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**HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

Tuesday 29 January 2019

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The House met at half-past Eleven o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

TREASURY

The Chancellor of the Exchequer was asked—

Economic Growth: Yorkshire

1. **John Grogan** (Keighley) (Lab): What recent assessment he has made of trends in economic growth in Yorkshire. [908864]

The Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury (Robert Jenrick): There are 200,000 more people in employment in Yorkshire and the Humber today than in 2010. Unemployment has fallen by over 45%, and it is currently the second fastest growing jobs market in the UK. Since 2010, nearly 70,000 more businesses have been created, and the region has seen growth of 21%.

John Grogan: In the light of figures produced by the Economic Statistics Centre of Excellence, which suggest that growth in Yorkshire and the Humber has been less than 1% since 2010, whereas it has been over 3% in London, is it not time for Ministers to start talking seriously to the 18 Conservative and Labour local authority leaders who advocate One Yorkshire devolution, with transitional arrangements in South Yorkshire and elsewhere?

Robert Jenrick: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government is reviewing the proposals of the One Yorkshire consortium. It is our priority—I think it is a reasonable one—that the Sheffield city region and its mayor is taken forward and that the mayor is able to fully perform his functions on behalf of the people who elected him a year ago. We have said that the purpose of devolution is to create a mayoralty around a functioning economic geography. It is not clear that that case has yet been made by an historic county of the scale of Yorkshire, but we will continue to consider the proposals.

Philip Davies (Shipley) (Con): One scheme that is vital in my constituency for promoting economic growth is the Shipley eastern bypass. The Secretary of State for Transport has visited twice and made it clear that he supports the scheme and would like to ensure that it is implemented. Will the Treasury ensure that he has the funding to make the Shipley eastern bypass a reality?

Robert Jenrick: My hon. Friend and I have discussed the Shipley eastern bypass on several occasions. We have put a record amount of money into our strategic roads network. By hypothecating vehicle excise duty, the amount of money available for road spend in the

second road investment strategy period will be almost 175% of the previous period, which is a substantial increase in investment in our roads.

Rachael Maskell (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): The Centre for Cities report published yesterday shows that there is low productivity in York but also serious levels of underemployment. What are the Government doing to address underemployment and ensure that we get the maximum benefit for our economy?

Robert Jenrick: Through our productivity plan, we are investing more in the skills base in all parts of the country, whether that be through apprenticeships, the national retraining scheme or raising standards in our schools. We are also investing more in our infrastructure. Over the last four years, there has been a 50% increase in public investment in infrastructure in Yorkshire and the Humber compared with the last four years of the Labour Government. The hon. Lady and I met recently to discuss her plans in York for the high street and improving the city centre, which we wish to support.

Kevin Hollinrake (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): Does my hon. Friend agree that well-run city regions are the key drivers of productivity and prosperity and that Yorkshire's economy is best served by devolution to the city regions of Sheffield, Leeds, Hull and York?

Robert Jenrick: We are seeing mayors across the country driving their regions' economic strategy, including great mayors like Ben Houchen in the Tees Valley and Andy Street in the West Midlands. We want to see more mayors, but we have to be mindful of the original purpose of devolution, which, as my hon. Friend said, is the role of cities and their immediate hinterland in driving productivity and economic growth.

New Business Creation

2. **Will Quince** (Colchester) (Con): What steps he is taking to encourage the creation of new businesses. [908865]

The Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury (Robert Jenrick): The UK is one of the best places in the world to start a business, and a new business is being established every 75 seconds in this country. The Government champion entrepreneurship by keeping business taxes low and helping entrepreneurs to access the finance they need.

Will Quince: New and growing businesses in Colchester such as Ryza Media, Three Wise Monkeys, Heavenly Desserts and Beer Me Now are helping to drive our local economy. How will measures such as the start-up loans programme, cutting business rates by a third and entrepreneurs' relief further encourage entrepreneurs in Colchester to thrive?

Robert Jenrick: My hon. Friend has named some of the measures that we have recently brought forward to support entrepreneurship in all parts of the country. At the recent Budget, the Federation of Small Businesses declared it the most business-friendly Budget ever, and rightly so. We have extended the start-up loans scheme, helping an extra 10,000 entrepreneurs to get the capital

they need, and with that—along with our reductions in business rates and with entrepreneurs' relief, the seed enterprise investment scheme, the enterprise investment scheme and reductions in corporate taxes, including for small businesses—we are creating the most globally competitive tax regime to support those who create jobs and enterprise in our country.

Ruth Smeeth (Stoke-on-Trent North) (Lab): Data suggest that new businesses struggle in areas where communities do not have free access to cash. As of this month, the mother town of the Potteries, Burslem—a town of 20,000 people—no longer has access to a free-to-use ATM. Will the Minister meet me to discuss how we can work together to fix this?

Robert Jenrick: I would be very happy to meet the hon. Lady. We are continually pressing the Payment Systems Regulator and the LINK organisation, which manages the ATM network, to ensure a good supply of cash in all parts of the country. We recently issued a call for evidence at the Treasury to give greater consideration to how we can maintain that supply as we move to an increasingly cashless society and protect those who are vulnerable and harder to serve, perhaps including the hon. Lady's constituents.

Priti Patel (Witham) (Con): The Minister will know that Essex is the county of entrepreneurs. How are the Government supporting more small business creation, alongside new housing schemes such as the garden settlements that are proposed for the great county of Essex?

Robert Jenrick: I concur with everything my right hon. Friend has said. This is of course a country of entrepreneurs. All our most recent statistics have shown that the UK is attracting entrepreneurs from around the world. We are the third leading destination in the world, after the US and China, for inward investment. That is not happening by accident; it is happening as a result of the pro-business policies of this Government, creating the most globally competitive tax regime and investing in our productivity.

21. [908884] **John Mc Nally** (Falkirk) (SNP): If Brexit goes ahead, what plans has the Chancellor made to compensate firms in Scotland, such as the live transport of shellfish and seed potatoes industry, which will suffer losses because of delays at the ports?

Robert Jenrick: The Government are making a range of plans to support businesses in the event of all Brexit outcomes. For example, Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs is increasing its guidance to firms online and by writing to more than 140,000 businesses across the country to ensure that they make appropriate plans. As I have already described, in the Budget we made a whole range of moves to support small businesses across the country—business rates relief, the future high streets fund—all of which have been Barnetted. It is for the Scottish Government to come forward with their plans for how they intend to support small businesses; at the moment, there is only silence.

Mr Speaker: I note that "Barnett" has now become a verb, and we are grateful to the Minister for his ingenuity.

Mark Pawsey (Rugby) (Con): In its report on small business, the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee drew attention to the need for consistency of advice for small businesses and those starting small businesses. In Rugby, that is provided by the growth hub, as part of the local enterprise partnership. Does the Minister agree with me that it is important that these bodies are properly resourced?

Robert Jenrick: We do agree with that. All the evidence suggests that small businesses would benefit from better quality advice across a range of areas. Recently in the Budget, we have supported extra funding for networks, to bring businesses together, and we are working across the Government to think about ways in which we can improve the quality of advice and increase competition within business advisory services.

Mr Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): The Minister should take some advice from someone who has been in the House a long time: bragging about being an "every 75 minutes" Minister is very dangerous. I have just checked and in Huddersfield it is cloudy but not cold, but the economic temperature is freezing: start-ups are not starting, the new creative businesses are putting everything on hold, and until they have some reassurance about Brexit, they will not move.

Robert Jenrick: If the hon. Gentleman wanted to give greater certainty to businesses in his constituency, he would support the deal. He did not do so in the recent vote, but I hope he will come forward and do so shortly. I would not be so negative about the business community and the state of the economy in Yorkshire. We have record levels of employment, the jobs market is the second best in the country and real wages are rising. In Yorkshire, real wages and household disposable income are rising above the national average.

Stephen Kerr (Stirling) (Con): Small and medium-sized businesses are the bedrock of Stirling's economy and the engine of the UK economy. What is being done in practical terms to help those businesses find the funding that they need to scale up?

Robert Jenrick: We have made a number of interventions in this space, because as my hon. Friend says, while the UK is generating record numbers of start-ups, there is evidence that we need to help businesses to scale up and achieve their full potential. We launched the patient capital initiative, and we put £2.5 billion behind the British Business Bank to help small businesses in all parts of the country, including Scotland, and it is making good progress.

Kirsty Blackman (Aberdeen North) (SNP): I am pleased to let the Minister know that in the next financial year, 90% of businesses in Scotland will pay less in business rates than they would if they were elsewhere in the UK. Following on from the question from the hon. Member for Stirling (Stephen Kerr), it is important that new firms have access to banking and lending facilities. What is the Minister doing to encourage banks to lend to businesses?

Robert Jenrick: We are taking a range of steps to ensure that banks are able to finance small businesses. For example, as I have just described, we are establishing the British Business Bank, which is supporting tens of

thousands of businesses across the country, including many in Scotland, and helping to ensure that finance is available. The venture capital sector is vibrant and maturing in all parts of the country—not just the areas traditionally associated with venture capital, such as London, Oxford and Cambridge—and helping those businesses to scale up.

Kirsty Blackman: The news that Santander is to close 15 branches across Scotland will leave firms across the country without access to basic banking services. When did the Treasury become aware of that news, and what action has it taken to protect those services and those jobs in our local communities?

Robert Jenrick: We have taken action already to ensure that banks, including Santander, work more closely with post offices, so that there are always banking services available in all parts of the country. We give post offices over £50 million in financial support a year to help keep branches open, particularly in rural and harder-to-serve communities.

Lowest Paid: Earnings

3. **Vicky Ford** (Chelmsford) (Con): What steps he is taking to increase earnings for the lowest paid. [908866]

4. **Neil O'Brien** (Harborough) (Con): What steps he is taking to increase earnings for the lowest paid. [908867]

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr Philip Hammond): The national living wage was introduced by my predecessor. It will rise to £8.21 from April this year. In total, it will have delivered a pay rise of over £2,750 for a full-time minimum wage worker since its introduction in 2016. While we are proud of that achievement, my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Vicky Ford) will know that in the long term, sustainable pay growth relies on improving productivity. That is why we are investing heavily in infrastructure and are delivering a national retraining scheme to ensure that people are equipped for the technology revolution ahead.

Vicky Ford: What steps are the Government taking to make sure that everyone, including those on the lowest incomes, has the opportunity to save for their future?

Mr Hammond: The Government are committed to supporting savers at all levels of income and at all stages of life. In September 2018, we introduced Help to Save, which is targeted at people on low incomes and which Martin Lewis of moneysavingexpert.com described as “a very clever scheme” that “enables people possibly to have the best of both worlds”.

It pays a 50% bonus on savings of up to £50 made by working families on low incomes. We have 80,000 accounts open already, and we expect the numbers to rise substantially over the next few months.

Neil O'Brien: My constituency has a quarter more businesses and 6,700 more people in work than in 2010, and Harborough district has seen the fastest growth in wages anywhere in the east midlands over the last five years, but we cannot rest on our laurels. To accommodate

230 more jobs, Harborough District Council is building a new “grow on space”. Will the Chancellor come and visit it once it is complete?

Mr Hammond: The sting was in the tale. I am delighted to welcome the new jobs that have been created in Harborough through the action of the council, no doubt with strong encouragement from my hon. Friend. The Government are keeping taxes low and are helping start-ups to access the support that they need. That is why 3.4 million new jobs and 1.2 million more businesses have been created since 2010. With regard to his generous invitation, as I visited his constituency and had the pleasure of seeing what was going on there only very recently, if he does not mind, I will offer it to one of my team.

Catherine McKinnell (Newcastle upon Tyne North) (Lab): Given that the Government's own analysis shows that every region and every nation of the country will be poorer under any form of Brexit, does the Chancellor really believe that the lowest paid will be better off as a result of us leaving the EU?

Mr Hammond: The hon. Lady's statistics are wrong. It is not right to say that every region will be worse off. Every region under every scenario will be better off. The UK economy will continue growing. *[Interruption.]* The UK economy will continue growing. There is no doubt, as the published cross-Government analysis shows, that leaving with a deal will best protect the UK economy and will be in the interests of all our constituents. I urge the hon. Lady to get behind the deal.

Derek Twigg (Halton) (Lab): Given what the Chancellor has said, why do large numbers of families in my constituency have to go to food banks? Many of them are on universal credit. Working families are having to use food banks in my constituency. What is he doing for them?

Mr Hammond: The measures we have taken to increase the national living wage, combined with the increases in the personal tax allowance, mean that a single person on national minimum wage will be £4,500 better off in terms of take-home pay than they would have been in 2010.

24. [908887] **Fiona Bruce** (Congleton) (Con): The Chancellor has actually already answered my question. What assessment has he made of the effect on the lowest pay of meeting our manifesto commitment to cut personal allowance a year early, which in effect has almost doubled the tax-free allowance under the Conservatives?

Mr Hammond: My hon. Friend is right and we are proud of that record. From 2015, 1.7 million of the lowest paid will be taken out of tax entirely and a typical basic rate taxpayer is £1,205 better off in terms of tax paid than in 2010-11. As I have just said, when we combine that with the changes to the national living wage, that is a £4,500 a year increase in take-home pay—8% in real terms, the largest increase across any part of the income distribution.

Chris Law (Dundee West) (SNP): Westminster has repeatedly failed to support Scottish National party demands to introduce a real living wage, ban unpaid trial shifts and extend rights to those in the gig economy. If Westminster will not act, when will employment law be devolved to allow the SNP Scottish Government to boost the wages of the lowest paid in Scotland?

Mr Hammond: As I have just said twice, we have substantially increased the national living wage and reduced the amount of tax that people on low incomes are paying. With regard to the question on the gig economy, the hon. Gentleman will know that my right hon. Friend the Business Secretary is currently reviewing proposals for introducing additional employment protections to those in this sector of the economy.

Leaving the EU: No Deal

5. **Stephen Timms** (East Ham) (Lab): What assessment he has made of the potential effect on consumer prices of new non-tariff barriers in the event that the UK leaves the EU without a deal. [908868]

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mel Stride): Last year, the Government published a comprehensive assessment of the impact of our departure from the European Union, covering four different scenarios and looking at the effect on GDP and GDP per capita on exports and imports. That analysis is available on gov.uk.

Stephen Timms: The British Retail Consortium estimates that if we leave the EU without a deal, new non-tariff barriers will add on average 29% to the cost of food imports from the EU, on top of new import duties on food. The Chancellor was surely right in his call to business leaders to argue for no deal to be taken off the table. Will he continue to press the Prime Minister to do so?

Mel Stride: What we will continue is our extensive planning for the possibility of a no-deal, day-one exit to make sure that our ports are indeed flowing and goods are moving, including food. But the best way to ensure that we have the right conditions for UK consumers is to back the deal that has been negotiated with the European Union.

Mr Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con): Will the Minister confirm that, in the event of a no-deal Brexit, we would immediately be able to eliminate VAT on domestic fuel and reduce tariffs on foods imported from outside the European Union to zero?

Mel Stride: This country will achieve a range of additional flexibilities when we are outside the European Union. We will, of course, assess them all in due course, taking into account the fiscal costs of some of the measures that my hon. Friend has raised.

20. [908883] **Debbie Abrahams** (Oldham East and Saddleworth) (Lab): The CBI and many others have warned that leaving the EU with no deal will exacerbate existing regional economic inequalities. The north-west alone is predicted to lose £20 billion a year in a no-deal scenario. That will, of course, impact jobs, not least the 350,000 that are linked to EU exports, 14,000 of which

are in my constituency of Oldham East and Saddleworth. So will the Chancellor and the Government as a whole once and for all rule out a no-deal Brexit scenario, which would harm the country as a whole and particularly my constituents and the north?

Mel Stride: The simple reality of the situation that Parliament finds itself in is that, in the event that we do not conclude a deal successfully with the European Union, this country may well leave without a deal. I urge the hon. Lady, in order to address the concerns that she has rightly raised in this House, to get behind the deal.

Charlie Elphicke (Dover) (Con): Will the Minister confirm that the Government have no plans for any new non-tariff barriers and call out the British Retail Consortium's recent "Project Fear" comments? Will he also confirm that it is within the Government's power, after we leave, to reduce tariff barriers and tariffs on food and clothing?

Mel Stride: My hon. Friend raises two issues. On non-tariff barriers, we have made it very clear that we will implement a solution in the event of no deal, for example, that will be as friction-free as possible. But there will be requirements in that scenario for us to handle pre-custom declarations and various checks, which will come with having a border under those circumstances with the EU27. On our tariff policy, we will come to that in due course.

Anneliese Dodds (Oxford East) (Lab/Co-op): Stockpiling by business is at its second highest rate since 1992. The Treasury suggests that new customs paperwork for no deal would cost UK business £13 billion. When will the Minister's boss, the Chancellor, stop arguing privately against no deal's staying on the table and publicly take on the scorched-earth fantasists in his own party?

Mel Stride: The questions I have just responded to are in a similar vein and all lead back to one conclusion, which is that, if we are to avoid a no-deal scenario, there has, by definition, to be a deal that is agreed with the United Kingdom. We have a very good deal that the Prime Minister has negotiated and will be negotiating further with the European Union. It sees us respecting the outcome of the 2016 referendum but, most importantly, making sure that flows across our borders are as frictionless as possible.

Leaving the EU: Scotland

6. **Patrick Grady** (Glasgow North) (SNP): What discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Scotland on the economic effect on Scotland of the UK leaving the EU customs union and single market. [908869]

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Elizabeth Truss): The Prime Minister's deal delivers the ability to negotiate free trade agreements with third-party countries and to protect trade with the EU. So I suggest that the SNP backs the deal, rather than try to stop Brexit.

Patrick Grady: Will the Minister confirm that we do not actually know any of the full economic effects because the Treasury has not conducted an economic

analysis of the Prime Minister's deal? On that basis, can it really be the Government's view, as the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Secretary told me a couple of weeks ago, that other European countries will be looking enviously at the UK's position?

Elizabeth Truss: It is an absolute cheek for SNP Members to claim that there is an issue with our deal, given that they want to break up the UK. Some 61% of Scotland's external sales are actually to the rest of the United Kingdom.

Kirstene Hair (Angus) (Con): In Scotland, goods exports to non-EU countries are higher than those to EU countries, so does my right hon. Friend agree that because of the trade deals that this Government are seeking to strike, Scotland will benefit from that growth?

Elizabeth Truss: My hon. Friend is correct. Of course, Scotch whisky is one of our flagship exports right across the world. We have the opportunity to renegotiate some very high tariffs and make it even more of a bestseller.

Bill Esterson (Sefton Central) (Lab): The Government's deal was rejected by a record vote in the House. Business leaders in Scotland and across the UK want the Government to rule out any prospect of no deal, and the Chancellor told business leaders that that was possible, so why have the Government not ruled out any prospect of no deal?

Elizabeth Truss: It is important that we keep no deal on the table to get a better deal from the EU. I strongly encourage the hon. Gentleman to support our deal as the best way to take no deal off the table.

John Stevenson (Carlisle) (Con): Quite clearly, the Union of the UK is vital to the prosperity of Scotland and the border area. Does the Chief Secretary to the Treasury agree that Government initiatives, such as the borderlands growth initiative, also make a vital contribution to the prosperity and success of the region?

Elizabeth Truss: My hon. Friend makes a good point. The borderlands deal is an important way of stimulating growth across the border area, although it would also help if the Scottish National party Government followed through in Scotland on things such as the tax cuts we have introduced elsewhere in the UK.

