I would like to highlight some points. My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds North West (Alex Sobel) talked about the issues with T-levels, as have many other people. If I had more time, I would talk more about T-levels, not to attack them, but to say that they are doing a very different job, and even that job is being hampered by a series of things.

The right hon. Member for Harlow (Robert Halfon), who is the respected Chair of the Education Committee, was absolutely right to talk about the different ages at which people get second chances and to challenge the Government on building new colleges. I absolutely agree with him: what is the point of building new colleges or new institutes of this, that or the other, if there are inadequate staff to take those courses through and inadequate funding to sustain them? That is the challenge for the Government. This requires a long-term strategy and a 10-year plan.

My hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Laura Smith) gave a fantastic speech lauding her own FE college. She also pointed out the dire problems for smaller towns—she was absolutely right to talk about the tragic situation of Manchester Metropolitan University—which were expressed by many hon. Members. My hon. Friends also mentioned the 24,000 FE teachers who have left the sector. The Minister and the Department have to focus on those things.

The right hon. Member for South Holland and The Deepings, whom I am proud to call my collaborator in the joy of further education, was absolutely right to point out that the role of adult learning is in jeopardy because of the sheer volume of funding cuts. The hon. Member for Eastbourne (Stephen Lloyd) talked about the yawning gap between schools funding and FE teachers' funding.

My hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Yvonne Fovargue) talked about the importance of Winstanley College in her constituency, which reminded me that it is named after Gerrard Winstanley, who was one of the group of Levellers to become known as the Diggers. Thomas Rainsborough, another Leveller, said to Cromwell that the “poorest he”—sorry about the sexism of the 17th century—should have the same opportunities as the “greatest he”. That is the watchword of further education and schools, time after time: people should be allowed to have this opportunity.

My hon. Friend the Member for Poplar and Limehouse (Jim Fitzpatrick) put his finger on the button when he talked about the message needing to go to the Secretary

of State for Education and to the Treasury, regarding the underspend on 16 to 19 education and advanced learner loans. It is a tragedy that this Government have not only failed to put money in the right places, but introduced systems and structures, such as the advanced learner loans, of which 50% of the money has been returned to the Treasury year after year and nothing has been done about it. That is one of the real problems in this area.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent Central (Gareth Snell) talked about how valuable further education is to the north Staffordshire economy. My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle (Emma Hardy), who serves so strongly on the Education Committee, talked about the social capital in that area. We also heard a number of good points from my hon. Friends the Members for Hornsey and Wood Green (Catherine West), for Huddersfield (Mr Sheerman) and for Chesterfield (Toby Perkins).

My right hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley (Mr Howarth) talked about the over-complex system. My hon. Friend the Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Ruth Cadbury) quite rightly pointed to the achievements of the last Labour Government in this area and how those have not been replicated so far by this Government. My hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Paul Farrelly) praised the principal of a college in his constituency. My hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham South (Lilian Greenwood) summed up further education as a beacon of hope and opportunity.

Those are the sorts of questions that come to this Chamber. It is sad that we have to revisit these voices of challenge and hope, because we were all led to believe—as the Minister said in perfectly good faith—that the unprecedented campaign in the autumn would produce a result. That is why, in October last year, I wrote to the Chancellor to request an urgent uplift in this area.

**Mr Peter Bone (in the Chair):** Order. I am sorry to interrupt the shadow Minister, but there is a Division in the House. If there is one Division, we will suspend for 15 minutes. If there is more than one Division, please try to return as soon as possible.

7.17 pm

*Sitting suspended for Divisions in the House.*

7.42 pm

*On resuming—*

**Mr Peter Bone (in the Chair):** Order. The debate will resume with the shadow Minister, and we will now conclude at 7.55 pm.

**Gordon Marsden:** As I was saying, these cuts have been very severe. There has been a real-terms cut of anything between 50% and 60% in the budget for adult education, as well as cuts in the budgets for further education and sixth-form funding—which, of course, is why the “Raise the Rate” campaign has been doing what it has been doing. The truth of the matter is that, as Amanda Spielman said,

“I am firmly of the view that the government should increase the base rate for 16 to 19 funding in the forthcoming spending review.”

[Gordon Marsden]

We really do have to go down that route. We cannot repeat the situation of being marched up to the top of the hill and down again, as we were with the Chancellor.

There are so many aspects of tonight's debate that I could talk about, but I do not have the time to do so. However, I particularly want to ask the Minister whether she is going to do anything to make sure that the Augar review rebalances the rates between students in FE and HE, and whether that will be a priority in the spending review. We also know about the issues with the financial health of colleges and insolvency; what is the Minister going to be doing in that area? We know that policy makers have not looked holistically at that area, and we need to have that holistic approach.

Because this Government have failed to take a holistic approach, because they have not looked at human capital as well as physical capital, and because the advanced learner loans have been a continuing disaster, we need to have a transformation. We need to have parity of esteem, and that can only be achieved through the sorts of structures that the Labour party are proposing: the national education service and the lifelong learning commission. Having spent 20 years as a lecturer in the adult learning sector, and having seen the powerful effect of FE in my own college in Blackpool, I believe that there is no better way of dealing with this issue than having that step change, not just of funding, but of vision and structure.

7.44 pm

**The Minister for Apprenticeships and Skills (Anne Milton):** It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Bone. I congratulate the hon. Member for Cambridge (Daniel Zeichner) on securing this important debate, and I offer particular congratulations to the A-level politics students of Brockenhurst College for having started the petition that underlies it. I think we can all agree that securing a debate in Parliament is a pretty impressive piece of A-level project work.

**Gareth Snell:** Will the Minister give way?

**Anne Milton:** No, I only have 10 minutes. I am so sorry.

The hon. Member for Blackpool South (Gordon Marsden) mentioned the Augar review, and he should be in no doubt that I have fed my feelings about further education into that review. It is an independent review, and we await it with anticipation; somebody asked about timescales, but I do not yet know when it will report. To reassure the hon. Gentleman, we certainly are not building any new colleges. Institutes of technology, which are possibly what he was referring to, are collaborations. That is not about new buildings; it is about collaborations between FE and HE.

I cannot rehearse all the valuable arguments that have been made, but we sometimes forget that despite all the challenges that FE faces, 81% of colleges are rated "good" or "outstanding". However, I know that Ofsted has raised concerns about the financial stability of the sector and how finances constrain what FE colleges and sixth-form colleges can do, and of course we have heard a great deal about that today. The petition

that underpins this debate was launched as part of the Association of Colleges' campaign, "Love Our Colleges"—which I do. Campaigns such as this and "Raise the Rate" have helped raise the profile of this issue, and we have had 18 speakers today.

The hon. Member for Cambridge is right to talk about divisions; divisions in society underlie this whole debate. He is also right that further education has been left behind, not just in terms of finance but through the domination of the higher education sector, which has crowded out any conversation about further education and how crucial it is. We must ensure that everyone, whatever their age, background or prior educational attainment, can access the best opportunities that are available.

My hon. Friend the Member for St Albans (Mrs Main) mentioned those with special educational needs. As we all know, the further education sector offers a particularly high-quality opportunity to make sure that those young people have a chance to get on in their lives. To talk a little bit about mental health, I am acutely aware of the particular stresses that disproportionately affect young people in further education. We are creating new mental health support teams to address those needs, and we will work with colleges to identify and train designated senior leads for mental health to oversee mental health and wellbeing, with appropriate back-up support available. That is an important innovation.

My right hon. Friends the Members for Harlow (Robert Halfon) and for Chingford and Woodford Green (Mr Duncan Smith) rightly pointed out that people develop at different stages in their life; it does not all happen for people at the ages of 16 or 18. For many people, school has not worked well. Examinations at 16 and 18 have not shown their true potential, and the door needs to remain open for those people. In my view, everybody has potential; everyone has skills, and is able to get a job or career and get on in their life. What they need is the opportunity to develop that potential.