Deficit Reduction

7. Stephen Metcalfe (South Basildon and East Thurrock) (Con): What progress his Department has made on reducing the deficit since 2010. [908870]

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr Philip Hammond): In 2010, the Government inherited from Labour a deficit at a post-war high. Since then, owing to decisions the Government have taken and the hard work of the British people, the deficit has reduced by about four fifths and is forecast to be just 1% of GDP by 2021-22. The Government's balanced approach is ensuring that debt is falling while also supporting vital public services, keeping taxes low and investing in Britain's future.

Stephen Metcalfe: I am sure the Chancellor will join me in celebrating the fact that for the first time we are starting to see a sustained reduction in our overall debt. Does he agree that the worst thing we could do is hand over the levers of our economy to the Labour party so that it might leave us yet another toxic inheritance to clean up?

Mr Hammond: My hon. Friend is right. The public finances have reached a turning point. This is the first time in 17 years that we are not borrowing for day-to-day expenditure. Debt has peaked and now begun to fall—its first sustained fall in a generation—and the last thing we want is for the hard work of the British people to be thrown away by the incompetence of a Labour Government delivering higher debt and higher interest payments, which they always do.

Mr Adrian Bailey (West Bromwich West) (Lab/Co-op): The Bank of England has forecast a range of negative impacts on the economy from Britain's leaving the EU, with or without a deal. What assessment has the Chancellor made of the impact of these on the public sector deficit and his current public spending plans?

Mr Hammond: The Government have made a cross-departmental assessment of the medium to long-term effects of different Brexit outcomes, which the Government have published. The Bank of England, because it is better equipped to do so, has made an assessment of the short-term impacts of leaving the EU under different scenarios, which it has published.

Mr Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): You're the Chancellor of the Exchequer. You should have made it yourself.

Mr Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is a cerebral denizen of the House. I know he is arguing the toss about what he thinks is the inapplicability of the personal views or the professional opinion of the Chancellor, but he should not offer a lecture from a sedentary position. We are accustomed to hearing this eloquence when he is on his feet. We do not need to hear him when he is in his seat.

Nicky Morgan (Loughborough) (Con): The next most important update on the deficit will be the Office for Budget Responsibility's statement around the time of the spring statement, but the OBR has been clear that it can only make a forecast once it knows the Government's plans for Brexit, so could the Chancellor give the House an update on when he thinks the OBR will be able to produce that work for the spring statement in relation to the Brexit timetable?

Mr Hammond: Yes I can. My understanding is that the OBR is basing its forecasting work on the same assumptions it used at Budget 2018, but, as my right hon. Friend has asked me, I can inform the House that the spring statement will be made on Wednesday 13 March. I remind the House that it is not a fiscal event but that, as I have said before, if the economic or fiscal outlook changes materially, it is always open to us to turn it into one.

Tim Farron (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD): World-class connectivity is vital to tackling the deficit, but the Treasury's decision to stop investors in community benefit societies receiving 30% tax relief could undermine the good work of broadband pioneers such as Broadband for the Rural North—B4RN—in Cumbria. Given that B4RN has reached the parts of Cumbria that the Government and BT could not or would not reach, what assessment has the Chancellor made of the effect of that decision, and will he think again about his damaging proposals?

Mr Hammond: I am not familiar with the case to which the hon. Gentleman has referred, but obviously we want to encourage the delivery of high-speed connectivity in all areas, including rural areas. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to write to me with the details, I shall be happy to look at them and respond to him.

18. [908881] **David T. C. Davies** (Monmouth) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that we would be paying off the deficit even more quickly if companies such as Starbucks and Amazon paid a fair share of tax? Is that a point that he might be willing to make to their bosses next time they get on the phone to him to complain about Brexit?

Mr Hammond: We have taken a large number of measures to ensure that all companies pay the appropriate amount of tax, and we have closed a significant number of loopholes that have been used to avoid corporate tax in the past. My hon. Friend will understand that I cannot discuss individual taxpayers at the Dispatch Box, but of course the Government want to see every taxpayer paying the appropriate amount and contributing fairly to the support of our public services.

Peter Dowd (Bootle) (Lab): Bonkers, Mr Speaker. Let me add, respectfully, that I am referring not to you, Sir, but to the response of the Resolution Foundation's director to the Chancellor's £6.2 billion corporation tax giveaway. Even the adviser to the previous Chancellor says that the cut represents poor value for money, and the danger is that it will slow progress in reducing the deficit. If the Chancellor is giving away £6.2 billion, does he accept that it would be better given to, for example, cash-strapped local councils, rather providing handouts for cash-rich corporations?

Mr Hammond: The Labour party will have to get its act together, and organise a discussion between its Front Benchers and its Back Benchers.

Mr Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): You ought to get your act together.

Mr Hammond: Well, I know where the deep divisions lie. [Interruption.] We have heard many Opposition Members express concern about a lack of investment and the potential relocation of businesses, but now the hon. Member for Bootle (Peter Dowd) has popped up on the Front Bench suggesting that we hit business with an additional tax charge. Labour is the party that is proposing to increase corporation tax for businesses, including the smallest in our country. We will remain

the party that is encouraging businesses, large and small, by ensuring that ours is an attractive jurisdiction for investment to take place.

Peter Dowd: Not content with his Government's manic drive—and there was an example of it—to turn Britain into a bargain basement economy, the Chancellor is splashing out billions of pounds of taxpayers' money to prop up a no-deal Brexit. Will he come clean and admit that the hard Brexit for which he is reluctantly preparing may lead to increased borrowing, more debt and the widening of the deficit, not to progress in reducing it?

Mr Hammond: Some might think it a bit rich for Labour Members to lecture us about increasing deficits and debt, given that their stated policy is to increase the deficit and the debt. Let me be frank with the hon. Gentleman. He has seen the analysis that the Government have published. If we leave the European Union without a deal, yes, it will lead to an increased deficit, and it will lead to an increase in the debt. That is why the Conservatives are working to ensure that we deliver the deal that will protect the British economy. What I do not understand is why Labour Members who genuinely fear a no-deal outcome do not get behind the solution.

New Hospitals: Capital Funding

8. **Robert Halfon** (Harlow) (Con): What plans the Government have to make capital funding available for new hospitals. [908871]

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Elizabeth Truss): We have committed £3.9 billion of capital investment by 2023 to transform and modernise NHS buildings. We are also increasing the NHS budget by 3.4% a year, while keeping taxes low for working people.

Robert Halfon: Despite the hospital having outstanding staff and the extra moneys that have gone to Princess Alexandra Hospital in Harlow, the building is in a very bad state and not fit for purpose and we desperately need a new hospital. Will my right hon. Friend use the moneys from the excellent £20 billion extra money for the NHS and work with the Health Secretary to make sure that we get a new hospital for Harlow?

Elizabeth Truss: I thank my right hon. Friend for his question. In December, we allocated £9.5 million to the Princess Alexandra Hospital to help to improve the emergency care pathway, but I recognise that there are further issues. Of course we are in discussions with the Department of Health and Social Care and these issues will be looked at in the spending review.

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): It is not just about capital spending; it really is, in relation to acquired brain injury, for instance, also about making sure we have enough people to follow on from the work done in the new trauma centres to make sure there is proper neuro-rehabilitation and local authorities have enough money to provide decent housing for people. Will the right hon. Lady look at this in the round? Will she make sure that we are not letting people down? We can have as many wonderful hospital buildings as we want, but in the end we need people to treat people.

Elizabeth Truss: That is one of the reasons—rising demand—that we have put extra money into the NHS: up to £20 billion per year. But as part of the spending review we will be looking across the board to make sure that services are integrated and we are investing to get the best possible results for people.

Child Poverty

9. **Kerry McCarthy** (Bristol East) (Lab): What plans he has to tackle child poverty. [908872]

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Elizabeth Truss): We are working to tackle the root causes of poverty by getting people into work and giving children the best possible education. A record number of children are now in working households and there are 630,000 fewer children in workless households than there were in 2010.

Kerry McCarthy: A number of Members have been involved in the children's future food inquiry, and we have heard some shocking stories recently about children going to school hungry, packed lunches consisting of maybe two slices of white bread with nothing in between and worse stories. What is the Treasury doing to help the UK to meet the sustainable development goal on zero hunger because it seems at the moment that it is doing very little?

Elizabeth Truss: I point out to the hon. Lady that 1 million fewer people are now in absolute poverty than in 2010, including 300,000 fewer children, but of course we continue to look at the best way to help children in school—I know that the Department for Education is looking at this—to make sure that children are properly nourished.

Mr Gregory Campbell (East Londonderry) (DUP): The Treasury could tackle child poverty, attack the bureaucracy and help lower-paid workers across the economy in the UK by raising the level at which people begin to pay national insurance contributions as well as tax, thereby assisting local people in the economy across the United Kingdom.

Elizabeth Truss: We are working to make sure that those on the lowest incomes keep more money in their pockets, so at the Budget we increased the amount working families will be getting on universal credit by £630 and we cut basic rate tax, to the benefit of £130, for families on those incomes.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: If the hon. Member for Bolton West (Chris Green) wishes to shoehorn his inquiry into the question of which we are treating now, it is a very neat fit.

12. [908875] **Chris Green** (Bolton West) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend the Minister agree that the effective marginal tax rate of 73% for one-earner married couple families with two children at 75% of the average wage is too high and should be brought down to the OECD average of about 33%?

Elizabeth Truss: One of the reasons we introduced UC was to make sure that work always pays and we have been continually working to make the system better, reducing the taper rate. Of course we continue to look at that as we roll it out.

Lyn Brown (West Ham) (Lab): For heaven's sake. In the last two years of the Labour Government, the number of children living in absolute poverty fell by 400,000. In the next seven years of Tory rule, it fell by only 100,000. At this rate it is going to take 28 years for the Tories to achieve what Labour achieved in two, and one and a half centuries to end child poverty, even without this Government's blooming Brexit disaster. Does the Minister not understand—this ain't success, or doesn't she care?

Elizabeth Truss: If we are going to trade statistics, at the end of the last Labour Government, 20% of young people were unemployed and 1.4 million people were on welfare and left on the scrapheap. We have record employment and the lowest unemployment since the mid-1970s. The way we are going to solve the issue of poverty is to help people get on, help people get into work and get our education levels up.

Leaving the EU: No Deal

10. **Sir Desmond Swayne** (New Forest West) (Con): What recent contingency plans he has made to prepare for the UK leaving the EU without a deal. [908873]

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr Philip Hammond): Leaving the EU with a deal remains the Government's top priority, but as a responsible Government we are, of course, also making preparations to ensure that the country is ready for every eventuality across all sectors of the economy. I have made substantial funding available to prepare for the UK's exit from the EU in all scenarios. HMRC has written on no-deal preparations to 145,000 EU-only traders, and the Government have produced a partner pack to support stakeholders in preparing for a no-deal scenario.

Sir Desmond Swayne: And worth every penny, isn't it? How much in total is the Chancellor spending on delivering the people's decision?

Mr Hammond: Let me put it this way: since 2016 I have made more than £4.2 billion available for EU exit planning, and funding for the 2019-20 financial year has now been allocated to Departments. That is funding to prepare the Government for leaving the EU in any scenario. In addition, I have made arrangements to ensure that Departments and the devolved Administrations can fund measures to address urgent civil contingencies in a no-deal scenario.

Sir Vince Cable (Twickenham) (LD): The Chancellor has rightly made very clear his determination to avoid a no-deal Brexit. How in practice does the Treasury distinguish between those no-deal preparations that have enduring value for money and those that will have been wasted in the event that he is successful?

Mr Hammond: Some of the expenditure being undertaken by Departments will be required in any case for our post-EU future, whether we leave with a deal or

no deal, but I have made no bones about the fact that some of the expenditure is of a precautionary nature. The expenditure will be nugatory if the deal is agreed and we leave with a smooth trajectory. Every responsible Government, across all areas of activity, undertake expenditure to deal with potential contingencies, to ensure that the country is prepared for eventualities that may arise. It is proper that we should do so.

Mr Speaker: We are running out of time, so we need one-sentence questions.

Rebecca Pow (Taunton Deane) (Con): Deal or no deal, one deal that is really working is the nuclear sector deal. Does my right hon. Friend agree that that is a hugely important venture in the south-west and that we should support and encourage it? So far, it has put £900 million into the south-west economy.

Mr Speaker: That was absolutely hopelessly long.

Mr Hammond: My hon. Friend demonstrates ingenuity and she is absolutely right: the nuclear sector deal is very important.

15. [908878] **Ian C. Lucas** (Wrexham) (Lab): Some £16 billion to £20 billion of private sector investment has been taken out of north Wales because of the suspension of the nuclear project. Will the Chancellor meet me and other MPs from north Wales to discuss the north Wales growth deal, which was put in place before that dreadful announcement?

Mr Hammond: Obviously, we are disappointed by Hitachi's decision to suspend work on the Wylfa project, but we have not given up hope. It retains the site and we hope that the work we are doing on a possible alternative financing model may yet allow the project to go ahead, but I am very happy to meet the hon. Gentleman.

Leaving the EU: Economic Forecasts

11. **Wes Streeting** (Ilford North) (Lab): What discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union on the Bank of England's forecasts for the economy after the UK leaves the EU. [908874]

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (John Glen): On 28 November, the Bank of England published analysis on how the short-term impact of leaving the EU could affect the Bank's ability to meet its objectives for monetary and financial stability. That analysis is published independently and reported to Parliament, but in line with normal practice, no comment will be made on discussions between Ministers.

Wes Streeting: The Bank of England knows that no deal will be a disaster, and so do Ministers and the Chancellor, yet the Prime Minister is whipping her MPs to vote today for an amendment that will make it more likely. What does that say about the Chancellor? Does the continued presence of no deal on the table speak to his lack of influence, his lack of authority or his lack of courage?

John Glen: I very much regret the hon. Gentleman's tone. As he knows, the reality is that the best way of avoiding a no-deal scenario is to get behind the Prime Minister's deal and vote for it.

Helen Hayes (Dulwich and West Norwood) (Lab): I was contacted this week by a constituent who runs a business in Derry/Londonderry. He writes:

"The official position is that"

the recent bomb attack

"is nothing to do with Brexit; everyone I've spoken to finds this laughable—it is everything to do with Brexit. The danger, irresponsibility and absurdity really comes home to you when the bomb disposal Land Rovers are screaming past our office."

What does the Chancellor think the implications of Brexit will be for jobs in Northern Ireland, when local employers feel like this?

John Glen: I very much recognise the risks associated with no deal. That is why the Government are very clear, as the Prime Minister will set out shortly, about the imperative for the House to come behind the deal and vote for it.

2019 Loan Charge

13. **Mr Alistair Carmichael** (Orkney and Shetland) (LD): If he will take steps to prevent the 2019 loan charge from being applied retrospectively. [908876]

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mel Stride): The loan charge is not retrospective. The schemes that were entered into and to which the loan charge relates have always been defective—they never worked, including at the time when they were entered into. That has been evidenced by a number of court cases, including one put before the highest court in the land, the Supreme Court.

Mr Carmichael: Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs is allowed to go back to 1999 to look at tax records. Records that it can look at include those in otherwise closed years. If that is not retrospective, I do not know what it is. What word would the Minister use to describe the loan charge to my constituent, who tells me that he started a business working in the oil and gas industry, living in Orkney but working across the globe, doing everything the Government would want him do? How does he now find himself facing bankruptcy, before his 29th birthday?

Mel Stride: An important principle lies at the heart of the whole debate around the loan charge, which is that individuals should pay the tax that is due. If they enter into arrangements that basically mean they disguise income as a loan that they have no intention of ultimately repaying—money that is, more often than not, routed via low or no-tax jurisdictions overseas, via a trust, then brought back into the United Kingdom by way of payment—the Government believe that that is wrong, and the tax should be paid.

Andrea Jenkyns (Morley and Outwood) (Con): What assessment has the Chancellor made concerning an immediate suspension of the loan charge and all settlement discussions within an appropriate period, to allow the loan charge review to be properly conducted and any recommendations to alter the legislation to be implemented?

Mel Stride: My hon. Friend will know that the loan charge was brought into effect in 2016. It allowed three years for individuals to clean up the loans—if they were

loans, they could be refinanced on a proper, commercial basis—or to come to an arrangement with HMRC. The most important message that I can give from the Dispatch Box today to those involved in these schemes is to get out of avoidance, to get in touch with HMRC and to settle their affairs. They will have a sympathetic and proportionate hearing.

Adult Education Funding

14. **Wera Hobhouse** (Bath) (LD): What recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Education on the adequacy of funding for adult education. [908877]

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Elizabeth Truss): We fully fund adults to take English and Maths to level 2. From 2020, we will also be funding them for basic digital skills. Those are the vital skills that people need to get a job and get on in life.

Wera Hobhouse: In the last 10 years, total enrolment of adults in further education colleges has dropped by 62%, including at Bath College in my constituency. Enrolment in health and social care is down by 68%; in engineering, it is down by 68%; and in construction, it is down by 37%. Does the Minister agree that this situation is of huge concern and that the Treasury must look at serious reinvestment in adult skills as part of the upcoming spending review?

Elizabeth Truss: We do fund the core courses that are going to help people get work and get on in life, but we also provide adult learner loans so that people can help shape their own future. In 2017-18, we spent £220 million on those loans.

Topical Questions

T1. [908889] **Alex Chalk** (Cheltenham) (Con): If he will make a statement on his departmental responsibilities.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr Philip Hammond): My principal responsibility is to ensure economic stability and the continued prosperity of the British people. At this juncture, the best way to achieve that objective is to support a negotiated Brexit, ensuring a smooth and orderly departure from the EU.

Alex Chalk: Cheltenham's Government-backed future cyber-park will deliver jobs and opportunities for local people. What role will the Government's university enterprise zones play in ensuring that this project is backed to its full potential?

Mr Hammond: I welcome the work that is going on in Cheltenham to build on the magnetic effect of GCHQ and to attract innovative cyber-based firms to the area. In autumn Budget 2018, I announced £5 million to support proposals for university enterprise zones, which will encourage collaboration between universities and businesses, promote knowledge and skills exchange, and deliver a boost to local productivity. The funding will allow excellent institutions such as the University of Gloucestershire to develop locally led proposals to build on strengths like cyber-security, technology and engineering.

John McDonnell (Hayes and Harlington) (Lab): Let me bring the Chancellor back to Brexit. He knows full well the impact that no deal would have on people's everyday lives. As we have heard, the British Retail Consortium warned yesterday that a no deal would lead to higher food prices, and even to empty shelves. The Government's own economic analysis suggests a 10% hit to real wages. Knowing all this, would not a responsible Chancellor—a senior member of the Cabinet—stand up to the Prime Minister to insist that she rule out a no deal?

Mr Hammond: We are absolutely determined to avoid no deal, but the way to avoid no deal is to deliver a deal. As the Prime Minister has said from this Dispatch Box many times, the choice is stark: do the deal or face no deal or no Brexit. No Brexit would be a betrayal of the democratic decision of the British people, and no deal would be a betrayal of our economic future. The deal is the only way forward that protects our democracy and our economy.

John McDonnell: It is a deal that lost in this House by a majority of 230. Just as business leaders were not reassured by the Chancellor's phone call, I do not think the House will be reassured by his response today. The Bank of England has warned that we are potentially facing an economic crisis even more severe than the financial crisis of 2008. Past holders of his great office of state would have had the strength and authority around the Cabinet table to prevent the Prime Minister from behaving so recklessly. At a time when the country is facing a potential national economic crisis, has there ever been a Chancellor so weak?