My right hon. Friend the Member for South Holland and The Deepings (Sir John Hayes), who is always eloquent, gave us probably the most succinct description of the problems we face. Higher education has dominated Governments of all political persuasions; everyone, including the media, talks incessantly about higher education, and I well remember that at the hustings at my local university during the 2017 election, I was asked about tuition fees. My response was, "What about the 50% who do not go to university?" That did not go down terribly well, but I felt strongly about this issue then, long before I took on this job. My right hon. Friend probably answered his own question about apprenticeships: we were determined to raise the quality of apprenticeships, to make them high quality, relevant to the workplace and, critically, designed by employers. Such major reforms have inevitably resulted in a reduction in the numbers of apprenticeship starts, although that has started to turn around. There has been a rise in the numbers of level 4 and 5 and degree apprenticeships, and they are becoming a route of choice instead of full-time higher education courses, which is excellent.

My hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Outwood (Andrea Jenkyns) rightly pointed out the additional maths premium. I am not going to go through a whole raft of all the things we have funded, but she is right that overall funding has not kept up with costs. She is

also right that playing party politics does not help. I urge Members from all parts of the House to work together with me and with each other to ensure that we make the case. With the post-18 review looking at HE and FE, and with us also looking at the sustainability of the sector, that joint working is critical.

The hon. Member for Poplar and Limehouse (Jim Fitzpatrick) mentioned the cross-party nature of the debate and asked about underspends. It is likely that the Department answer will state that any underspend is recirculated among other departmental priorities. I will see whether there are further details on that, but the money stays within education— although like him, I would like to see it spent on further education. The hon. Member for Scunthorpe (Nic Dakin) asked me what the priorities are. I make no particular judgment about the various educational sectors, whether that is higher education or schools, but we hear a lot about schools funding and tuition fees and we do not hear much about FE. He also asked about the case for that funding, and there is a clear economic case and a productivity case. As a country, we cannot afford not to adequately fund the education of 50% of the population to ensure we have the skills we need. On a very personal level, it is about social mobility, community growth and the fact that everyone deserves a chance.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent Central (Gareth Snell) mentioned mental health provision, which I have referred to, and the complex other needs of students in FE. Part of the case we need to make is that young people and adults often come into FE because their lives have been complex. Their learning needs are often not straightforward. Teaching and learning are only part of the job that FE staff do. There are often many other needs that must be met before any learning can begin to take place. I congratulate him on his thoughtful and collaborative approach. He is right that I need the help of all Members.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle (Emma Hardy) is a real champion of her local college. She rightly raised the role that the college has played in her community, and it was a delight to hear her say that. That role is not measurable and is difficult to define, but it is of immense value. The hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr Sheerman) probably summed it up better than many. The hon. Lady talked about lifelong learning and how 35% of jobs are likely to disappear in the next 10 years due to automation. The national retraining scheme, where we are doing a lot of research into what works, has received £100 million from the Chancellor. There is collaboration between the TUC, the CBI and Government to address exactly the issues she raised.

I have talked about the sustainability of the further education sector and FE funding. In the run-up to the spending review, it is time to articulate the case for FE. We talk about it not being school or university, but we need a clear vision that everyone can get behind. We have identified some key issues about how we can put FE on a sustainable footing and deliver quality. There are many questions that we need to ask. How do we ensure a high-quality further education offer in each local area so that young people and adults have opportunities to develop their skills and employers can access the training and skilled recruits they need? We want FE to be sustainable. We know that area reviews have done some of the work, but there is probably more work and more collaboration to do. The 16 to 18-year-old population has been declining for several years, but we will see an increase after 2020. By 2028, there will be a quarter more 16-year-olds than there are today, so the problem is coming up behind us.

T-levels do not distract from the issue; they are an add-on. Often in parliamentary questions I give an answer about how much we are spending on T-levels. It is important. It is not a substitute for core funding, and I am aware of that. We also want to see a better and more visible offer for people at level 4 and level 5 in technical education. The Secretary of State emphasised that in his speech last month. What is the role of FE and HE institutions? What is the role of learning and grant funding? Those issues are all bound up in the post-18 review. There are also the key steps we have to take to help colleges recruit and train the teachers they need.

I thank the hon. Member for Cambridge again for securing the debate and I thank everyone for their contributions. I reassure Members that I will take the issues away and continue to champion FE as we prepare for the spending review. I reject any suggestion that I do not care about further education. I did not go to university; I went by a route that included further education, and I am the first to challenge the intellectual snobbery that pervades much of the mainstream media and broadcast media. We have to turn that around. I want a society where it does not matter where someone came from—

**Mr Peter Bone (in the Chair):** Order. I apologise for the fact that the proposer of the debate did not get a chance to wind up, but time has beaten us.

7.55 pm

*Motion lapsed, and sitting adjourned without Question put (Standing Order No. 10(14)).*



# Written Statements

Monday 21 January 2019

## DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

### The Times and The Sunday Times: Sharing of Resources and Services

**The Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Jeremy Wright):** On 10 January 2019, News UK submitted an application to DCMS requesting that the Secretary of State accept proposed undertakings in place of undertakings that were put in place by the then Secretary of State for Trade (the right hon. John Biffin) in 1981.

The proposed new undertakings seek to vary the sections of the 1981 conditions which require that ultimate control over the resources, including journalists, available to each newspaper are kept separately with the editor of each newspaper. The main variation proposed by News UK is to set out explicitly in paragraph 5 of the proposed undertakings that:

“The newspapers may share services and resources, including journalists, to such extent as the editors agree.”

News UK has submitted that the changes would permit a greater sharing of resources and services, including journalists, between *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* and that such sharing is a necessary step to mitigate the financial challenges that the two titles will face in the future.

I am placing in the Library of the House today a copy of the application we received from News UK along with details on how to comment on the application. The deadline for comments is 5pm on Monday 11 February. This application will be considered in a quasi-judicial manner through a fair and transparent process.

If, after considering the responses, my decision is to accept the new undertakings, there will be a further consultation on the terms of the new undertakings as required by the legislation.

The proposed undertakings are also available online at: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenstatements>.

[HCWS1256]

## EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION

### Voting Rights

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Mr Robin Walker):** Today, I can confirm that the Government have reached a reciprocal agreement with Spain that will secure the rights of UK nationals in Spain, and Spanish citizens in the UK, to stand and vote in local elections now and in the future. This is a positive step forward in our future relationship with Spain and we hope this will be the first of many similar bilateral agreements with other member states.

This agreement with Spain is the first of its kind and secures the democratic rights of over 300,000 UK nationals who are now able to continue exercising their right to vote and stand in local Spanish elections, including the upcoming election in May 2019.

Citizens have always been our priority in the negotiations for our departure from the EU, and in particular to protect the rights of British expats. The UK advocated the inclusion in the withdrawal agreement of the right to vote and stand in local elections for UK nationals living in the EU, and EU citizens in the UK, but the EU did not want to include these rights within the scope of the agreement. Instead, we have been clear that we will pursue these rights on a bilateral basis and that the right of EU citizens to vote in local elections in the UK should be considered alongside the rights of UK nationals. It has always been our priority to secure these reciprocally.

To provide certainty while we pursue these agreements, we do not anticipate any changes to the current primary legislative framework for candidacy and voting rights being made before the May 2019 English and Northern Ireland local elections. These are devolved competences and the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly are responsible for their own franchises in local and devolved assembly elections. It is the policy intent of the UK Government that candidates who are validly nominated and elected at the May 2019 local elections in England and Northern Ireland should be able to serve that term of office in full.

I will be depositing the agreement in the Libraries of both Houses.

[HCWS1257]

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Domestic Abuse

**The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Sajid Javid):** My right hon. Friends, the Prime Minister and Justice Secretary and I are today publishing the consultation response on transforming the response to domestic abuse and draft Domestic Abuse Bill following the public consultation last year.

Domestic abuse destroys lives. It is a cruel and complex crime that can affect anyone, leaving physical and emotional scars that can last a lifetime. It also places a considerable demand on public services—Home Office research published today estimates the economic and social costs of domestic abuse to society to be £66 billion each year. This consultation response and draft Bill further our ambition to transform the response to domestic abuse and change social attitudes that keep these crimes hidden in plain sight.