Mr Hammond: If the right hon. Gentleman believes what he has just told the House, he should get off his backside and get the Leader of the Opposition off his backside, and they should get themselves over to Downing Street to sit down and engage with the Prime Minister so that we can solve this problem in the national interest.

T3. [908891] **Priti Patel** (Witham) (Con): The Chancellor will know that the great county of Essex is underfunded, on per capita measures, for education, health and policing, so will he use the forthcoming comprehensive spending review to ensure that Essex is at the top of the list so we can make sure that our services are well funded?

Mr Speaker: There is a lot to be said for Essex. The right hon. Lady and I can agree about that.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Elizabeth Truss): Mr Speaker is right: the only way is Essex. My right hon. Friend the Member for Witham (Priti Patel) is a great champion of the fantastic county of Essex, and she will have noticed that the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has already launched a fair funding consultation on local government spending. In the spending review, we will, of course, look at the different funding streams and make sure they are fair for all parts of the country.

T2. [908890] **Helen Jones** (Warrington North) (Lab): In the north, we face years of disruption on the trans-Pennine line, but there is no money for electrification. In London, the Government bail-out Crossrail to the tune of £1.4 billion,

in addition to what they have already spent. When is the Chancellor going to act to tackle these inequalities in transport infrastructure spending, which are damaging the economies of the north of England?

The Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury (Robert Jenrick): The hon. Lady is incorrect. Over the course of this Parliament, infrastructure spending will be highest in the north of England—higher than in London, higher than in the south-east and significantly higher than under the last Labour Government.

T7. [908895] **Dame Caroline Spelman** (Meriden) (Con): Will the Chancellor give a firm commitment that debts owed to major Departments such as Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs and the Department for Work and Pensions will fall within the breathing space scheme?

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (John Glen): A consultation was launched in October, and we intend it to be as wide as possible. The consultation closes today and the Government will respond shortly, but we are very sympathetic to where my right hon. Friend is coming from.

T4. [908892] **Diana Johnson** (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): What discussions has the Chancellor had with the Transport Secretary about the economic impact of a no deal on cities that have regional ports?

Mr Philip Hammond: We have a cross-Whitehall committee that regularly discusses impacts of a no-deal exit and makes preparations for them. The issues that the hon. Lady is raising have been and will continue to be considered in that forum.

T8. [908896] **Mrs Pauline Latham** (Mid Derbyshire) (Con): What is the Minister's estimate of new start-ups in the creative industries and of their contribution to the economy?

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mel Stride): I thank my hon. Friend for that question. The creative industries are vital to our country. This Government have provided an array of very important tax reliefs to that sector—they were valued at £850 million in 2017-18. We will continue to support the sector.

T5. [908893] **Janet Daby** (Lewisham East) (Lab): Constituents such as mine are facing large retrospective bills because of the loan charge. What plans does HMRC have to litigate against those who have disguised remuneration arrangements since 2016?

Mel Stride: As the hon. Lady may know, the way the loan charge works is that those who have been involved in this form of tax avoidance have until April to settle their affairs, in which case no penalty will be applied at all. We have also said that those earning £50,000 or less will automatically qualify for a five-year minimum repayment term. My message, as always in these circumstances, is that those who are involved in these schemes should come forward, speak to HMRC and sensibly sort out their arrangements.

T10. [908898] **Stephen Kerr** (Stirling) (Con): Forecasting has had a bad rap recently from some people. Will the Chancellor therefore join me in welcoming a report

from Commerce Bank that found that economic forecasting is more accurate now than it has been for most of the past 30 years?

Mr Philip Hammond: I agree with my hon. Friend on this. Forecasting has had a bit of a bad rap in this House over the past couple of years, but this report was interesting, because it showed that economic forecasts in fact have a good track record of delivering, and we should pay attention to what the experts are telling us.

T6. [908894] **Kevin Brennan** (Cardiff West) (Lab): It is Independent Venue Week. Such venues are the research and development to a £4.5 billion music industry, but a third of them have closed in the past decade. Why is the Chancellor, who has Runnymede Jazz Club in his constituency, giving a rates discount to pubs but not to music venues? Will he look at that again?

Mr Speaker: Let us hear about the jazz situation in Runnymede.

Mr Hammond: Jazz is alive and well in Runnymede. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will give me the precise address of the Runnymede Jazz Club later. The measures we announced in the Budget to support high street and retail more generally apply to all retail outlets with a rateable value of less than £51,000. If he has a specific point to make about music venues, I or one of my colleagues would be happy to meet him to talk about it.

Mr Marcus Jones (Nuneaton) (Con): I welcome the future high streets fund and the various business rate reliefs that the Chancellor has provided. What more can he do to support bricks and mortar retailers who have a far greater business tax liability than the online giants they are now competing against?

Robert Jenrick: We have made more than £1.5 billion available to reduce the impact of business rates on smaller retailers. At the Budget, we provided a 30% discount for small retailers, which will have a huge impact in my hon. Friend's constituency. We have the £675 million future high streets fund, and we are also bringing forward planning reforms to make it easier for small businesses and entrepreneurs to change the use of their shops and restaurants.

T9. [908897] **David Linden** (Glasgow East) (SNP): Last week, in an absolute hammer blow to the east end of Glasgow, Santander announced that it was closing the Parkhead branch and abandoning the east end. So when I meet Santander bosses this afternoon, can I have the UK Government's support in saying that they should keep our branches open, rather than waffle about post offices? Will the Minister give a clear, unequivocal message at that Dispatch Box to save our Santander?

John Glen: What I can tell the hon. Gentleman is that banks must make commercial decisions on the basis of what works for them. When I visited Scotland, I found they were also keen to work with post offices and the Government's provision to make sure that services can be delivered through the Post Office.

Nigel Huddleston (Mid Worcestershire) (Con): Average wages in my constituency are below the national average, with many people earning the living wage. Tax rates

really matter to them, so is that not precisely why we Conservatives voted for a tax cut for 32 million people, by contrast with the Opposition? Will we continue to be truly the party for working people?

Mel Stride: We are truly the party for working people, as my hon. Friend states, unlike the Labour party. We are the party that raised the personal allowance to £12,500 one year ahead of our manifesto commitment to do so, taking well over 4 million of the lowest paid out of tax altogether. We are also the party of the national living wage, which will go up by 4.9% this April and be of great benefit to the very lowest paid in our country.

Neil Gray (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP): We knew that shifting the BBC licence fee concession to the BBC has always been folly, but we now know from the BBC's consultation that the £745 million cost is likely to mean either a reduction in output, pensioners losing the concession, or both. Will the UK Government finally reverse this ridiculous decision and bring the concession back to the Government?

Mr Philip Hammond: A consultation is under way that I believe ends on 13 February. Once it is complete, the Government will consider it.

Bim Afolami (Hitchin and Harpenden) (Con): What is the Treasury's view of the idea of opportunity zones to help to revitalise some of the more disadvantaged parts of our country, particularly in that they differ from enterprise zones because they involve a capital gains cut rather than other types of tax relief?

Elizabeth Truss: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his article proposing new ideas. He raises one example of some of the exciting prospects for the post-Brexit economy that will help to revive some of the industrial areas throughout Britain.

David Hanson (Delyn) (Lab): Does the Chancellor of the Exchequer have any plans to meet Tom Enders, the chief executive of Airbus, to discuss his view that no deal will be disastrous for the UK economy?

Mr Philip Hammond: I am pleased to say that I recently had an opportunity to talk to Tom Enders and his successor Guillaume Faury, the incoming chief executive of Airbus, and to assure them of the Government's commitment to make the UK a hospitable and attractive place for Airbus to continue to do business.

Jo Swinson (East Dunbartonshire) (LD): UK corporation tax was already the third lowest in the G20, yet this year the Government are spending more on an unnecessary corporation tax cut than it would cost to end the cruel benefits freeze. Politics is about choices. Can the Chancellor not see that when the poorest are suffering, a race to the bottom on corporation tax is the wrong priority?

Mr Hammond: If we want to have well-funded public services and a generous welfare support system in this country, we also have to ensure that we have a solid business base creating the jobs and the tax revenues for the future. It is about getting that balance right, and in

my opinion right now is not the time to be sending a negative message to businesses about the attractiveness of investing in the UK.

Mr Jim Cunningham (Coventry South) (Lab): When is the Chancellor going to make money available to address the shortage of police officers in the west midlands? We are 3,000 short. I regularly have representations from residents in Finham, Willenhall and St Michael's about the high increase of crime in their areas. When is the Chancellor going to make funds available to replace these officers?

Elizabeth Truss: As the hon. Gentleman will recognise, the recent police grant funding statement provided extra funding, both from grant and from precept, into the police, meaning funding will be going up in real terms.

Anna Turley (Redcar) (Lab/Co-op): Sirius Minerals already employs more than 800 people in North Yorkshire and Teesside in the world's largest polyhalite mine, but to bring 50 years of growth and job opportunities to our region, it needs a Treasury guarantee on its funding. Will the Chancellor make that guarantee available today and unleash a whole new era of jobs and opportunities in my area?

Mr Philip Hammond: I am familiar with the project in question and a discussion is going on between the company and the Treasury. Those discussions are of course commercially sensitive and confidential, so I cannot discuss them, but the conversation is ongoing.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: I feel sure that the House will want to hear the Strangford Zebedee. The hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) has been bouncing up and down on virtually every question; I do not want him to feel socially excluded.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): They always wish to hear the Strangford perspective on life, but that is by the bye.

Will the Chancellor outline the possible negative effects that reducing the deficit could and would have on the defence budget in the next three years?

Mr Hammond: The Government have made a commitment to maintain the real-terms value of the defence budget at 2% of our GDP, increasing defence spending in real terms in every year. We have no intention of changing that commitment to UK defence.

Philip Davies (Shipley) (Con): When will the Chancellor give some much-needed money to our police forces?

Elizabeth Truss: As I have just pointed out, we have given extra grant funding to the police forces. We are also achieving better efficiencies in conjunction with the Home Office, and we have covered the cost of additional pensions as well.

Rushanara Ali (Bethnal Green and Bow) (Lab): Workers at Dyson, Jaguar Land Rover and Ford are among the casualties of the threat of no deal. Given the number of

jobs at risk, is it not time for the Chancellor to get off his backside and ask the Prime Minister to rule out the threat of no deal and to stop holding Parliament and the country to ransom?

Mr Philip Hammond: Parliament speaks for itself, and Parliament clearly has the opportunity to speak on this issue. I will continue to work with the Prime Minister to try to ensure that the deal that we place before the House of Commons is improved in a way that allows Members of Parliament to get behind it to ensure that we are not faced with the unacceptable choice of either no deal or no Brexit.

James Gray (North Wiltshire) (Con): Further to the question asked by the hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Bow (Rushanara Ali), will my right hon. Friend find time to have a meeting with my constituent, Sir James Dyson, to ask for confirmation that, rather than taking people to Singapore, he is taking only two senior executives to Singapore? He has invested £200 million in a research and development facility at Hullavington in my constituency and £43 million in a college in Malmesbury. He is employing 4,500 people, and that number is increasing rather than decreasing.

Mr Hammond: I or one of my colleagues will be very happy to meet Sir James Dyson should he request such a meeting. We regularly meet industrial leaders, and we will continue to do so.

Peter Kyle (Hove) (Lab): Yesterday, the Prime Minister announced her support for the Brady amendment, which will profoundly change the deal. What right has the Chancellor got to ask us to vote for a deal that the Prime Minister herself wants to tear up?

Mr Hammond: In a very short while, after a very important statement that is about to be made by my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, the Prime Minister will set out her case to the House, and the hon. Gentleman and all his colleagues will be able to consider carefully what is now in the national interest.

Hannah Bardell (Livingston) (SNP): Can the Chancellor explain to people across the UK what the point is in balancing the books if it is done on the backs of the poorest in our society and they are being starved into shoplifting? In Dundee recently, a woman was left with £90 a month on which to live. The sheriff said that it was a matter of considerable concern that someone was trying to live on £90 a month. What does he say to the judiciary and what does he say to our citizens who are being starved into poverty?

Mr Hammond: Earlier in this session, I said that, if we want to have well-funded public services and a well-funded welfare support system, we must ensure that we have a sound economy. Part of having a sound economy is to get our deficit under control and our debt falling so that we are less vulnerable to shocks in the future. Our current levels of debt mean that this country is vulnerable in the event of an economic downturn.

Such downturns come along from time to time, and we need to be able to manage them in order, precisely, to protect the poorest in our society.

Stephen Morgan (Portsmouth South) (Lab): Does the Minister agree that the Government's idea of turning high streets into residential streets or office spaces is not a solution to solving our high street crisis?

Mr Hammond: That is not what the Government propose or have proposed, but we must recognise that retail is changing and that the nature of our high streets has to change. The future high street will probably be smaller than the high streets of today. It makes sense to use the land that is released around our high streets to develop residential accommodation, addressing the housing challenges that we face, but also bringing footfall back into our high streets and town centre areas to give them vibrancy and a decent chance for the future.

Alan Brown (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): What procurement and budget advice did the Chancellor's Department provide the Department for Transport before it awarded a ferry contract to a ferry company with no ferries?

Mr Hammond: The Department for Transport has complied with all the Treasury's Green Book procedures in letting the contract in question, and the decision to go ahead will have been taken with the consent of the Department for Transport's accounting officer.

Mr Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I may have erroneously misled the House when I said that the Minister said that the Government were creating 75 businesses a minute. It has been pointed out to me that he actually said 75 businesses a second.

Mr Speaker: No, I think that the Minister said a business every 75 seconds.

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): But is it true?

Mr Speaker: It is not for the Speaker to be the arbiter of truth. Knowing the ambitions of the hon. Member for Rhondda (Chris Bryant), it is important that he knows what he is letting himself in for. He would have important responsibilities, but the adjudication upon the matter of truth would not be one of them.

Mr Sheerman: Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: In deference to the seniority of the hon. Gentleman, I will hear his point of order if he insists.

Mr Sheerman: I just wanted to thank you for correcting the record, Mr Speaker. I would be glad if the record could be put straight. As you said, the figure was 75 businesses a second. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: I am getting advice that is the product of the scholarly cranium of the Clerk of the House, but I think I will leave the hon. Gentleman to find his own salvation. We will leave it there.

HMRC Estate Transformation

12.46 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mel Stride):

With permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to make a statement relating to Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs estate transformation.

In the 2015 spending review, the Government announced HMRC's locations programme to transport the Department's office accommodation across the United Kingdom, moving from 170 legacy offices to 13 regional centres over the space of 10 years. I am pleased to report to the House that HMRC has now successfully secured sites for each of these 13 regional centres. This is a significant milestone in the Department's trajectory towards serving the taxpayer from buildings that facilitate more efficient and technologically adept working across every region and country of the United Kingdom. This year will see two regional centres open in Belfast and Bristol—the first to follow the pilot in Croydon and to learn from the Department's findings there. I will be receiving the keys from the developer on behalf of Her Majesty's Government in the handover next month in Bristol.

The HMRC offices in 2015 varied hugely in size, quality and accessibility of location, but HMRC has since worked towards offices that are well equipped and large enough to offer serious career progression in city centre locations that allow for travel across the country as well as the recruitment of local graduates. The higher standard of building, designed to support digital, flexible ways of working, is an integral component of HMRC's broader plans to better provide service to the taxpayer at a lower cost. It is by making better use of technology and working differently that HMRC can become a more highly skilled organisation, maximising revenue, increasing compliance and further reducing the tax gap. Its Croydon regional centre is already open, impressing those who visit it with a new understanding of what it means to work for the civil service and providing a valuable prototype for the remaining offices.

Securing the locations of these 13 offices is an important step in the wider Government plans to create hubs across the country, and to move civil servants out of London and the south-east. The regional centres are not just offices for HMRC, but form part of Government hubs and sites for cross-Government work. NHS Digital will be taking space in the Leeds regional centre, for example, and the Department for Work and Pensions will be taking space in Birmingham.

The Cabinet Office is responsible for the wider Government hubs programme and it plans to align Government policy so that it is efficiently used and maximises opportunities for, and productivity of, civil servants. HMRC's 13 regional centres are the first phase of delivering this vision. I am proud that the public sector is stepping up to the forefront of industry, thinking about what an effective, flexible and inclusive working environment looks and feels like. Far from lagging behind the private sector, HMRC is delivering offices that are suited to the 21st century, maximising current technology and planning ahead for what further change might be in the pipeline. Not only will this enable HMRC to provide its customers with good service while cracking down on the dishonest minority, it is also excellent value for money, saving over £300 million in the 10 years of the programme up until 2025 and then saving a further £90 million a year from 2028.

The route to this transformation is balanced by the recognition that, to protect HMRC from business disruption, current staff and their expertise should be retained wherever possible. HMRC believes that about 90% of the staff that it had at the start of this transformational journey will move to a new regional centre or finish their careers in their current offices. To further manage potential disruption, the Department is keeping eight transitional sites that will be open for longer to help to maintain continuity.

As HMRC gears up to manage the workload resulting from exiting the European Union, it is also providing additional space in regional centre cities for additional staff and retaining some space for longer so that the planning can benefit from the knowledge and experience of existing personnel.

To transform the services that HMRC delivers for the United Kingdom, we are modernising almost every aspect of what we do. I am proud that HMRC is at the forefront of this change within the civil service, and I commend this statement to the House.

12.51 pm

Anneliese Dodds (Oxford East) (Lab/Co-op): I was given advance notice of the contents of this statement while I was in the Chamber for Treasury questions, and therefore time has been limited to prepare for it. I am surprised that we are now discussing this matter given that I and many of my colleagues have repeatedly raised problems with the Building our Future programme and generally been met with one-sentence answers from the Government.

The Minister maintains that this announcement has come today because of the successful securing of sites for 13 regional centres, so I hope that he will indicate to this House which centre was secured yesterday to justify this statement being presented today. When will he publish the list of precise locations of each of these centres, given that he maintains that we have today secured those new places? That would be enormously helpful for us, because without that information we will be forced to conclude that this statement has been made today for reasons other than its newsworthiness.

In July 2014, HMRC published the Building our Future proposals on reforming tax collection services for the next five years. In November 2015, HMRC announced plans to cut the number of offices from 170 to the 13 that are, apparently, having their locations announced today. In January 2017, the National Audit Office published its report on that process. It indicated that that original plan was unrealistic. It stated that the estimate of estate costs over the next 10 years had risen by nearly £600 million—almost a fifth—with more than half of that being due to higher than anticipated running costs for the new buildings. The National Audit Office also forecast a further 5,000 job losses and said that the costs of redundancy and travel had tripled from £17 million to £54 million due to this programme.

So what exactly is happening now among the HMRC workforce as a result of Building our Future? Some 73% of HMRC staff surveyed said that the Building our Future plans will undermine their ability to provide tax collection services. Half of them said that it would actually undermine their ability to clamp down on tax evasion and avoidance. I have to say that that was my

[Anneliese Dodds]

assessment as well when I visited a number of current and former HMRC offices right across the country—10 of them—over the past few months.

The Government say in this statement that “90% of the staff that”

HMRC

“had at the start of this transformational journey”—a piece of jargon if ever I heard one—

“will move to a new regional centre or finish their careers in their current offices.”

During the visits that I conducted, I did hear about staff finishing their careers—they were finishing their careers early because they could not travel to the new regional centres that the Minister is trumpeting today. People from Wrexham were being expected to travel every single day to Cardiff or to Liverpool. People from Exeter were being expected to travel to Bristol. These journeys are simply not feasible for people with caring responsibilities and simply not feasible on public transport.