On 8 March 2018, the then Home Secretary issued a written ministerial statement (HCWS525) announcing a comprehensive public consultation to address domestic abuse from prevention through to rehabilitation. The consultation ran for 12 weeks and received around 3,200 responses. In addition to questionnaires, we ran a series of national roadshows and themed roundtables with victims and other stakeholders. The Government are grateful to the victims, frontline practitioners and

others who took the time to respond to the consultation and supported the events. These responses have helped us to refine and improve our proposals.

To reflect the prevalence and complexity of domestic abuse and the harm it causes, the consultation response is truly a cross-Government effort. It recognises that change needs to occur across all statutory agencies, including in courts, police, schools, social care, housing, welfare and healthcare settings.

For those measures which require legislation to implement, the Government have today published the Domestic Abuse Bill in draft for pre-legislative scrutiny. A joint committee of both Houses will be established as soon as practicable to undertake such scrutiny. Once the joint committee has reported, the Government are committed to introducing the Domestic Abuse Bill as soon as parliamentary time allows.

The draft Bill includes the following measures:

- a) Introduce the first ever statutory Government definition of domestic abuse (which will include economic abuse);
- b) Establish the office of Domestic Abuse Commissioner and set out the Commissioner's functions and powers (the competition for the appointment of the Designate Domestic Abuse Commissioner was launched on 4 December 2018);
- c) Provide for a new Domestic Abuse Protection Notice and Domestic Abuse Protection Order;
- d) Prohibit perpetrators of abuse from cross-examining their victims in person in the family courts and give the court discretion to prevent cross-examination in person where it would diminish the quality of the witness' evidence or cause the witness significant distress;
- e) Create a statutory presumption that complainants of an offence involving behaviour which amounts to domestic abuse are eligible for special measures in the criminal courts;
- f) Enable domestic abuse offenders to be subject to polygraph testing as a condition of their licence following their release from custody;
- g) Place the guidance supporting the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme on a statutory footing;
- h) Ensure that where a local authority, for reasons connected with domestic abuse, grants a new secure tenancy to a social tenant who had or has a secure lifetime or assured tenancy (other than an assured shorthold tenancy) this must be a secure lifetime tenancy; and
- i) Support ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the "Istanbul Convention"), by extending the extraterritorial jurisdiction of the criminal courts in England and Wales to further violent and sexual offences.

Ahead of the legislation we have already started to implement measures to improve support for victims and their children. We have launched applications for the designate Domestic Abuse Commissioner role; we have announced successful bids to the children affected by domestic abuse fund with nine projects across the country being funded; and 12 projects have been awarded funding to support female offenders who have experienced domestic abuse.

The Government remain resolute in their determination to fundamentally change the response to this insidious crime through delivering the cross-Government commitments set out in today's Command Paper. It demonstrates a clear focus on prevention and sets out new measures to: raise awareness; better support victims and their children; ensure perpetrators are pursued and

prosecuted; and drive consistently high performance in the response to domestic abuse across all local areas, agencies and sectors.

A copy of the Command Paper (CP 15), including the consultation response, the draft Domestic Abuse Bill and explanatory notes, will today be laid before the House and will be available online at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk). Copies of the Paper on the economic and social costs of domestic abuse; draft Domestic Abuse Bill impact assessment; delegated powers memorandum; and ECHR memorandum will be placed in the House Library.

[HCWS1255]

## PRIME MINISTER

### European Union (Withdrawal) Act: Section 13(4) Statement

**The Prime Minister (Mrs Theresa May):** This statement is being made for the purposes of Section 13(4) of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 and outlines how the Government intend to proceed in the light of the House's decision on Tuesday 15 January 2019 not to agree to a resolution laid for the purposes of section 13(1)(b) of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018.

The Government will today table the motions required in both Houses under section 13(6) of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018. Later this week the Government will also take the steps set out in section 13(11) of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018. This will require motions pursuant to section 13(11)(b) to be tabled in both Houses.

It is the Government's intention, in accordance with the procedure allowed under section 13(13)(b) and (c), for those later section 13(11)(b) motions to be combined with the motion tabled today under section 13(6). The scheduled debates in the House of Lords and the House of Commons, on 28 and 29 January respectively, will therefore be on motions relating to the statements made under both s. 13(4) and s. 13(11)(a).