I note that the Minister said that having city centre locations leads to a situation where it will be possible to recruit local graduates, but of course what his Department has forgotten, and what the NAO reminded him of a couple of years ago, is that in many of these city centre locations the labour market is far tighter, so we often find that there is actually an enormous recruitment problem rather than the bonanza that might be suggested to people who read his statement uncritically.

At the end of the statement, the Government accept, it seems, the need to learn from expertise. I will quote the sentence, although it pains me a little to do so given its construction:

“As HMRC gears up to manage the workload resulting from exiting the European Union, it is also providing additional space in regional centre cities”,

which I assume means offices,

“for additional staff and retaining some space for longer so that the planning”—

of what, we do not know—

“can benefit from the knowledge and experience of existing personnel.”

Well, that raises almost as many questions as it answers. The situation is still unclear about where 5,000 extra customs staff will go—a point I will return to later.

None the less, that sentence, as garbled as it is, suggests that HMRC wants to build on existing experience, but that principle is just not being followed in the Building our Future programme. We had within HMRC centres of excellence across a whole range of different specialisms, whether income tax fraud or the different kinds of multifarious problems that taxpayers can have in filling out their self-assessment forms. Many of the staff who were employed in those specialisms have either already left or are thinking of leaving. A great example of this is what we have seen happening in Swindon, which was previously a centre for income tax fraud. There is now a centre of excellence being built up on that in Liverpool, but with none of the same staff and with none of that expertise. It is being built up from scratch, creating huge inefficiency.

The Government have dogmatically refused to reassess the Building our Future programme apart from when they have been forced to do so—as they acknowledge very, very briefly in this statement—and that is exacerbating

problems in HMRC. The attrition rate is greater than the hire rate. We saw in 2014 an absolute reduction in staff of over 3,000 and in 2015 an absolute reduction in staff of over 4,000. In 2017, the UK had the second highest attrition rate out of the 55 countries that share data on their tax services. There has also been incredible mismanagement, with the release of 5,600 customer services staff and then, in 2015, the hiring of 2,400 new customer services staff. It is no surprise that morale is at rock bottom in HMRC.

I therefore want to ask some very quick questions of the Minister. Which new regional centre was secured yesterday? When will we have the list of locations of regional centres? If 90% of positions are retained or vacated due to people finishing their careers, does that mean that 10% of people in HMRC are going to be made redundant? Have there been any reviews of these plans in the context of Brexit? Has the Minister thought about the impact of this on the local economies that are so dependent on these jobs, as raised by many of my colleagues?

Mel Stride: I thank the hon. Lady for her response. I will pick up on some of the points that she has raised.

The hon. Lady asked why this statement is being delivered today. I think that she partly, at least, supplied the reason for that herself, in that she has shown a very keen interest in these matters, as have many other Members across the House, quite rightly. It is right, as we have always said, that we will be transparent in the roll-out of this transformation programme, and today is part of that process.

Towards the end of the hon. Lady's remarks, she called for a review of our arrangements in the context of Brexit and the customs arrangements that our country may face. That is the second reason why it is important that we consider these matters. The debate this afternoon will rightly focus on preparedness, among other matters, and HMRC and its transformation programme lies at the heart of the issues that will be debated.

The hon. Lady asked for the locations of these sites. I believe they are all in the public domain, but I am happy to provide her with a list. She also made several observations about the NAO report and value for money. We are still confident that we will meet our roll-out end date of around 2025. In terms of value for money, there will be savings of some £300 million across the 10 years. I remind the hon. Lady that we will be getting out of a substantial number of private finance initiative contracts that the existing offices are engaged with—PFI contracts that were brought in under her party's Government in 2001. One driver of additional value for money is that we will be able to unpick the unfavourable arrangements that her party's Government got us into in the first place.

The hon. Lady asked about the cost of redundancy. I said in my opening remarks that some 90% of those who will be impacted by these moves will either conclude their career in their existing offices or relocate to the new regional hub. The overall thrust of these changes is to ensure that we are better equipped at getting in more tax. It is very much a Labour philosophy that every solution has to involve more money and more people, whereas our approach is adjusting with the times and getting offices in place that are fit for the 21st century,

often using complicated data-based interrogation techniques, for which large regional hubs are the way forward.

Some of the 170 legacy offices that the hon. Lady seems so intent upon protecting had under 10 staff in them. Most of the processes carried out by those staff were manual in nature rather than technology-driven, so they were far less efficient. For example, over 80% of self-assessment returns are now done in a digital format, which is why it is important that we move to this model.

I turn to the hon. Lady's remarks about the staff themselves, who have been at the heart of our considerations as we have rolled out this process. All staff are given at least one year's notice of any proposed change. They are quite rightly given face-to-face meetings with their managers to discuss the changes and assistance that they may require. In determining the locations of the regional hubs, HMRC mapped out the journey to work of the staff who would be impacted, to ensure that that was one of the principles taken into account when assessing where the locations should be. Those who have extended travel arrangements as a consequence of any move may be given assistance with additional travel costs for between three and five years. Transitional offices, which the hon. Lady raised, will provide additional opportunities for continuity of HMRC's work and the opportunity of employment for those within these arrangements.

There is a purpose to this. It is not just about saving money, closing offices, suggesting that we are ready for the 21st century or making change for the sake of change. The purpose of these changes is to ensure that we continue the excellent work that HMRC is carrying out in clamping down on avoidance, evasion and non-compliance. The proof of the cake is in the eating: some £200 billion has been brought in or protected since 2010, and we have one of the lowest tax gaps in the world at 5.7%. That does not happen by magic; it happens by having an HMRC that is lean, efficient and up to the job. I commend this statement to the House.

James Duddridge (Rochford and Southend East) (Con): More than 1,000 people work for HMRC in Southend. I understand that Southend will not be a regional centre, but what does this mean for the people who work in HMRC in Southend? Do the words "eight transitional sites" offer them any short-term hope? Will the Financial Secretary work with me to ensure that the figure is 90%-plus in Southend?

Mel Stride: I thank my hon. Friend for his question. As he will be aware, we have announced that we will retain the Southend office until the end of 2022, but I am happy to meet him to discuss that matter.

Kirsty Blackman (Aberdeen North) (SNP): I thank the Financial Secretary for giving this statement and for advance sight of it. It is clear that he has drawn the short straw today—perhaps it is penance for his "no food, no channel tunnel" gaffe. Somebody needed to give a statement so that we had less time for the Brexit debate, and at least 10 fewer Members will get to speak in it as a result of this statement.

This is an important statement, but the timing is bizarre, given that on 8 January HMRC produced on its website a list of addresses and details of the transitional

sites. How come it has taken 21 days for the Financial Secretary to come to Parliament to allow us to ask questions on this statement? How come it happens to be on the day when we are discussing Brexit?

As the hon. Member for Oxford East (Anneliese Dodds) said, the entire programme of transformation and the way that this has been gone about is completely bonkers. Dedicated, experienced staff are being forced out of HMRC as a result of these closures. Communities such as Cumbernauld and Livingston are losing thousands of jobs as a result of these changes. Why on earth does the Financial Secretary think it is good value to close a large out-of-town office and move it to a city centre location where rents are hugely in excess of those in out-of-town locations, where staff will have massively increased travel costs to get to work and where business rates are likely to be far higher? Why does he think that this is a good idea?

The Financial Secretary said that 90% of staff who were at HMRC at the beginning of this process will still be there at the end. What about the 10% of staff who will not be there at the end? Will those staff be made redundant? How many of those 10% of staff are in Scotland?

People worked in HMRC offices in Inverness, Wick and Aberdeen, but the only regional offices in Scotland will be in Edinburgh and Glasgow. Does the Financial Secretary realise how long it takes to get from Aberdeen to Edinburgh, from Inverness to Glasgow or from Wick to Glasgow? It takes the best part of a day to get there from Wick. There is no way that people can commute that distance.

In terms of the customs checking functions that HMRC will need to perform, does the Financial Secretary believe that there will be adequate geographical coverage of customs staff once Brexit happens? More checks by customs officers will be required at those ports, and if it takes them a day to get to the port, there will be even more of a hold-up than is being suggested in a no-deal scenario.

I understand that HMRC is taking on an extra 5,300 staff to deal with Brexit planning. Could the Financial Secretary confirm how many of those 5,300 staff who are being taken on or have been taken on are in Scotland? How many of the 3,000 additional customer service staff who have been taken on are in Scotland? How many jobs will HMRC have in Scotland at the end of this process compared with the beginning? Lastly, I want to know why the Financial Secretary has taken 21 days to come to the House to tell us what was published on HMRC's website on 8 January.

Mel Stride: The hon. Lady raised a number of questions, one of which was about the issue of staff.

Neil Gray (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP): Answer the question.

Mel Stride: If the hon. Gentleman gives me a moment, I will do precisely that, as I always do.

The answers to the hon. Lady's questions relating to staff and the way in which we will be handling the staff are as I have set out. All staff will have at least one year's notice of any impending move. The mapping process that HMRC undertook, as it went into the

[*Mel Stride*]

detail of where to locate the regional hubs, was very thorough. It took into account a number of principles, which I will come on to in a moment to answer another of the hon. Lady's questions. Among those principles is the issue of the travel-to-work time, and every single employee's home location was mapped against the possible new alternatives under consideration at the time those decisions were being made. I have also raised the issue of the transition offices, which are of course there, among other reasons, to provide employment opportunities for the staff.

The location principles—this comes to the questions the hon. Lady asked about why we have chosen one particular location rather than another, or indeed the existing location of the legacy offices—come down to eight key principles. They include transport connections, which are of course excellent in both Edinburgh and Glasgow, and the talent pool there, such as in universities—for example, Edinburgh and Glasgow have world-class universities—as well as the housing that is available, the quality of the schools and all the matters that will sustain the recruitment of the teams we will be bringing together in these 21st-century and much more sophisticated hubs for dealing with our tax purposes.

The hon. Lady raised the issue, which I know she has raised on previous occasions, of the location of these hubs in relation to our ports and points of entry into the United Kingdom. I think I can reassure her that, quite outside this whole process of the transitional arrangements, we will of course ensure that Border Force, HMRC and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs have the personnel available at those locations to make sure that they are able to run imports and exports efficiently. There is a general premise, however, in the suggestion that the offices somehow need to be close to people all the time. In fact, since 2014, it has been the case—[*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. I think there is a sense in the Chamber that there is an inadvertent abuse going on. This is not a debate; it is a statement. The Financial Secretary has twice said that he commended the statement to the House: he said it in response to the first set of questions, and he had already said it when he delivered the statement. A brief and pithy encapsulation of the argument is what is required. A long dilation is not only not required, but notably irritating to the House.

Mel Stride: I can only apologise, Mr Speaker, and I obviously accept your guidance on this matter. I believe I was asked about 20-plus questions between the two Front Benchers, but I take your point.

I will deal with one last point. The hon. Member for Aberdeen North (Kirsty Blackman) specifically asked me how many of the 5,000-plus personnel that HMRC is recruiting in the context of our Brexit planning will be based in Scotland. We are up to about 3,500 currently, and I will write to the hon. Lady to make sure that we provide her with the information she has sought.

John Howell (Henley) (Con): When I was an inspector of taxes, the office network was totally incapable of being developed for a digital situation. How will this new programme make such development a possibility?

Mel Stride: As a former tax inspector, my hon. Friend is probably about as popular as I am as a tax Minister, which is never the most popular job in the world. The answer to his question—in a short and pithy response, Mr Speaker—is that we have to move to the more digital-based, data-based and inspection-based system that is facilitated by the very hubs I have been describing.

Meg Hillier (Hackney South and Shoreditch) (Lab/Co-op): This has already cost more; the projected savings have gone down; there are no break clauses in most of the 20 to 25-year leases; and there is little buy-in from other Departments. The Minister has said that the DWP and NHS Digital—interestingly, he picked only two small examples—are buying into a couple of the hubs. Will he list the other Departments that are buying in by locating in these regional hubs?

Mel Stride: There has been a series of discussions right across Whitehall, led by the Cabinet Office, in the area in which the hon. Lady has framed her question. The hon. Lady levelled the charge of cost, but she then very quickly went on to talk about savings, and there will of course be net savings from this approach of some £300 million by 2025.

Martin Vickers (Cleethorpes) (Con): Representing a coastal community, as I do, regional centres tend to be very many miles away. This is clearly a problem for staff, but also for constituents in their dealings with HMRC. Will the Minister give an assurance that, even in this digital age, face-to-face meetings between staff and constituents, where necessary, will be available locally?

Mel Stride: All requests for face-to-face meetings are of course treated on their merits, and they are certainly not discarded out of hand. I reiterate my point that, since 2014, tax offices have generally not been open for members of the public to walk in and ask to speak to a tax inspector. Indeed, some 80% of self-assessments are now done digitally online.

Eleanor Smith (Wolverhampton South West) (Lab): I have a tax office in Wolverhampton South West that is going to close, and my constituents are not happy. For a start, Carillion has gone and now the tax office is going, and it does not make sense. The Minister has talked about face-to-face meetings, but there are actually a lot of face-to-face meetings in that tax office. The staff there are not happy about having to travel, and the Government are going to lose a lot of staff with experience. How can he explain that with regard to the regional hubs, because they are supposed to go to Birmingham?

Mel Stride: The hon. Lady raises the issue of the tax office in her particular area of Wolverhampton. I am very happy at any point—this is of course an invitation to any Member—to speak to her specifically about the circumstances of the HMRC office in her location. Equally, Birmingham is not a huge distance from Wolverhampton for many of those people to commute to, but if the hon. Lady would like to take up any aspects of that with me, I will be delighted to speak to her.

Mr Marcus Fysh (Yeovil) (Con): I welcome HMRC's work on the transformation of its estate and on gearing up for customs readiness for any eventuality. In particular, it is great news that the CHIEF—customs handling of import and export freight—system will be fully ready

on 30 March to handle declarations for customs and that simplifications of customs procedure are being made available to business. That will enable imports of goods into the UK to flow without hold-ups using inland clearance techniques. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that we will indeed be ready and that fear is unjustified? Will he say what he is doing to ensure that a campaign is now activated to inform small and medium-sized enterprises about what they have to do to make use of the simplifications?

Mel Stride: On the IT systems element of my hon. Friend's question, he is absolutely right. CHIEF has been upgraded, and it is now capable of processing about 90 messages per second, which will be enough to handle the import and export declarations that may be required.

On the issue of informing the marketplace or traders about the new circumstances that may pertain after 29 March, we have written to 145,000 exporters that export only to the European Union and are not therefore familiar with customs arrangements. We have issued three iterations of our partnership pack and there is a huge amount of information on gov.uk, where businesses can also sign up to email alerts to make sure that they are aware of the very latest relevant information.

Mr Jim Cunningham (Coventry South) (Lab): On behalf of myself and my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton South West (Eleanor Smith), I have written to the Minister to ask for a meeting, with one or two reps from the trade unions, to discuss the situation in Wolverhampton and Coventry. People in Coventry will have to travel 16 miles to premises that are inadequate, while those who are left are not guaranteed jobs. I will not rehearse all the arguments now, but I would like to meet the Minister, with some reps and my hon. Friend, to discuss this further. Will he agree to do so?

Mel Stride: I would be very happy to meet the hon. Gentleman to discuss the matters he has raised.

Dr Caroline Johnson (Sleaford and North Hykeham) (Con): Improving public services is about more than just spending more money; it is about delivering better services more efficiently, on which the Treasury is well placed to lead. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that these changes will improve the services available to my constituents and how much money will he save to spend on the other public services they receive?

Mel Stride: I can confirm that services will be improved. All the evidence suggests that is the case as we have upgraded and brought HMRC into the 21st century, and I have already stated that the savings will be of the order of £300 million in the run-up to 2025.

Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): As the hon. Member for Aberdeen North (Kirsty Blackman) pointed out, the nearest centre will be a huge distance from my constituency. If we end up out of the customs union, ports such as Scrabster and Wick in my constituency will be the UK's border. How exactly will the Minister get HMRC to support those ports? If he is going to put personnel in them, why do we not simply reopen the Wick tax office?

Mel Stride: I cannot comment on the specific tax office that the hon. Gentleman mentions, although I am of course very happy to discuss that element of his question outside this statement. As I have already set out, having effective manpower at our ports and borders is a matter of making sure that we have adequate HMRC, Border Force and Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs staff available for that, and it will not impact on the fact that we are rearranging our HMRC tax offices.

Bob Blackman (Harrow East) (Con): Property prices tend to fluctuate, so how long are the leases on the new centres, and what break clauses are included in them?

Mel Stride: I will write to my hon. Friend with the answer to that question, on the basis that these are all individual arrangements that have been entered into. As for lease arrangements, the first stage of the process is to enter into a commitment with the developer to take possession of the building; the lease is signed in due course. I will, of course, write to him with a more specific answer.

Diana Johnson (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): Given that a no-deal Brexit is likely to increase massively the number of customs declarations made at ports such as Hull by those transporting goods through them, and given that that is combined with the Department for Transport's general lack of preparedness when it comes to our ports, how can the Minister justify taking these decisions at this point?

Mel Stride: These are two relatively unrelated matters. Reconfiguring our tax offices is important for the reasons I set out in the statement. As to the hon. Lady's point about preparedness for the very large increase that there may be in customs declarations, depending on where we land with the deal, I pointed out in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr Fysh) that CHIEF has been upgraded substantially; it will be able to handle the kind of volumes that it may be necessary to handle.

Mark Pritchard (The Wrekin) (Con): The Minister may have heard of Trump Plaza in Atlantic City, which is now closed, but is he aware of Telford Plaza in the borough of Telford and Wrekin, which is very much open, and is the largest letting in Telford and Wrekin in the last decade? It is 112,000 square feet over 13 floors, and many HMRC staff are employed there. Would he care to visit that centre of excellence, when he can find the time in his diary?

Mel Stride: I thank my hon. Friend for shamelessly promoting, quite rightly, the properties in his constituency. I would be very happy to meet him to discuss the area.

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): Mr Speaker,

“‘Beauty is truth, truth beauty’—that is all

Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.”

The Minister keeps referring to bringing together hubs, but the danger is that that will mean everything moving to big cities, and all the smaller towns in a constituency, such as all those towns in the valleys in

[Chris Bryant]

south Wales, losing out. There are loyal HMRC workers, and cheaper properties, in many of these towns. Will he not look at those smaller towns?

Mel Stride: The hon. Gentleman is suggesting that we set all current arrangements in aspic. Going back some decades, there would have been not 170 offices across the country, but several hundred. No doubt if we went back in time, the hon. Gentleman would have been on his feet telling us that we should keep 700 offices, rather than shrinking the number down to 170. The reality is that the way that the tax authority conducts its affairs is effective—I have given the figures—and there is a model that makes that happen. That lends itself to 21st-century hubs that have the right resourcing to do the job.

Philip Davies (Shipley) (Con): Given that cheaper premises were available just up the road in Bradford, it is absolutely ridiculous that the Yorkshire hub will be in Leeds. As HMRC made no economic impact assessment of the effect on the places that it is moving out of, will the Minister look at what financial support the Treasury can give from its savings to Shipley, to make sure that its local economy is not damaged by the closure of its tax office? There is already great congestion for commuters trying to get to Leeds on the train; what investment will he make to ensure that people can get from my constituency to Leeds on the train, which they cannot do at the moment?

Mel Stride: The decision to have a Leeds office as opposed to a Bradford office has been rigorously looked at. It hinged on eight principles, some of which I set out in my response to the hon. Member for Aberdeen North (Kirsty Blackman), who spoke for the Scottish National party. On my hon. Friend's more general point about the economic impact, the House should celebrate the economic success that we have had; we have the highest level of employment and lowest unemployment since the mid-1970s, and it is this Government's policies that are providing that.

Dr Paul Williams (Stockton South) (Lab): Four hundred people work for HMRC in George Stephenson House in Stockton South. Many of them have built their lives as carers and parents around their work. Why does the Minister think that it is okay to ask them to travel for an hour and a half each way just to keep their jobs, when 97% of them say that that is unacceptable?

Mel Stride: I do not think that we are requiring all the employees at that location to travel in excess of an hour to fit in with the new arrangements. In my statement, I set out at length the various measures—I will not repeat them now—that we have taken to make sure that HMRC does the right thing.

Nigel Huddleston (Mid Worcestershire) (Con): How can we ensure that niche skills and the expertise of key HMRC staff are retained in this move to regional hubs?

Mel Stride: My hon. Friend asks a very good question that goes right to the heart of why we are making these changes. If we are to build teams of highly skilled

individuals, we need the right locations in which to house them; that will lend itself to the hubs that we are rolling out, which are in locations with good housing, good education, good access to a talent pool, good transport facilities and so on.

Robert Halfon (Harlow) (Con): The Minister spoke of graduates being part of this transformation scheme. Will he confirm that HMRC will offer opportunities to apprentices, and will support apprenticeships across the board?

Mel Stride: I can certainly assure my hon. Friend that HMRC engages with apprenticeship programmes and is supportive of apprentices, as are the rest of the Government.

Dr Lisa Cameron (East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow) (SNP): East Kilbride's Centre 1 is so named because it was deemed No. 1 for taxation skills and experience, but the Public and Commercial Services Union reports that these plans lose the UK 17,000 years of tax experience. Everyone in EK knows someone who has worked in Centre 1 and utterly condemns this Government's plans. Given that the Minister's Department has been working constructively with me on the all-party parliamentary group on new towns to regenerate them, why is he devastating East Kilbride and new towns by closing our largest employer?

Mel Stride: The hon. Lady is absolutely right to be as passionate as she is about protecting the existing workforce and making sure that we do not lose the workforce's vital skills. That is why we have taken this approach. We are ensuring that the new locations are viable for those from the old. For example, we are assisting those who need to travel by meeting some of their travel costs over three to five years. We very much want to keep the high level of skills in the organisation.

Toby Perkins (Chesterfield) (Lab): Businesses in Chesterfield that I have spoken to that have had cause to query HMRC judgments have found the organisation monolithic and unresponsive to their queries. Does the Minister have any assessment of how many successful businesses go bankrupt or have a huge financial deficit as a result of a lack of experience in HMRC, and what will he do about that?

Mel Stride: If we look at all the metrics, we can see that HMRC is doing extremely well on customer service at the moment, including time taken to answer telephone calls. There is always more to do, and we will continue to work at this, but it has a good record to date.

Deidre Brock (Edinburgh North and Leith) (SNP): HMRC's New Waverley development in Edinburgh is being used for photo opportunities by Back-Bench Tory MPs even before it opens. We know that the office of the Secretary of State for Scotland and of the Advocate General for Scotland, the Office for Statistics Regulation, the Information Commissioner's Office, the Government Actuary's Department and Her Majesty's Treasury are also moving in. Will the Minister tell us exactly how much this enormous white elephant is costing us, and to which other Departments HMRC will sub-let?

Mel Stride: The main thrust of the hon. Lady's question seems to be to decry the fact that we are decanting more and more services into one location. There are many logical economic and business reasons why one would do exactly that. As for her charge that Conservative Back Benchers are going up to that location, I would suggest that that says they are very interested in these particular matters.

Mary Glindon (North Tyneside) (Lab): Unlike the CEO of HMRC, will the Minister show some common sense and heed the PCS union, which says he should halt his programme and instead concentrate on keeping the expertise, amounting to thousands of years, of staff at offices under threat?

Mel Stride: Rather like the question from the hon. Member for Rhondda (Chris Bryant), the suggestion is that we just do nothing and stay exactly as we are. That would not be to the benefit of the taxpayer. Frankly, that would not be to the benefit of the staff, either, who will have increased opportunities as a result of the changes we are bringing in.

Jim McMahon (Oldham West and Royton) (Lab/Co-op): Phoenix House in Oldham is due to close to relocate to Manchester city centre. The cruelty is that, when we asked whether a different site in Oldham could be considered, there was a categorical refusal to even shortlist a site, despite rents in Oldham being half the price of those in Manchester city centre. Does the Minister understand the anger felt in many of our towns, which are being cast aside in favour of our city centres by a Government who just do not care?

Mel Stride: HMRC has stuck to very clear, very fair and balanced guidelines on how to make the assessments—the eight location principles we have been discussing this afternoon—and I have absolutely no doubt that it was rigorous in adhering to that process. The individuals impacted by this decision are central to the approach HMRC is taking, in the way I have described.

Chris Stephens (Glasgow South West) (SNP): Will the Minister publish an economic impact assessment for each HMRC office closure—in many towns, the largest employer is leaving? Will he publish an equality impact assessment, so we can see the impact on staff, particularly those with disabilities, who are being asked to travel over 100 miles to their new workplace?

Mel Stride: There has already been an equality impact assessment. It is in the public domain, but I would be very happy to share it with the hon. Member.

Stephen Morgan (Portsmouth South) (Lab): Seventy-nine per cent. of staff surveyed said that the plans undermine their ability to provide tax collection. Are HMRC staff wrong?

Mel Stride: What is wrong is the suggestion that we are not good at collecting tax. We are world class at collecting tax. We have a tax gap of just 5.7%. If we had the same tax gap that we had under the Labour party, the missing revenue would be enough to employ every

policeman and woman in England and Wales. The Conservative way works; the Labour way squanders resources.

Alan Brown (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): Given the staff and estate upheaval at HMRC, and the fact that the Government will not take no deal Brexit off the table, can the Minister explain to my concerned constituents why HMRC is sticking with the date of 1 April 2019 for making tax digital for all businesses—a day on which many businesses may have something else to consider?

Mel Stride: When I first became Financial Secretary, one of the early decisions I took was to limit the roll-out of Making Tax Digital to just VAT and those businesses over the VAT threshold. The roll-out was delayed. I am confident that we are now in a position where businesses will be ready for that important change. That will be of benefit to HMRC by way of tax collection and important for the efficient running of those companies.

Chris Ruane (Vale of Clwyd) (Lab): The Minister is closing down the valuation office in Rhyl, with the loss of 40 jobs. His Government have already closed the Army careers office in Rhyl, the Crown post office and the county court. By contrast, the Welsh Labour Government are investing £50 million in new schools, £50 million in flood defences, £28 million in housing and possibly £42 million in the refurbishment of a new hospital. Why are the Conservative Government disinvesting in struggling seaside towns and reinvesting in already overheated city centres?

Mel Stride: The simple fact is that the Government are adopting an efficient approach to the use of our resources, including across HMRC. We do that for a distinct purpose: it allows us to spend more money on the things that our country expects us to spend money on, such as vital public services, including the national health service, where we will be spending £84 billion more over the next few years than under the previous Labour Government. I make no apologies for doing things that drive efficiency and allow us to support health and public services.

Hannah Bardell (Livingston) (SNP): On value for money, the Minister is either sadly mistaken or badly briefed, because the reality for the 1,000 staff in my constituency is that they are going to one of the most expensive retail units in all of Scotland when they move to Edinburgh. Does he think it acceptable that, as I understand it from the PCS union, staff will be expected to sit in armchairs about which occupational therapists have huge concerns and that staff who have disabilities or who are in wheelchairs have been told that if they cannot reach the screen or the plug sockets on their desks someone else can do it for them?

Mel Stride: Clearly, I am not in a position to comment on very specific remarks about armchairs, but if the hon. Lady would like to raise the matter with me outside of this statement, I would be very happy to discuss it with her.

Chris Law (Dundee West) (SNP): There is deep and clear concern from the 479 hard-working HMRC staff at Sidlaw House in Dundee that their jobs may come to

[Chris Law]

an end this year, rather than as planned in 2021, which was promised by the Treasury. Can the Financial Secretary give me an absolute guarantee today that their jobs are safe until the end of 2021?

Mel Stride: I would be happy to meet the hon. Gentleman to discuss the details of that specific office location.

BILL PRESENTED

EUROPEAN UNION (REVOCATION OF NOTICE OF WITHDRAWAL) (No.2) BILL

Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)

Angus Brendan MacNeil, supported by Pete Wishart, presented a Bill to require the Prime Minister to revoke the notification, under Article 50(2) of the Treaty on European Union, of the United Kingdom's intention to withdraw from the European Union, subject to the legislative consent of the Scottish Parliament and the National Assembly for Wales; and for connected purposes.

Bill read for the First time; to be read a Second time on 8 February, and to be printed (Bill 326).

Smoking Prohibition (National Health Service Premises)

Motion for leave to bring in a Bill (Standing Order No. 23)

1.37 pm

Tracy Brabin (Batley and Spen) (Lab/Co-op): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to prohibit smoking on National Health Service premises; and for connected purposes.

It is fabulous to have a full House, Mr Speaker. How marvellous.

This is a Bill that I hope is simple in its terms, can forge the support of as much of this House as possible and can bring us in line with the intentions of the Welsh and Scottish Parliaments—a Bill that would give our NHS trusts the legal back-up to ban smoking on their grounds, which I believe would be to the benefit of patients, visitors, staff, trusts and society more widely. During my contribution, I will try to convince Members of its benefits, but I am not naive. I am aware that some Members, indeed some commentators too, will have already written this off as some sort of attempted nanny state intervention that will only seek to cruelly deny unwell people the so-called pleasure of smoking a cigarette. I know I have my work cut out for me, so let us start at the beginning.

Our country has taken great steps in raising public awareness about the risks and harm of smoking. Those warnings are rightfully embedded in our education system. I doubt there are many children who would not know that smoking is linked to cancer and other life-threatening conditions. Most recently, Britain introduced plain packaging for cigarettes. Advertising by cigarette companies is also banned. This House has a history of introducing legislation to reduce the proliferation of smokers, including limits on where people can smoke. Work locations and public buildings both have bans in place. If there is a roof, you cannot spark up. You cannot smoke in cars with children. Yet, think about your last visit to a hospital, whether as a patient or a visitor. Why is it that, to reach the hospital, a place that by its very purpose should be a leading light of health and wellbeing, the chances are that you are forced to walk through great plumes of smoke to reach your location, with cigarette butts and litter filling wall-mounted bins? That scene is more than likely replicated day in, day out.

The inspiration for my Bill came from the Mid Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust, which serves my constituents in Batley and Spen and people across mid-Yorkshire. On a recent service visit, I was deeply concerned to hear of the havoc that smoking on the premises can cause. As I go through some of the arguments for legally outlawing smoking on NHS grounds, keep in mind that smoking is already banned on those premises and that smokers are already defying the rules of the hospital. This Bill is about putting that in legislation.

The Mid Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust has told me—and I have experienced this—about the unpleasant stench of smoke when people enter and exit the building. Staff face abuse when asking smokers to put out their cigarettes. The ethics of hospitals as health promoters is undermined. I also suggest that it makes the enforcement

of other rules, such as bringing alcohol on to the premises, much more difficult. Smokers congregating outside the entrance cause congestion and block access for less mobile or disabled visitors, and that is significantly worse in bad weather.

If smoking is a free-for-all as soon as visitors hit the fresh air, that affects services, too. Our hard-working and over-stretched staff are asked to escort patients outside and wait with them while they smoke, and staff are taken away from duties to let patients back into the ward after smoking. Wheelchairs are difficult to find as smokers use them, and volunteers, who have given up their time, are subject to complaints from members of the public as they walk through smokers to reach the entrance. One of the trust's neonatal wards cannot even open the windows because smoke would come in. Just think of the risk to newborn babies and patients with breathing difficulties.

In short, the case is compelling from that one trust, but we will not achieve smoke-free hospital grounds without legislation. [*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady is a distinguished actress and has a voice that projects, but it seems to me that the House is rather irreverent. What she is saying on this matter should be heard.

Tracy Brabin: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

A senior member of NHS staff, who will remain unnamed, said to me that we do not let alcoholics drink White Lightning, so why do we let smokers damage their recovery? Of course, the trust has not been idly waiting for legislation. It has introduced a speaker system to inform smokers where they should not be smoking, and it has even brought in a fruit and vegetable store to promote healthy eating, but sadly people smoke in front of it.

This issue is about much more than just mid-Yorkshire. I am calling for legislative support for all NHS trusts seeking to implement the Government's smokeless NHS debate initiative, as laid out in the 2017 tobacco control plan for England. This is about more than simply installing no-smoking signs; it is about creating a culture that is in favour of quitting. I want this legislation to be part of a package that includes support to help smokers quit or abstain. They should receive encouragement to do so while on hospital grounds. Smoke-free policies should be communicated before appointments; staff should be given stop-smoking training; carers, families and visitors should have cessation advice; and, crucially, patients who smoke should be identified so they can be given support to stop. That is the whole package that I want to see implemented, but while we wait for legislation there are a number of things that I believe we should be doing now.

I gently say to NHS England that it would be welcome to see it produce guidance on smoke-free NHS policy, alongside implementation procedure. Such a step would strengthen the message to trusts that smoke-free policies are an essential part of their operation and would be a very welcome push towards a smoke-free NHS. I say this to Ministers: I am aware that the prevention Green Paper is on its way and this Bill might be the opportunity to implement that legislation.

At the start of my speech, I mentioned the Scottish and Welsh Governments. In Wales, legislation to ban smoking on hospital grounds is expected to be implemented this summer. In Scotland, legislation has been passed giving Ministers the power to designate a perimeter around hospital buildings within which smoking is prohibited. This Bill would be an example of this House taking a lead from the devolved Administrations where appropriate. We should never be shy of doing that. It is worth remembering that the smoking population inside hospitals is higher than it is among the general public and that illnesses can be a major factor in quitting. Let us support people in the first hours and days of kicking the habit.

I know that, for some Members, the provision of support will depend on cold, hard cash. They will be relieved to know that a full implementation of smoke-free policies on the Royal College of Physicians estate would deliver a net saving to the NHS of up to £60 million within one year and greater savings in the long term. Let us not lose sight of the immediate benefits. Even following diagnosis of lung cancer, people who quit have a significantly lower risk of mortality and cancer recurrence.

Although the number of smokers is reducing, it remains a serious menace in my constituency of Batley and Spennings. In Kirklees, we have a higher than average number of smokers—17.1%—and in Yorkshire it is 17%. In England, the average is 14.9%. Sadly, 12.6% of pregnant women smoke at the time of delivery in Kirklees; the national average is just over 10%. According to Public Health England, between 2015 and 2017, there were 4,439 smoking-related hospital admissions in Kirklees—again, that is above average. In the same period, there were sadly 1,942 deaths attributable to smoking in Kirklees.

The need for this measure is obvious. We still have our work cut out for us. I am not saying that the Bill will magically reduce the number of smokers. Although I am aware of the hard work carried out on cessation programmes at the Mid Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust, we all need to do our part to make hospital grounds smoke-free, take the burden off our NHS staff and create a more pleasant experience for patients and businesses alike.

This is an incredibly simple Bill of the kind introduced in Scotland and Wales. I hope it will be implemented with ease.

Question put and agreed to.

Ordered,

That Tracy Brabin, Mary Creagh, Mrs Sharon Hodgson, Bambos Charalambous, Thelma Walker, Yasmin Qureshi, Paula Sherriff, Holly Lynch and Dr Rosena Allin-Khan present the Bill.

Tracy Brabin accordingly presented the Bill.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 15 March, and to be printed (Bill 327).

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE (TODAY)

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Speaker shall put the questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the motion tabled under section 13(6)(a) and 13(11)(b)(i) of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 in the name of the Prime Minister not later than 7.00pm;

such questions shall include the questions on any amendments selected by the Speaker which may then be moved; the questions may be put after the moment of interruption; and Standing Order No. 16 (Proceedings under an Act or on European Union documents) and Standing Order No. 41A (Deferred divisions) shall not apply.—
(*Michelle Donelan.*)

European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018

[Relevant documents: Eleventh Report from the Exiting the European Union Committee, Response to the vote on the Withdrawal Agreement and Political Declaration: Options for Parliament, HC 1902; and Twelfth Report from the Exiting the European Union Committee, Response to the vote on the Withdrawal Agreement and Political Declaration: Assessing the Options, HC 1908.]

Mr Speaker: I have provisionally selected the following amendments in the following order: (a) in the name of the Leader of the Opposition, Jeremy Corbyn; (o) in the name of the right hon. Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber, Mr Ian Blackford; (g) in the name of the right hon. and learned Member for Beaconsfield, Dominic Grieve; (b) in the name of the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford, Yvette Cooper; (j) in the name of the hon. Member for Leeds West, Rachel Reeves; (i) in the name of the right hon. Member for Meriden, Dame Caroline Spelman; and (n) in the name of the hon. Member for Altrincham and Sale West, Sir Graham Brady. Reference may be made in debate to any of the amendments on the Order Paper, including those I have not selected.

For the benefit of right hon. and hon. Members, and of those observing our proceedings, I will set out concisely what will happen at the end of today's debate. At 7 o'clock, I will first invite the Leader of the Opposition to move his amendment. If his amendment (a) is agreed to, amendment (o) falls, and I will invite the right hon. and learned Member for Beaconsfield to move his amendment (g), and so on down the list. If amendment (a) is disagreed to, I will invite the right hon. Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber to move his amendment (o). When amendment (o) has been decided, we will move to amendment (g), and so on down the list. If amendment (b) is agreed to, amendment (j) falls. At the end, I will put to the House the original question in the name of the Prime Minister, as amended, if amendments have been made, or in its original form, if no amendments have been agreed. To move the main motion, I call the Prime Minister.

1.51 pm

The Prime Minister (Mrs Theresa May): I beg to move,

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 24 January 2019.

Over the past few weeks, this House has left no one in any doubt about what it does not want. It does not want to leave the EU without a deal, because that would hurt our economy and disrupt people's lives. It does not want to hold a general election, because it would waste time, increase division and solve none of the problems we face. Indeed, this House renewed its confidence in Her Majesty's Government a fortnight ago. Neither do I see anything approaching a majority across the House to hold a second referendum. Indeed, the leaders of the so-called "People's Vote" campaign obviously agree with me, because they declined even to table an amendment

to put that into effect. I also accept, however, that this House does not want the deal I put before it in the form it currently exists. The vote was decisive, and I listened.

The world knows what this House does not want. Today, we need to send an emphatic message about what we do want. I believe that that must include honouring the votes of our fellow citizens and completing the democratic process that began when this House voted overwhelmingly to hold the referendum and then voted to trigger article 50 and that saw the vast majority of us elected on manifestos pledging to see Brexit through.

Stephen Doughty (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op): At the November European Council, the Prime Minister pleaded with other European leaders, telling them that her deal was not only the best deal but the only possible deal—a statement she repeated time and again, including in this House. We now hear from her spokespeople at No. 10 that she wants to rip up the withdrawal agreement and open up the whole process again. Why would other European leaders agree to that?

The Prime Minister: I gently suggest that the hon. Gentleman listen to my speech before asking questions of that sort.