The joint motion will be in neutral terms, in line with the European Union (Withdrawal) Act, but will now be amendable following the House of Commons decision on 4 December 2018 that, "the provisions of Standing Order No. 24B (Amendments to motions to consider specified matters) shall not apply in respect of any motion tabled by a Minister of the Crown pursuant to any provision of section 13 of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018. The joint motion in the House of Commons will be as follows:

#### *The Prime Minister*

That this House, in accordance with the provisions of section 13(6)(a) and 13(11)(b)(i) and 13(13)(b) of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018, has considered the written statement titled "Statement under Section 13(4) of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018" and made on 21 January 2019, and the written statement titled "Statement under Section 13(11)(a) of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018" and made on (date on or before 24 January).

An equivalent motion will be tabled in the House of Lords.

Members will be advised that amendments tabled to the original section 13(6) motion will need to be re-tabled when the second joint motion is tabled.

We are following this course of action to avoid any legal uncertainty as to whether the Government have complied fully with the terms of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018. Section 13(11) of the Act states that the Government must make the statement and motion mentioned above if, at the end of 21 January 2019, “there is no agreement in principle in negotiations under Article 50(2)”. While the negotiations have yielded an agreement, that agreement has not been approved by Parliament.

Notwithstanding this action, making this statement does not prejudice any further actions the Government may choose to take under section 13(1) of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 at a later date.

Earlier today I updated the House on the next steps following the decision not to approve the deal negotiated with the European Union and following initial engagement with senior parliamentarians across the House.

[HCWS1258]



# Petition

Monday 21 January 2019

## OBSERVATIONS

### HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

#### Access to Flash Glucose Monitoring in England

*The petition of residents of the United Kingdom,*

Declares that the unfair postcode lottery created by Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) for access to Flash Glucose Monitoring (FreeStyle Libre) is detrimental to the health and emotional wellbeing of people with diabetes and those that care for people with diabetes; further notes that technology has been proved to be cost effective for many who are on intensive insulin therapy; further that it has been made available on prescription by the NHS and there is evidence to support its positive impacts; further that half of the country have now given access, but the other half have not; further that there is no reason why CCGs across the country should not make this life changing technology available to people with diabetes who could benefit in England.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons to urge the government to take immediate action with NHS England to make Flash Glucose Technology available on prescription for people with diabetes regardless of their address.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Keith Vaz, *Official Report*, 14 November 2018; Vol. 649, c. 370.]

[P002292]

*The petition of residents of Crawley Constituency,*

Declares that the unfair postcode lottery created by Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) for access to Flash Glucose Monitoring (FreeStyle Libre) is detrimental to the health and emotional wellbeing of people with diabetes and those that care for people with diabetes; further notes that technology has been proved to be cost effective for many who are on intensive insulin therapy; further that it has been made available on prescription by the NHS and there is evidence to support its positive impacts; further that half of the country have now given access, but the other half have not; further that there is no reason why CCGs across the country should not make this life changing technology available to people with diabetes who could benefit in England.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons to urge the government to take immediate action with NHS England to make Flash Glucose Technology available on prescription for people with diabetes regardless of their address.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Henry Smith, *Official Report*, 14 November 2018; Vol. 649, c. 371.]

[P0022923]

*Observations from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Steve Brine):*

The NHS was founded on the principle of universal access—free at the point of delivery. This Government are committed to making sure that this principle remains.

The flash glucose monitoring system in question, FreeStyle Libre, was approved for reimbursement on National Health Service prescription from 1 November 2017 and is now available across the NHS. However, this is not a recommendation to automatically prescribe it as it is the responsibility of clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) to determine how funds are allocated for their local population based, on the relevant evidence and guidance. FreeStyle Libre is not suitable for everyone. Patients will need to discuss the ongoing management of their condition with their healthcare professional and consider whether FreeStyle Libre is suitable for them.

The Regional Medicines Optimisation Committee (RMOC) was asked to provide advice about Freestyle Libre to support local decision making and assist clinical commissioning groups in making effective use of this new technology. The RMOC brings together decision makers and clinicians to provide a credible source of consistent and reliable advice on medicines and devices for local NHS decision makers. Its advice sets out the criteria for patients who may be able to benefit from using the device, and suggested a careful start to its use because of a lack of data and recommended additional data collection to better understand the benefits for patients.

At the start of 2018, NHS England wrote to CCGs reminding them of their responsibilities and of the guidance that exists when it comes to flash glucose monitoring, and other treatments for people with Type 1 diabetes. NHS England continues to work with CCGs to strongly encourage them to adopt best practice. And in November 2018 NHS England issued a press release that announced action to end the current variation patients in some parts of the country are facing to access Freestyle Libre. NHS England will ensure the device is available on prescription for all patients who qualify for it in line with NHS clinical guidelines. From April 2019, these patients will be able to receive it on prescription from their local GP or diabetes team helping them to better manage their blood sugar levels.

At present, 178 out of 195 CCGs have now adopted Freestyle Libre for use. We are making progress—in November 2017 CCGs provided around 400 sensor packs to patients. By October 2018, this had risen to almost 20,000 packs. As of October 2018, CCGs have provided a total of almost 100,000 sensor packs at a total cost of £3.2 million.

Within its financial constraints, the NHS is committed to providing access to new medical technologies. We continue to support actions across the NHS to support the development and adoption of new technology, including new treatments for diabetes. Ultimately it is for CCGs, who are primarily responsible for commissioning diabetes services, to meet the requirements of their local population.

In doing so, they need to ensure that the services they provide are fit for purpose, reflect the needs of the local population, are based on the available evidence and take into account national guidelines.



# Ministerial Corrections

Monday 21 January 2019

## HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### Protection for Homebuyers

*The following is an extract from the speech by the Under-Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, the hon. Member for South Derbyshire (Mrs Wheeler) in the Westminster Hall debate on protection for homebuyers on 13 December 2018.*

**Mrs Wheeler:** The hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Justin Madders) mentioned the £10 ground rent. For a peppercorn to exist there must be a consideration of exchange of money. We are concerned that peppercorn could be open to abuse and therefore we have considered that an amount should be specified in statute. We have chosen £10 because that is the annual amount used for right to buys.

*[Official Report, 13 December 2018, Vol. 651, c. 204WH.]*

*Letter of correction from the Under-Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, the hon. Member for South Derbyshire (Mrs Wheeler):*

An error has been identified in the response I gave to the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Justin Madders).

The correct response should have been:

**Mrs Wheeler:** The hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Justin Madders) mentioned the £10 ground rent. **For a peppercorn to exist there must be a consideration, which can include an exchange of money.** We are concerned that peppercorn could be open to abuse and therefore we have considered that an amount should be specified in statute. We have chosen £10 because that is the annual amount used for right to buys.

## BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

### Car Production: Solihull

*The following is an extract from the Adjournment debate on Car Production: Solihull on 16 January 2019.*

**Richard Harrington:** I am pleased to remind the House that, on 19 December, the Treasury published a review of the impact of the worldwide harmonised light vehicles test procedure on vehicle excise duty and company car tax. The review is open until 17 September.

*[Official Report, 16 January 2019, Vol. 652, c. 1284.]*

*Letter of correction from the Under-Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, the hon. Member for Watford (Richard Harrington).*

An error has been identified in the speech I gave on Car Production: Solihull.

The correct response should have been:

**Richard Harrington:** I am pleased to remind the House that, on 19 December, the Treasury published a review of the impact of the worldwide harmonised light vehicles test procedure on vehicle excise duty and company car tax. The review is open until 17 **February**.



# ORAL ANSWERS

Monday 21 January 2019

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# PETITION

Monday 21 January 2019

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Monday 21 January 2019

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Car Production: Solihull .....	2MC	Protection for Homebuyers .....	1MC

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**not later than  
Monday 28 January 2019**

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Members may obtain excerpts of their speeches from the Official Report (within one month from the date of publication), by applying to the Editor of the Official Report, House of Commons.

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