Seeing Brexit through means reaching an agreement that works for this country and our people and for the other 27 nations of the European Union, including our nearest neighbour, Ireland. It means listening to the message being sent by the great manufacturing firms that employ millions of our constituents that they need an implementation period and a free trade area with our nearest market. It means protecting the security partnerships that keep us safe. It means caring about every part of this United Kingdom, including the people of Northern Ireland, who should be just as much the concern of each one of us in this Union Parliament as their fellow citizens in England, Scotland and Wales. We need a good deal that sets us on course for a bright future.

That is what I believe this House wants. It is what this Government want; it is what I want; and it is what the British people want. Today, we have the chance to show the European Union what it will take to get a deal through this House of Commons and to move beyond the confusion, division and uncertainty that now hangs over us and on to the bright, new, close, open relationship we want to build and can build with our European friends in the years ahead.

Stephen Gethins (North East Fife) (SNP): The Prime Minister knows that her Treasury analysis shows that every single plan for Brexit makes us poorer. If she is confident of her plan, will she publish it?

The Prime Minister: We published an economic analysis, along with other analyses, and they showed that the Government's proposal was the best deal for honouring the referendum and providing protection for jobs and the economy in this country. I know the hon. Gentleman does not agree, because he does not want to honour the referendum result, but I think it is our duty to honour it.

Peter Kyle (Hove) (Lab): The Prime Minister has had some strong words for the House for not forming an alternative consensus to her deal, but she is now supporting the Brady amendment, and so will be voting against her own deal. How does she expect the House to provide an alternative when she is voting against her own deal?

The Prime Minister: Time and again, Opposition Members have stood up and asked me to listen to the House. Now I come to the House having listened to the House, and Members say I should not have.

The way to make clear what it will take to agree a deal is to reject the amendments that state and restate once again what we do not want and back instead the amendment that shows what this House needs in order to agree a deal.

Andrew Percy (Brigg and Goole) (Con): The Prime Minister is absolutely right about honouring the referendum result. Millions of people across the north of England voted in huge numbers to leave the EU, and many of them went out and re-elected Labour MPs who stood on a solemn commitment to make good on the referendum result. Is it not the case that if any Member of Parliament representing a northern leave constituency votes for amendment (b) this evening, they will be voting to dishonour the referendum result?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes an important point. It is up to every Member to remember the manifesto on which they were elected. Some 80% of the votes cast at the general election were cast for parties that said they would honour the referendum result, and that is what we need to do, and we can honour it by showing tonight what it will take to enable this House to agree a deal on the basis of which we can leave the EU.

Tom Brake (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD): The Prime Minister now no longer favours the backstop arrangement she negotiated and instead is in favour of alternative arrangements. Will she set out for the House what those alternative arrangements are?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman refers to alternative arrangements as if it is a phrase that has suddenly come into use. As I will mention later, the deal we negotiated allows for alternative arrangements.

I would like to turn to the amendments. I appreciate the spirit of the amendment tabled by my right hon. Friend the Member for Meriden (Dame Caroline Spelman). I, too, want to avoid leaving without a deal. I have heard the concerns and anxieties of businesses and families around the country who worry about what would happen if we left without a deal, and I do not want to put at risk all the hard work that has seen this Government deliver record high employment; the joint lowest unemployment in 45 years and wages growing at their fastest rate in a decade.

That said, my right hon. Friend's amendment is missing the other half of the equation, for unless we are to end up with no Brexit at all, the only way to avoid no deal is to agree a deal. That is why I want to go back to Brussels with the clearest possible mandate to secure a deal that this House can support. That means sending the clearest possible message not about what the House does not want, but about what we do want.

Pete Wishart (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: I am just going to make a little more progress. I am always generous in taking interventions, as the hon. Gentleman knows.

I know that some Members have been concerned that this debate could be the last chance to vote on their desire to avoid a no deal, so I want to reassure the House that it is not. We will bring a revised deal back to the House for a second meaningful vote as soon as we possibly can.

Pete Wishart: Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman wants to comment on what I am saying about the process that the Government will follow, I suggest that he should wait until I have completed what I am saying. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. Let me very gently say to the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire (Pete Wishart) and his hon. Friend the Member for Na h-Eileanan an Iar (Angus Brendan MacNeil) that both of them are very senior figures in the land, as Chairs of important Select Committees of the House, and they should behave with the decorum that befits their high status.

The Prime Minister: First of all, as I have said, we will bring a revised deal back to this House for a second meaningful vote as soon as we possibly can. While we will want the House to support that deal, if it did not, we would—just as before—table an amendable motion for debate the next day. Furthermore, if we have not brought a revised deal back to this House by Wednesday 13 February, we will make a statement and, again, table an amendable motion for debate the next day. So the House will have a further opportunity to revisit this question of leaving without a deal. Today, we can and must instead focus all our efforts on securing a good deal with the EU that enables us to leave in a smooth and orderly way on 29 March.

Emma Reynolds (Wolverhampton North East) (Lab): The Prime Minister is, of course, right that there is more clarity about what the House does not want than about what it does want, but to get that clarity about what the House wants, why will she not agree to a series of indicative votes on all the substantive options before us—not the process but the substance, including a comprehensive customs union?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Lady and others—indeed, Members on her party's Front Bench—had the opportunity to table indicative votes. Did they do so? No. They tabled something that said, "Well, what's the answer? Let's have a few more votes in the future, possibly, maybe, if we think that it might be useful at some stage."

Neil Gray (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP): This morning, there was some kite-flying about a so-called Tory Brexit compromise that would still take Scotland out of the EU, would probably require an extension of article 50, and proposes what has already been ruled out. Does that not further emphasise the fact that this Prime Minister's Brexit policy has been about the Tory party, first, last and always?

The Prime Minister: My Brexit policy, and the policy of the Government, has been about the vote that took place in 2016 in the referendum and about delivering on leaving the European Union.

Charlie Elphicke (Dover) (Con): Does the Prime Minister agree that it is important for us to honour the referendum and the vote of 2016? Will she rule out any extension of article 50 and any wrecking tactics from the Labour party and make sure that we leave on 29 March?

The Prime Minister: I absolutely agree that we need to deliver on the result of the referendum. Let me add that when people talk about things such as delaying article 50, that does not resolve the issue of what deal we should have in leaving the European Union. What we can do today is send a clear message to Brussels about what the House wants to see changing in the withdrawal agreement in order to be able to support it.

Mr Chris Leslie (Nottingham East) (Lab/Co-op) *rose—*

Pete Wishart *rose—*

The Prime Minister: I will give way to the hon. Member for Nottingham East (Mr Leslie), and then I will relent and give way to the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire (Pete Wishart).

Mr Leslie: I want to find out what has changed since the Prime Minister said to the House just a fortnight ago:

"some...wanted to see changes to the withdrawal agreement, a unilateral exit mechanism from the backstop, an end date or rejecting the backstop...The simple truth is that the EU was not prepared to agree to this and rejecting the backstop...means no deal."—*[Official Report, 14 January 2019; Vol. 652, c. 826.]*

Does she still agree with herself?

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman will wait, I shall come on to talk about the issue of the backstop. We retain absolutely our commitment to a way of ensuring that we deliver on the commitment to no hard border between Northern Ireland and Ireland. However, the hon. Gentleman may have noticed that actually we lost a vote, and we have been listening to Members on both sides of the House. The hon. Gentleman and his right hon. and hon. Friends say to me that I must recognise that we lost a vote. Yes, that is why we are here, looking at what it will take to ensure that we get a deal through the House.

Pete Wishart *rose—*

The Prime Minister: I said to the hon. Gentleman that I would give way.

Pete Wishart: I am very grateful to the Prime Minister for relenting. She is just about to rip up her backstop, and we are all wishing that she would get on with it and tell the House exactly what she plans to do. That involves an agreement—*[Interruption.]* Hold on a minute. That involves an agreement—*[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. I know that Conservative Members find the hon. Gentleman mildly provocative—*[Laughter.]*—and no, he is not in an isolated category in that regard, but he must be heard.

Pete Wishart: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I shall continue to be mildly provocative, if I can, by asking the following question. This is an agreement with the European Union. What happens when the European Union says no to the Prime Minister again?

The Prime Minister: The first step in all this is for the House to make clear what it wants to see in relation to changes. The hon. Gentleman says that he wants me to get on with it and actually talk about what I want to talk about. If he were not jumping up and down all the time, I might be able to get on with it.

Let me now turn to the amendments from my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr Grieve) and the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper). I understand the concerns that led to the tabling of the amendments, but I have the most profound doubts about the consequences to which they would lead.

Both amendments seek to create and exploit mechanisms that would allow Parliament to usurp the proper role of the Executive. Such actions would be unprecedented and could have far-reaching and long-term implications for the way in which the United Kingdom is governed and the balance of powers and responsibilities in our democratic institutions. I am sure that, as former Ministers of the Crown, both Members must know that. So, while I do not question their sincerity in trying to avoid a no-deal Brexit, to seek to achieve that through such means is, I believe, deeply misguided and not a responsible course of action.

Furthermore, neither amendment actually delivers on the best way of avoiding no deal, which is, as I have said, for the House to approve a deal with the European Union. The amendment tabled by my right hon. and learned Friend would see six full days given over to debates and votes on alternative plans, on which we could have voted today. With just 59 days left before we are due to leave the European Union, the way in which to deliver Brexit and avoid a no deal is to focus all our energies and time on getting a revised deal that both the House and the European Union can agree to support.

Wes Streeting (Ilford North) (Lab): Does the Prime Minister not understand that the reason we are in this mess is that she chose to go and negotiate without first commanding the support of a majority in the House? Does she also not understand that, whether we are talking about the option that has been put forward by her Back Benchers or other options, she will need two things for that to succeed—time, and the opportunity for the House to agree on the negotiating mandate? The amendments provide that time and that opportunity. Why is the Prime Minister opposing them?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman has an opportunity today to agree the negotiating mandate for going back to Brussels by supporting the amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale West (Sir Graham Brady).

Mr Dominic Grieve (Beaconsfield) (Con): My right hon. Friend will have seen that the amendment that I tabled goes solely to process, not to outcome. But is it not the case that the House has never had a proper

opportunity to debate options, and to do it in a reasoned way? What the Prime Minister is asking the House to do again today is to suddenly adopt a measure that the Government have signed up to at the last moment and to say that that should be the route we should take. Surely that illustrates the precise problem that the House has had throughout. Let me make it clear to my right hon. Friend that the purpose of my amendment is to give the House the space in which to find where the majority lies, and I commend it to her.

The Prime Minister: Let me say first that we have that opportunity today. I, and others, have been listening and talking to Members on both sides of the House about the issues that they have raised—apart from the Leader of the Opposition, who did not want to come and talk to me. I shall mention a number of those issues later in my speech, but one of them, which has been raised consistently by Members, is the backstop. We have an opportunity to give a clear message to the European Union on this matter today, and I also say to my right hon. and learned Friend that I am sure he has thought through very carefully the longer-term implications of the moves proposed tonight in the amendments that he and the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford have put forward and the implications they have for the relationship between the Executive and Parliament in the future.

Mr Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley) (Con): Does the Prime Minister also get the idea that the European Union too wants to do a deal with the United Kingdom? We have a £95 billion deficit with it; the Germans sell us 850,000 cars every year; we buy 20% of all the prosecco produced in Italy: does she agree with me that the European Union wishes to carry on trading with the United Kingdom in the way it currently does?

The Prime Minister: I am going to reference this later on, and I think there is a willingness on the other side—the European Union—to agree a deal with the UK, but what it clearly said when the meaningful vote was lost was that it wanted to know what the UK wanted to see happening in relation to the deal, and that is an opportunity that we have today.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

The Prime Minister: I will give way to the hon. Member for North Down (Lady Hermon) and then I will make some progress.

Lady Hermon (North Down) (Ind): I am grateful to the Prime Minister for allowing me to intervene at this early stage.

The Prime Minister is trying to encourage this House to vote for an amendment that uses the words “alternative arrangements to avoid a hard border”

on the island of Ireland. Forgive me, Prime Minister, if I say that those words are nebulous. They are nebulous; the Prime Minister has a duty to spell out to this House before we vote what those alternative arrangements are, and how on earth the other 27 EU member states are expected to agree to this revised arrangement before Brexit date on 29 March.

The Prime Minister: The amendment standing in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale West and other right hon. and hon. Members does indeed reference the issue of “alternative arrangements”. That term is recognised in the withdrawal agreement and the political declaration in terms of the deal, and I am going on to reference a number of options that have been brought forward in relation to that particular term.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

The Prime Minister: I am going to make some progress.

The amendment in the name of the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford does not rule out no deal; it simply delays the point of decision, and the policy dilemmas, the choices, the trade-offs that we face as a Parliament will not go away if we postpone exit day. Her amendment offers absolutely no positive suggestions to address them. Furthermore, I believe that the EU is very unlikely to agree to extend article 50 without a credible plan for how we are going to approve a deal. So whatever the right hon. Lady’s intention, I think the practical consequences of her amendment would be not to rule out no deal, but to delay Brexit, and that is not a course of action that this House should support.

Yvette Cooper (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab) *rose*—

The Prime Minister: I will of course give way to the right hon. Lady.

Yvette Cooper: If the Prime Minister does not get agreement either from the EU or this Parliament to her next course of action, is she ruling out any extension of article 50?

The Prime Minister: I have been very clear, as I said earlier, about the process we will follow: if we get a deal we will bring it back to this House, or if we have not got a deal we will give this House opportunities through amendable motions to state its view as to what should happen at that point in time.

Henry Smith (Crawley) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that throughout the history of the European Union it has always worked to deadlines, and the British people now want us to get on and finish the job they have given us?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend for what he has pointed out and particularly for the fact that, as he said, the British people just want to see this done. They want us to leave; they want us to leave with a deal.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

The Prime Minister: I will give way to the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford, as I have referenced her.

Yvette Cooper: It is really important that the House has some clarity on this. If the Prime Minister is saying that there will be future votes in which Parliament can make some decisions about no deal or not, she will know that her credibility is very limited because she said there would be a vote in December and then pulled it at the last minute. We therefore need some clarity from

her now: is she saying that if Parliament votes for an extension of article 50 to avoid no deal on 29 March she will respect that?

The Prime Minister: There is a very simple point: extending article 50 does not rule out no deal. *[Interruption.]* No, I am sorry; I have said this before, but I apologise to the House as I am going to repeat it again. There are two ways in which it is possible to rule out no deal. One is by revoking article 50 and not leaving. That is the SNP’s view, but it is not my view, it is not the Government’s view, and I believe that it is not the view of the British people and is not the view of the majority of Members of this House. The other way to ensure we do not leave with no deal is to agree a deal. The stage we are at at the moment is that the House of Commons has rejected the deal that the Government agreed with the European Union when we brought that back, and it rejected it with our having achieved further reassurances; I am going to go on to say what I believe is now required by this House, from the conversations and discussions I have had with right hon. and hon. Members of this House. As I have set out—

Yvette Cooper: Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Lady wants to intervene again; I will take another intervention from her, and then if she will excuse me I will make some progress.

Yvette Cooper: I am very grateful to the Prime Minister for giving way again, but I am simply trying to understand what she is saying. She cannot have it both ways: she cannot be saying that she absolutely will leave on 29 March in all circumstances, whatever happens, and then simultaneously say that there will be an opportunity for Parliament to have some future votes and decide what happens next if there is no deal. The question here is whether or not she would ever contemplate any extension of article 50 to get a bit more time to sort things out to avoid no deal—yes or no.

The Prime Minister: As I said earlier in my speech, we will bring a revised deal back to this House for a second meaningful vote as soon as we possibly can. If it were not supported by the House, we would table an amendable motion for debate the next day, and if we have not brought a revised deal back to this House by Wednesday 13 February we will make a statement and again table an amendable motion for debate the next day. The right hon. Lady references the timetable up to 29 March; actually this House voted for that timetable when it voted to trigger article 50.

I would like to move on to the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey) (Lab): Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: No, I am going to make some progress.

Ms Eagle *rose*—

The Prime Minister: No.

We should not indulge the amendment from the Leader of the Opposition. First he wanted a comprehensive customs union, then it was a new customs union and now it is a permanent customs union. Last week, I asked him whether he means accepting the common external tariff, accepting the common commercial policy, accepting the Union customs code, or accepting EU state aid rules: he had no answers then; he has no answers now; he hasn't got a clue. He is still facing both ways on whether Labour would keep freedom of movement, and last night he whipped his MPs to oppose the Bill that would end free movement and introduce a skills-based system. And he is still facing both ways on a second referendum: his amendment calls for legislation for a public vote, but we still do not know whether he would use it or what the question would be.

I know that many Labour voters and MPs, and others in the Labour movement, are frustrated by the Leader of the Opposition's approach. It is surely time for him to step up to the responsibility of being Leader of the Opposition and finally sit down with me and talk about how we can secure support in this House for a deal. As I said last week, he has been willing to sit down with Hamas, Hezbollah and the IRA without preconditions; it is time he did something in our national interest, not against it.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi (Slough) (Lab) *rose*—

The Prime Minister: No, I am going to make some progress.

None of the amendments I have addressed so far will ensure that we deliver Brexit. Instead, they simply provide more arguments against action and more reasons to stand still. Rather than setting out a plan to make Brexit work, they create further delay. And delay without a plan is not a solution; it is a road to nowhere.

Ms Angela Eagle: Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: No. I have said to the hon. Lady that I am going to make progress.

I am not prepared to stand still and put at risk either the Brexit that the people of this country voted for or the economic success they have worked so hard to secure. After this House gave its verdict on the withdrawal agreement, I stood at this Dispatch Box and pledged to work with the House to determine what steps to take next, and in the two weeks since, I have done just that. *[Interruption.]* Labour Front Benchers say that I have not done that. Actually, the only people I have not been able to talk to about this are the Labour party's Front Benchers, because they decided not to come.

I have listened to the House, met MPs from all parties and spoken with and listened to Members of the European Parliament, Heads of the devolved Administrations, senior trade unionists and the leaders of Britain's biggest businesses. From those conversations, it is obvious that three key changes are needed.

First, we must be more flexible, open and inclusive in how we engage this House in our approach to negotiating our future partnership with the European Union. Secondly, we must and will embed the strongest possible protections for workers' rights and the environment. The Government will not allow the UK leaving the EU to result in any lowering of standards in relation to employment,

environmental protection or health and safety. Furthermore, we will ensure that, after exit day, the House has the opportunity to consider any measure approved by EU institutions that strengthens any of those protections. As I have set out before, we will consider legislation where necessary to ensure that those commitments are binding. To that end, in the coming days, we will have further talks with the trade unions and MPs across the House to flesh out exactly how we can ensure that their concerns on those fronts are met. My message to Britain's workers, in factories, offices, warehouses and right across our country, is that you can rest assured that the Government will deliver for you.

Mr Dhesi: A clear and concise message needs to be given to the EU and to our nation. The Prime Minister does not want no deal, business in Slough and in the rest of the country do not want no deal, and the unions, which she has just mentioned, do not want no deal, so what is the problem in putting that down in black and white?

The Prime Minister: In order to deliver what the hon. Gentleman wants and ensure that we do not leave with no deal, we need to agree a deal. What we are doing today is looking at a series of amendments. I will come on shortly to an amendment that actually sets out a clear view from this House that we can take to the European Union and work to ensure that we can leave with a deal.

The third point that has become clear from discussions is that we must address the concerns of this House over the nature of the Northern Ireland backstop. The fundamental concern is that what is supposed to be a temporary arrangement could in fact become permanent. The message has been unequivocal: this House wants changes to the backstop before it will back a deal.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

The Prime Minister: No, I am going to explain the position. That message has come from Conservative Back Benchers, Opposition Members and our confidence and supply partners in the DUP. That is why I believe it is in all our interests for the House to back the amendment tabled by my hon. Friends the Members for Altrincham and Sale West and for South West Wiltshire (Dr Murrison), my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Damian Green) and others.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

The Prime Minister: No, I am going to explain. This amendment will give the mandate I need to negotiate with Brussels an arrangement that commands a majority in this House—one that ensures we leave with a deal and addresses the House's concerns, while guaranteeing no return to the hard border between Northern Ireland and Ireland.

What I am talking about is not a further exchange of letters but a significant and legally binding change to the withdrawal agreement. Negotiating such a change will not be easy. It will involve reopening the withdrawal agreement—a move for which I know there is limited appetite among our European partners. But I believe that with a mandate from this House, and supported by

[*The Prime Minister*]

the Attorney General, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, I can secure such a change in advance of our departure from the EU.

Nigel Dodds (Belfast North) (DUP): I welcome what the Prime Minister has said about the need to address the issue of the Northern Ireland backstop, which she is quite right to emphasise as the primary problem. I also welcome the fact that she has said in terms that she will go back and seek the reopening of the withdrawal agreement. She can be assured of our support in trying to find a solution that avoids any hard border on the island of Ireland as well as any borders within the United Kingdom.

The Prime Minister: I am grateful for the clarity with which the right hon. Gentleman has set out that position. We remain absolutely committed as a Government to ensuring that we have no hard border between Northern Ireland and Ireland and that any proposals accepted and put forward by this House maintain our precious Union.

Nicky Morgan (Loughborough) (Con): I agree with the Prime Minister that the best way to avoid no deal is to put an agreement in place. She will be aware that a surprising combination of Members with very different Brexit views have been coming together to come up with some proposals. We are very grateful to her for the time she has given to engage with us. Will she undertake to ask her officials to consider those proposals seriously and to put them on the table as a possible way of fleshing out the alternative arrangements?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend anticipates what I was going to say. We will be focusing on delivering specific changes that will address the concerns of the House, and I am looking at a range of ways to achieve that. As my right hon. Friend has just said, she and my hon. Friends the Members for Wycombe (Mr Baker), for North West Hampshire (Kit Malthouse), for North East Somerset (Mr Rees-Mogg) and others have worked to bring forward a serious proposal that we are engaging with sincerely and positively.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

The Prime Minister: I will take more interventions in a moment. I can give my right hon. Friend confirmation that we will sit down and work through the proposal in the way she has suggested.

Gloria De Piero (Ashfield) (Lab): Some 17.4 million people voted for Brexit. The idea that they were duped into doing so is absolute nonsense, so Brexit must be delivered. But it must be a Brexit that protects jobs in my constituency and beyond. Unions and bosses tell me that that requires a permanent customs union or arrangement. Why will the Prime Minister not listen to them?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Lady is absolutely right about ensuring that we deliver on the vote of those 17.4 million people, and I want to deliver on that with a

deal that does protect jobs. What we need to ensure is that, as we look to the future relationship, in the free trade area and in the customs arrangements, we remember the necessity of protecting those jobs. What I have also heard very clearly from hon. Members on both sides of the House and, of course, from the trade union leaders I have spoken to is the issue of ensuring that we protect workers' rights. As I have just indicated, we are committed to doing so.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

The Prime Minister: I say to all Members of this House that I have already been very generous in taking interventions. I am sure that many Members wish to contribute to the debate, so I will make progress.

Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg (North East Somerset) (Con) *rose*—

The Prime Minister: As I have referenced my hon. Friend in my speech, I will give way to him.

Mr Rees-Mogg: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend and thank her for her very clear assurances that the withdrawal agreement text will be reopened and that she will consider what has been called the Malthouse compromise. May I ask for one more promise, namely that any further detailed agreement will come back and will not be deemed to have been ratified by the amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale West (Sir Graham Brady)?

The Prime Minister: I give my hon. Friend that assurance: it has to and will come back to this House. Legally speaking, ratification of the agreement can take place only in the act of passing the WAB—the withdrawal agreement Bill. That will be the ratification moment for any arrangements.

Melanie Onn (Great Grimsby) (Lab): The Prime Minister has referred repeatedly to protecting workers' rights post Brexit, but may I take her back to 2017 and my Bill, which was specifically about protecting workers' rights when we leave the European Union on 29 March? Why was that measure not adopted at the time, and if she is so committed to it, will she meet me to discuss those elements of the Bill that she is prepared to adopt?

The Prime Minister: We are looking at ways in which we can give that assurance in relation to workers' rights. As I said, we are looking at when legislation would be appropriate and where it would be necessary. I am happy to meet the hon. Lady to go through that issue.

I want to complete what I was saying to my right hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Nicky Morgan). We will indeed engage seriously and positively with the proposals that she has put forward, which were also referenced by my hon. Friend the Member for North East Somerset. The crucial concept that we see within this amendment is the concept of alternative arrangements. As I have already said in this speech, that has already been accepted by the EU as a way out of the backstop. I commend my right hon. and hon. Friends for their willingness to find a solution and I look forward to working with them over the coming days. A number of other colleagues have also suggested ways to achieve that aim, such as securing a time limit to the backstop, or a unilateral exit clause, which we will of course study

closely as well. While there are obviously details that need to be worked through, the fact that leading figures from different sides of the argument are coming together to develop proposals shows how much progress has been made over the past few weeks.

Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): Does the Prime Minister recognise that there is no solution in chasing fantasies? The EU has ruled this kind of option out many times. We cannot have an insurance policy based on a technology that does not exist. Will she not recognise that what she is chasing here are heated-up fantasies that have already been rejected by the EU and depend on technologies that do not exist?

The Prime Minister: Members across the House have put forward a number of proposals on how this issue can be addressed. They are not indulging in fantasies—they are coming forward with serious proposals, on which this Government will work with them.

Sir William Cash (Stone) (Con): On the question of our control over our laws, to honour the referendum, will my right hon. Friend give instructions to make certain that in any future withdrawal and implementation Bill, there will be an express repeal of the European Communities Act 1972, so as to dovetail with section 1 of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018, which we have passed?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend knows, in the European Union (Withdrawal) Act, we repealed the 1972 Act. It would be necessary to replicate the impact of some aspects of that Act for the purposes of the implementation period, but I certainly take what my hon. Friend has said. Within the withdrawal agreement Bill that we will need to bring before the House, we will make absolutely clear the arrangements for ensuring that the European Communities Act, and its impacts, do not go beyond the end of the implementation period.

Several hon. Members rose—

The Prime Minister: I will take more interventions in a little while, but I want to make the point that the essence of any negotiation is to find a mutually acceptable solution. That is the spirit in which both sides have consistently approached these negotiations and that is the spirit in which I will engage with our partners, if this amendment passes.

Some say that there is no point even trying to achieve any change—I am hearing that from some interventions from sedentary positions, and from elsewhere—and that the EU simply will not budge under any circumstances, but in the two years since this House voted to trigger article 50, the EU has made concessions in many areas of the negotiations where people said no ground would ever be given. Today, neither side in this negotiation wants to see the UK leave without a deal. The simple fact is that the deal I reached with the EU has been rejected by this House. In response, the EU has asked us what we want and what this Parliament will accept, and this is Parliament's opportunity to tell them.

Sammy Wilson (East Antrim) (DUP): Does the Prime Minister agree that, rather than chasing a fantasy, there is now an opportunity, which Michel Barnier himself

presented when he told the Irish Government that the EU would look for ways of ensuring that checks could take place without any infrastructure along the border? He even talked about paperless and decentralised arrangements. That is what the EU is saying, so it is obviously not a fantasy, but something we have in common.

The Prime Minister: Those are exactly the issues that we want to work on, and several proposals have been put forward. However, what matters today is that Parliament makes it clear to the EU that the backstop is the issue that needs to be dealt with. This is Parliament's opportunity to respond to the EU, which has said that it wants us to tell it what we want. This is our opportunity to do that. This is not the second meaningful vote. As I have said and repeated, we will bring a revised deal back to the House for just such a vote as soon as possible.

A vote for amendment (n) is a vote to tell Brussels that the current nature of the backstop is the key reason the House cannot support this deal, as many hon. Members have said to me, the media and their constituents over the past few weeks. A vote against that amendment does the opposite. It tells the EU that, despite what people may have said in speeches, tweets and newspaper columns, the backstop is not the problem. It risks sending a message that we are not serious about delivering a Brexit that works for Britain.

Toby Perkins (Chesterfield) (Lab): The right hon. Lady is not the first Prime Minister to discover that the Conservative party is un-uniteable and unleadable on Europe. Many others have learnt that lesson. However, as she celebrates having people on different sides of the argument coming together to support an amendment, does she not realise that she has been able to get them to agree to it only because it is so nebulous as to be meaningless?

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman wants to look for different views about the issue, perhaps he can talk to some of his colleagues. He might try to get the Leader of the Opposition to focus on a detailed proposal for what the Labour party thinks.

Mr Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con): I think that Conservative Members are all trying to find a way of getting a deal, and I have been impressed with what the Prime Minister has said today. We will send her back to Brussels to reopen the withdrawal agreement, but will she assure the House that, if we do not agree with what she comes back with, we will still have the right to vote against it?

The Prime Minister: Yes, of course the House will have the right to decide whether it agrees with the agreement that emerges. However, I hope that, when we bring a revised agreement to the House—as I am sure that we will be able to—my hon. Friend will look at it carefully before he determines how to vote.

Several hon. Members rose—

The Prime Minister: I am conscious of the length of time I have been at the Dispatch Box. Hon. Members want to speak and I will now conclude.

[*The Prime Minister*]

Since the draft withdrawal agreement was published, I have come to the House to discuss it more than half a dozen times. I have been on the Front Bench for many hours of debate, taking hundreds of questions and interventions from hon. Members, and I have been listening.

Dr Sarah Wollaston (Totnes) (Con) *rose*—

The Prime Minister: I indicated that I would not take any more interventions and that I was completing my speech. I am sure that my hon. Friend will have an opportunity, if she catches the Speaker's eye, to speak later.

I have witnessed division and discord, and I have seen passion and anger on all sides, but in the two weeks since the House rejected the withdrawal agreement, I have sensed a growing recognition of the task that has been entrusted to us. Members on all sides have begun to focus on what really matters: delivering the Brexit that Britain voted for while protecting our economy and our people.

We can increasingly see where this consensus lies, and I believe that we are within reach of a deal that this House can stand behind, but the days ahead are crucial. When I go back to Brussels to seek the changes this House demands, I need the strongest possible support behind me. Most of the amendments before us do not provide that. They create a cacophony of voices when this House needs to speak as one. I will never stop battling for Britain, but the odds of success become far longer if this House ties one hand behind my back. I call on the House to give me the mandate I need to deliver a deal this House can support. Do that, and I can work to reopen the withdrawal agreement. Do that, and I can fight for a backstop that honours our commitments to the people of Northern Ireland in a way this House can support. Do that, and we can leave the EU with a deal that honours the result of the referendum.

The time has come for words to be matched by deeds: if you want to tell Brussels what this House will accept, you have to vote for it; if you want to leave with a deal, you have to vote for it; if you want Brexit, you have to vote for Brexit.

2.39 pm

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Lab): It is a pleasure to speak in this debate, and it is important to start by reminding us all that this whole process was secured only in the teeth of Government opposition, so I start by paying tribute to those MPs who voted with us for Parliament to have a full democratic role in the Brexit process and especially to the right hon. and learned Member for Beaconsfield (Mr Grieve) for his work in the earlier debates.

Labour has been absolutely clear from the start that there must be a meaningful vote on any negotiated deal. That was raised by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Keir Starmer) at the very beginning of this whole Brexit process. Should a deal be defeated in Parliament, as it was decisively, Parliament must have a say on how the Government proceed.

This is a vital issue that affects the future direction of our country and the future facing all of our constituents. It determines the jobs and living standards of our people, the rights of European Union citizens living in Britain who have been deeply stressed by this situation—as have British citizens living across the continent of Europe—our place in the world and our participation and co-operation in Europe-wide projects on issues as vital as security, counter-terrorism and climate change.

Our job must be to bring people together. No matter how anyone in this House campaigned in the referendum, we cannot wish away the votes of 17 million people who voted to leave, any more than we can ignore the concerns of the 16 million who voted to remain. We must have in our minds the views right across the country.

It is therefore right that Members represent their constituents in deciding the way forward on implementing the result of the referendum, but in delivering the result, we have to unite people so as not to create further divisions, stoke xenophobia or allow racism to rear its ugly head in our society. Many communities across this country have been neglected for far too long, lacking decent investment and with too few—

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Order. The person who has the Floor chooses whether and, if so, when to give way. That is the situation. It is very clear, and it cannot be contradicted. That is all there is to it.

Jeremy Corbyn: What I was saying was—

Angela Smith (Penistone and Stocksbridge) (Lab): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Jeremy Corbyn: I will give way later to a small number of people. [*Interruption.*] Listen, the reason why this debate is so short is that the Government decided to take an hour out of it to make a statement that could have been made on any other day, not to mention the fact that the vote was delayed on 11 December, which wound down the clock still further.

Many communities across this country have been neglected for far too long, lacking decent investment and with too few secure and well-paid jobs and too little new industrial development. These are not issues that face Britain alone; they would be recognisable in communities all across Europe, where many people face exactly the same problems.

Simon Hoare (North Dorset) (Con): Contradictory, confused or claptrap. Which of those c's best describes the right hon. Gentleman's policy at the current time?

Jeremy Corbyn: This is a serious debate, and I do not think the hon. Gentleman's intervention has done anything to raise the standard of debate.

It is quite clear to me that our first duty is to block a disastrous no deal, and I hope amendments to that effect will be carried by the House this evening. Labour's amendment (a), which stands in my name and in the name of my colleagues, starts by calling for sufficient time for Parliament to vote on options that prevent leaving with no deal, but whatever happens in the votes that follow, it has now become inevitable that the

Government will have to extend article 50 in any scenario. If amendments intended to rule out no deal are defeated, and if this Government are serious about keeping the threat of no deal on the table, they are not even close—not even close—to being prepared, and the exit date would have to be extended.

Even if the Prime Minister's deal were somehow to achieve a majority in this House next month, there is no chance that the necessary primary legislation and an extensive catalogue of secondary legislation—I believe there are over 600 statutory instruments—could clear this place between now and 29 March.

Angela Smith: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr Dhesi: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Jeremy Corbyn: I give way to my hon. Friend.

HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"

Mr Dhesi: I can see that I am very well liked here. Does my right hon. Friend agree that clear, close and collaborative describes the relationship proposed by his amendment? That is why we need a customs union. The unions, Labour members and others are telling us that we need a customs union with our neighbours.

Jeremy Corbyn: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention and, of course, he is right. If we are to protect jobs and industries and maintain living standards, there has to be a customs union.

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for giving way. He has just reiterated, as his amendment references, the need for a customs union. Will he now tell the House whether he means accepting the common commercial policy, accepting the common external tariffs, accepting the Union customs code—it is no use asking the shadow Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union—and accepting the EU's state aid rules?

Jeremy Corbyn: Obviously a customs union would be negotiated, would be inclusive and would be designed to ensure that our jobs and investment are protected, that there is frictionless and seamless trade with the European Union and that we have a say in future trade arrangements—something the Prime Minister has absolutely failed to achieve. The fault for not achieving it lies absolutely with the Prime Minister. She claimed she would have a deal agreed by October, then she delayed the vote by a month, and she still suffered the worst—

Boris Johnson (Uxbridge and South Ruislip) (Con)
rose—

Mr Speaker: Order. The former Foreign Secretary does not seem to be very well versed in the traditions of the House of Commons and debate. *[Interruption.]* Order. I am telling the right hon. Gentleman what the position is, and he will learn from me. When he seeks to intervene, he waits to hear whether the person on his or her feet is giving way, and the Leader of the Opposition is not giving way. In that case, with the very greatest of respect, it is for the right hon. Gentleman to know his place, which is in his seat.

Jeremy Corbyn: Thank you, Mr Speaker. As I was saying, the fault lies exclusively with the Prime Minister, who missed her own deadline to have a deal agreed by October, and she still suffered the worst defeat of any Government in British history.

Angela Smith *rose—*

Jim McMahon (Oldham West and Royton) (Lab/Co-op)
rose—

Jeremy Corbyn: I give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham West and Royton (Jim McMahon).

Jim McMahon: I thank my right hon. Friend for giving way. *[Interruption.]* I am not sure how people in this House believe this will be received by the public watching on TV, but I have to say that the public are sick of the childish antics of people in this House and they want us to come together to find a way through this mess. There are thousands of different views on, and variations of, what people felt and thought they voted for in that referendum, but the one thing we can be certain of is that the referendum leaflet that went to every household in this country did not make any mention of leaving the customs union. Why can we not find agreement on that?

Jeremy Corbyn: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention. The point he makes about the way in which this House debates these matters is important. He has led a local authority, Oldham, brought people together and brought communities together, and achieved things—that is something this Government have lamentably failed to do. If the—

Michael Fabricant (Lichfield) (Con): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I think the hon. Member for Oldham West and Royton (Jim McMahon) may have inadvertently misled the House. He claimed that no one had said during the EU referendum that we would be leaving the customs union. In fact, the former Prime Minister said that—

Mr Speaker: Order. Resume your seat, Mr Fabricant. I know you are trying to help the House and I appreciate that—your public spiritedness is well known throughout the House and across the nation—but the hon. Gentleman referred to a leaflet and the contents thereof. Whatever the merits or demerits of that argument, it is not a matter of order for the Chair. It is a matter of political debate, as your grinning countenance suggests you are well aware.

Jeremy Corbyn: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I just ask: is the Prime Minister—

Rebecca Pow (Taunton Deane) (Con): On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: I hope it is a genuine point of order.

Rebecca Pow: It is actually an observation really—

Mr Speaker: Order. Resume your seat. *[Interruption.]* With no disrespect to the hon. Lady, I am not interested in observations. *[Interruption.]* Order. I am not debating it. I am telling you what the situation is. *[Interruption.]* It is no good laughing, chuckling away as though it is a matter of great amusement. It is a matter of fact: points

[Mr Speaker]

of order, yes; observations, no. [Interruption.] No, the hon. Lady has helpfully explained that she had an observation to make. We are very grateful.

Jeremy Corbyn: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Rees-Mogg: On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Gentleman does know parliamentary procedure. Point of order, Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg.

Mr Rees-Mogg: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. This is a genuine point of order. I wonder whether you could guide the House on how Members refuse interventions, because I think the reason there is so much noise is that it is not clear whether the right hon. Gentleman has heard the request for an intervention or not. Your guidance would be extraordinarily helpful.

Mr Speaker: I am very grateful to the hon. Gentleman. If I understand his point of order correctly, the answer to it is that the customary method of acknowledging the intention of another Member to intervene, and perhaps the acceptance of that intervention, is a gesticulation with the hand, at which, among other things, the hon. Gentleman excels. [Interruption.] No, no, I think the hon. Member for St Albans (Mrs Main) is a bit confused; it is not about the fact that someone seeking to intervene gesticulates, but the fact that the Member on his or her feet signals acceptance. That has not happened and therefore the Leader of the Opposition has the Floor. The position is extraordinarily straightforward.

Angela Smith: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I do wonder, with all the noise in the Chamber and with my being directly behind the Leader of the Opposition, whether my requests for an intervention may not have been heard.

Mr Speaker: I cannot claim to have known that, but I think now that the hon. Lady has issued what might be called a public information notice. We are aware of it, but it is a matter for the Leader of the Opposition to decide. I hope the hon. Lady is satisfied with her efforts.

Mrs Sheryll Murray (South East Cornwall) (Con): Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: Order. [Interruption.] Calm down. I gave a ruling in relation to the point of order, and “Further to that point of order” does not arise.

Jeremy Corbyn: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Is the Prime Minister seriously telling this House that we have to wait until 13 February—

Angela Smith *rose*—

Jeremy Corbyn: And put—[HON. MEMBERS: “She’s behind you.”] I can well understand what the Tory MPs are trying to do here. They do not want to hear the debate. They do not want to be part of this debate. They—

Mr Speaker: Order. Many people have talked in recent times about the importance of respect in the Chamber. [Interruption.] No, no, no, I do not require any help from the Government Chief Whip. Let me gently say to him that he has a challenging task, which he discharges to the best of his capabilities, and the House and the nation are grateful to him. The idea that he needs to advise the Leader of the Opposition or the Speaker on how to discharge their responsibilities is, frankly, beyond credulity. He has got one job to do. People will make their assessment of whether and how well he does it. Don’t try doing somebody else’s job. With respect, sir, it is way beyond you.

Jeremy Corbyn: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Ms Nadine Dorries (Mid Bedfordshire) (Con): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Is it in accordance with the rules of this House that the Leader of the Opposition takes interventions only from male members of his party?

Mr Speaker: The answer is that there is no breach of rules whatsoever. The hon. Lady has made her own point, in her own way, and I acknowledge it. No breach of rules has taken place. Order has been maintained. That is clear to me and to the professional advisers to the Chair as well, and I think the hon. Lady knows it. However, she has made her own point, in her own inimitable way.

Jeremy Corbyn: I did take an intervention from the Prime Minister, Mr Speaker. Perhaps the hon. Lady had not noticed that.

Is the Prime Minister seriously telling the House to wait until 13 February and put its faith in her doing negotiations in a couple of weeks that she has failed to do in the past two years? One really wonders how many more ceremonial baubles and promises of ermine will be handed out in vain in an attempt to cajole Conservative MPs to vote for a deal that has been overwhelmingly rejected by this House. The Prime Minister says that a second referendum would be like asking the public to vote again until they give the right answer, but so far that is precisely what she is asking this House to do.

Labour will today back amendments that attempt to rule out this Government’s reckless option of allowing the UK to crash out without a deal. Everyone bar the Prime Minister accepts this would be disastrous. The CBI says:

“The projected impact”—

of no deal

“on the UK economy would be devastating”.

Just yesterday, the Federation of Small Businesses called on Members of this House to block no deal. The TUC, representing millions of workers, is also opposed to no deal, as its general secretary, Frances O’Grady, reiterated to me last week. Every Opposition party in this House is opposed to no deal. Many Conservative Members, even Front-Bench and Cabinet Conservative Members, are opposed to no deal. Let me quote the Chancellor, who said recently:

“I clearly do not believe that making a choice to leave without a deal would be a responsible thing to do”.

So, presumably, he too wants no deal ruled out.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Jeremy Corbyn: I am making progress. The Home Secretary has gone further and called for a free vote on the amendment tabled by my right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper). The Labour party will back that amendment tonight, because to crash out without a deal would be deeply damaging for industry and the economy—that is why the Chancellor says it would be irresponsible. I say to my right hon. Friend now that in backing her amendment, we are backing a short window of three months to allow time for renegotiation.

Angela Smith *rose*—

Yvette Cooper (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab) *rose*—

Jeremy Corbyn: I will give way to my right hon. Friend.

Yvette Cooper: I want to address the point that my right hon. Friend has raised about my amendment and I do not want to cut across a very difficult wider issue. On his point about the amendment, I reassure my right hon. Friend that the purpose of the amendment and the Bill is not to fix any particular time for any extension, or even to decide now what an extension of article 50 should be; it is simply to give the House the ability to do so at the end of February. I agree that nobody wants to see any unnecessary delays.

Jeremy Corbyn: I thank my right hon. Friend for those remarks and the spirit in which she made them. Her amendment quite clearly has the effect of ruling out no deal on 29 March. Surely that should be good and important for this House. It will not be any comfort, after 29 March, to say, “I told you so,” when the lorries are backing up on the M20, cancer patients cannot get medicines and prices are rising in our shops. Tonight, we have the opportunity to take no deal off the table.

When the Prime Minister invited party leaders for talks, I said to her that she must first remove the threat of no deal. If the House today votes to remove the immediate threat of crashing out without a deal on 29 March, as I fervently hope it does and will, I will be happy to meet the Prime Minister to discuss a sensible solution that works for the whole country—which is what the Labour party wants to achieve.

Many of the amendments tabled, including those in the names of my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds West (Rachel Reeves), and of my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Jack Dromey) and the right hon. Member for Meriden (Dame Caroline Spelman), advocate delaying article 50 to give Parliament more time to break the impasse and avoid the dangers of no deal. If the House votes for any of those amendments, the Prime Minister must accept that an extension to article 50 is a responsible measure to allow time for real renegotiation and to find a deal that can win the support of this House. It will mean that no deal is off the table and that the red lines must change.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Jeremy Corbyn: I am making progress, if I may.

The primary part of Labour’s amendment is about finding a workable solution. That means a new customs union, a strong single market deal and no race to the bottom on workers’ rights, on environmental protections and standards or on consumer standards. The EU chief negotiator Michel Barnier has been clear that

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

We understand that just this weekend the EU Commission President told the Prime Minister that accepting the case for a permanent customs union would help to solve the issue of the backstop arrangement. Indeed, Ireland’s Europe Minister made exactly that point at the weekend, saying:

“The backstop is there because of the red lines that the UK put down”

at the beginning of this process.

We understand that today the Government will back the amendment in the name of the hon. Member for Altrincham and Sale West (Sir Graham Brady)—the Prime Minister said as much—which will require changes to the backstop, but still we have no clarity on what changes they are or which red lines will change to allow that to happen. On the other side, we see that there is flexibility—an apparent willingness now to renegotiate—but only if the red lines change.

Ms Angela Eagle: Does my right hon. Friend share my puzzlement, after listening to the Prime Minister for close to an hour and with many people having asked the question, that we are still no nearer to knowing any detail on what the phrase “alternative arrangements” means, except that the Prime Minister said they were arrangements that were alternative?

Jeremy Corbyn: I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention. We are witnessing the long, slow decline of this Government as they run down the clock. They put off the vote then lost the vote. They came to the House today and are now offering more votes next week, then a week later and a week later. They are running down the clock, using the fear of no deal as opposed to the Prime Minister’s deal. Her deal was defeated two weeks ago, but the Prime Minister is still to answer the question on which of her red lines she is prepared to change, or even just be flexible on. It is clear that the obstacle to a solution is the Prime Minister. She is refusing to accept the clearly stated will of this House, which has decisively—in record numbers for a parliamentary vote—defeated her deal and which is equally clear in its opposition to a disastrous no deal, which I hope and expect will be reiterated tonight.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Jeremy Corbyn: I am going to make progress.

In the absence of any leadership from the Prime Minister, solutions are being put forward from across the House. Those advocating Norway plus or common market 2.0 have worked on a cross-party basis. I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Grantham and Stamford (Nick Boles), the right hon. Member for Harlow (Robert Halfon), and my hon. Friends the Members for Aberavon (Stephen Kinnock) and for Manchester Central (Lucy

[Jeremy Corbyn]

Powell). They are clear that not only do we need full access to the single market but we need a customs union, too. That is why a new comprehensive and permanent customs union has long been Labour's policy. It is a pragmatic solution that would help to deliver the Brexit that people voted for and the frictionless trade that the Prime Minister once promised, that would help to deliver a solution to the Irish backstop and that would help to deliver a majority across the House for a deal.

Angela Smith: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Jeremy Corbyn: So far, the Prime Minister has only doubled down on her own defeated deal, saying at last week's Prime Minister's Question Time that her deal delivers

"the benefits of a customs union and the benefits of our own trade policy."—[*Official Report*, 23 January 2019; Vol. 653, c. 237.]

It does no such thing. The political declaration fails to deliver on the Chequers promise of frictionless trade—it does not even guarantee tariff-free trade. It means that we lose the 40 to 50 trade agreements we have through the EU.

The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Michael Gove): Why is the right hon. Gentleman scared to take an intervention from the hon. Member for Penistone and Stocksbridge (Angela Smith), a member of the Labour party for 37 years?

Jeremy Corbyn: I thank the Minister for his intervention and his brief statement of his leadership intentions.

As I was saying—[*Interruption.*]

Angela Smith *rose*—

Jeremy Corbyn: I am making progress, Mr Speaker. [*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. Is the right hon. Gentleman giving way?

Jeremy Corbyn *indicated dissent.*

Mr Speaker: He is not giving way. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] Order. The House must behave with decorum. Senior Front-Bench Members, who I know would proclaim their commitment to, and I am sure genuinely believe in, courtesy in the Chamber, are witness to deliberate attempts to shout down the Leader of the Opposition. [*Interruption.*] Order. It will not happen. [*Interruption.*] Order. The rules of this House are clear. If the Leader of the Opposition wishes to give way, he does so; if he does not wish to do so, he does not have to do so. He will not be shouted down and no amount of inspired and orchestrated attempts to shout him down will work—not today, not tomorrow, not at any time. Drop it. It is not worth it and, actually, you are not very good at it.

Jeremy Corbyn: I am making progress, Mr Speaker—

Frank Field (Birkenhead) (Ind): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. There may be quite a few people in the country watching this debate. They will not understand that our shouting is one way of seeing whether somebody can maintain a line of argument to his and her colleagues here. Given the damage that this debate is already doing

to our standing with the nation, might not you consider taking all the amendments that you did not call, and closing the proceedings early so that we can actually vote on those amendments. The country will understand that, whereas they do not understand this behaviour.

Mr Speaker: I am very grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. I know that he is well-intentioned, but the short answer is no. The timescale for the debate has been set and agreed by the House, and the selection by the Chair has been appropriately made in accordance with the conventions of this House and without demur from colleagues, and it is best that we proceed.

Jeremy Corbyn: I am coming towards the end of my remarks, because I want to ensure that other Members get a chance to speak in this debate.

Simon Hoare: On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: We will see whether this is a real point of order.

Simon Hoare: I am grateful to you, Mr Speaker. Earlier in this debate, you rightly referred to the expectations of this place of respect and politeness to colleagues. That is a perfectly sensible benchmark to set. In your judgment, Sir, and I seek your ruling on this, has the behaviour of the Leader of the Opposition to the hon. Member for Penistone and Stocksbridge (Angela Smith) lived up to your expectations of respect to colleagues?

Mr Speaker: The answer is very simple. Good order has been preserved; nothing disorderly has taken place. I do not want to be unkind to the hon. Gentleman because I know that he is trying to be an apprentice parliamentary expert, but I am afraid that he has quite a few steps on the ladder still to climb.

Jeremy Corbyn: The point that I was making is that we could lose 40 to 50 trade agreements that we have through the European Union, which the International Trade Secretary has so far failed to replicate at all, despite the extraordinary and very bold claims that he made at the beginning of this whole Brexit process.

This is a Government in denial, split from top to bottom, and incapable of uniting themselves, let alone the country.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Jeremy Corbyn: No, I am making progress; I will not give way any more.

The Government are in denial about the majority view of this House, which I believe exists to rule out no deal and to get a workable deal that includes a customs union. That is why, tonight, Labour will back amendments that give this House the opportunity to recognise the reality that this Government have so far failed to recognise. This Government's shambolic handling of Brexit negotiations is fast becoming a crisis. It is worrying to businesses and it is worrying to people in work who are concerned about their futures. Everyone who is worried is worried because they have no leadership on this process from their Government. They have no leadership

from a Government who have demonstrated that they have no ability to negotiate a good deal, no willingness to listen to Parliament—hence we are back here again despite the biggest ever defeat in parliamentary history—and, crucially, no acceptance that they must change course. The Government have spent most of the past two years arguing among themselves rather than negotiating with the European Union. And they are still arguing among themselves and failing to come up with a workable solution. Tonight, I hope that this House does its job and leads where this Government have failed.

3.13 pm

Mr Kenneth Clarke (Rushcliffe) (Con): None of us taking part in this debate is in any doubt that we are actually discussing an almost unique political crisis—one of a kind that has not happened for very many years. The crisis takes two forms: one is that we are trying to break a political deadlock over exactly what changes we will make to the great bulk of our political, security, intelligence, crime-fighting, trade and investment, and environmental relationships with the rest of the world, having turned away from the ones that we have put together over the past 47 years; the second is that we are also facing a constitutional crisis over the credibility of the Government and Parliament in their ability to resolve these matters. I rather agree with what the right hon. Member for Birkenhead (Frank Field) said. I enjoy as much as any veteran parliamentarian the rowdiness of the House of Commons; it is a way of testing the arguments. However, we should also be aware that, at the moment, the public are looking on our political system with something rather near to contempt, as it seems to them that neither the Government nor the political parties, parliamentarians and politicians in general seem able to resolve a question that was first raised by a referendum. Referendums are designed by those who support them to bypass parliamentary decision making, parliamentary majorities and political parties deciding things. We really do need to settle down, and, perhaps if the Government get their way, we can do that in the next few weeks. We have fewer than 60 days to decide how we will come to conclusions about the way forward.

I want to concentrate on just a few issues. I have put forward most of my views on these amendments in the many debates that we have had already, and many other people want to speak. I suspect that a high proportion of this House can guess which way I will vote on the amendments that Mr Speaker has chosen. Probably far too many of them have had to listen to my arguments. To take some encouragement from this debate—

Frank Field: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr Clarke: I will in a second.

I wish to take up this question of the relationship between Parliament and the Government, because I took some encouragement from my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, who did seem to accept that the Government should give opportunities to the House to debate things that each Member regards as key matters of policy. Under our constitution, the Government have to pay regard to the views expressed by this House.

Frank Field: I am very grateful to the right hon. and learned Gentleman for giving way. He and I tabled an amendment that was not called. It was to give this House the chance to vote on the various options. The Prime Minister, when she was speaking, talked of taking other amendments away and working on them with the hope of bringing them back to act upon. Might I, through this intervention, ask him to push on his own side that she does precisely that with our amendment?

Mr Clarke: Well, unless I take too long, I hope to touch on the arguments behind the right hon. Gentleman's excellent amendment, because that is one of the things that we should do in one way or another over the next few weeks.

Angus Brendan MacNeil (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
rose—

Mr Clarke: Let me just deal with this question and then I will give way to the hon. Gentleman if his point is relevant.

The question is, what is the role of this House vis-à-vis the Government and what are our procedures? I must admit that, in the past month or two, I have listened to what I, as a fairly experienced Member here now, have regarded as the most extraordinary nonsense about sweeping away centuries of tradition and distorting our procedures because people have objected to the Speaker selecting amendments where they think they might not be on the winning side. There is a rather fundamental, underlying problem here. This Government did not start this, but Brexit brought it to its head. I think that it started with the Blair Government, because Tony Blair, with the greatest respect, never could quite understand why he had to submit to Parliament so often. He started timetabling all our business and so on, but that is now water under the bridge. I say with respect that, mistakenly, this Government began by saying that they were going to invoke the royal prerogative, and, as it was a treaty, they felt that Parliament would not be involved in invoking article 50 or any of the consequences because the monarch would act solely on the advice of her Prime Minister, trying to take us back several hundred years. That was swept away. Then we had to have defeats inflicted on the Government last summer in order to get a meaningful vote on the outcome of any negotiations. This has gone on all the way through the process. Today's debate and the votes that we are having tonight are only taking place because the Government actually resisted the whole idea of coming back here with any alternative to the deal that they were telling us was done and fixed and the only way of going forward. That has worried me all the way through.

Now, I did take the Prime Minister today to be taking a totally different approach, and I hope that she will confirm that. It does now seem that, whatever course we decide on today, things are going to come back to this House. No deal of any kind is going to be ratified until we have had a vote in this House, approving whatever we are presented with. One problem is that we have not yet produced a consensus or a majority for any option, but if this House expresses a clear wish about the nature of the deal that it wants to see negotiated, the Government will consider—indeed, I believe that under our constitution, they are bound to follow—the wishes of the House of

[Mr Kenneth Clarke]

Commons, because British Governments have never been able to pursue these matters without the consent and support of a majority of the House of Commons.

Angus Brendan MacNeil: The right hon. and learned Gentleman said that the House must test the various options. Will he “join the (q)”, as it were? Amendment (q) aims to revoke article 50. Is that one of the ideas that he thinks should be tested in this House—even for nothing other than that the people of Scotland would at least know the folly of sticking with Westminster, which is taking them out of Europe against their will?

Mr Clarke: I do not wish to revoke article 50 for the same reasons as the hon. Gentleman, although I do share some of his views. If I was trying to exercise unfettered autocratic power in the government of the country, I would of course still believe that the best interests of the United Kingdom lie in remaining a member of the European Union. I do not share enthusiasm, however, for what the hon. Gentleman wants. After the pleasure of the first referendum and all that it has caused, he now thinks that we will automatically resolve things by having a second referendum, which could be even more chaotic in its effects than that the one we have had.

As I have said, the Government of the day have got to give this House a far bigger role, which therefore means a much bigger responsibility on this House to create the intraparty, cross-party majority that is the only majority of any kind that might be available here for any sensible way forward.

Anna Soubry (Broxtowe) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr Clarke: Let me just finish my point. I will give way in a minute.

I heard all the stuff when the Clerks were invoked—the advice of the Clerks to the Government to resist this approach. Of course it is true that the law can only be changed by legislation. That is a perfectly straightforward legal point. But in our constitution, in my opinion, the Government are accountable politically to the non-legislative votes of Parliament. It is utterly absurd to say that Opposition Supply days and amendments to motions of the kind we are addressing today are just the resolutions of a debating society that have no effect upon the conduct of daily government. If we concede that point in the middle of this shambles of Brexit, with all the other things we have to resolve, we will have done great harm to future generations because it is difficult to see how the concept of parliamentary sovereignty will survive such an extraordinary definition.

Mr Mark Harper (Forest of Dean) (Con): May I humbly suggest that the Prime Minister is actually following the will of Parliament, because she is remembering that, two years ago, two thirds of MPs in this Parliament voted to trigger article 50, which leads to the unconditional leaving of the European Union on 29 March? That was the instruction that she was given by Parliament that she is trying to deliver, and our duty is to assist her.

Mr Clarke: With the greatest respect to my right hon. Friend, I think that my approach throughout the last two years has demonstrated that I am prepared to be pragmatic in response to these things. I did not regard myself as bound by a referendum. In the British constitution, referendums are advisory—they are described as such in official pronouncements—but politically most Members of this House bound themselves to obeying the result. That was brought home to me in a parliamentary way, consistent with what I have just been saying, by the massive majority of votes cast for invoking article 50. I opposed the invocation of article 50, but since that time I accept—I have to accept—that this House has willed that we are leaving the European Union.

With respect to my right hon. Friend, I do not concur that we agreed to leave unconditionally, whatever the circumstances, at a then arbitrary date two years ahead. We then wasted at least the first 18 months of the time, because nobody here had really thought through in any detailed way exactly what we were now going to seek as an alternative to our membership of the European Union, to safeguard our political and economic relationships with the world in the future. And we still have not decided that. It looks as though I am going to be remarkably brief by my own standards, but that is probably only by contrast with the frequently interrupted Front-Bench speeches, to which I have mercifully been only mildly, and perfectly pleasantly, exposed.

Where does this leave me, given that I believe I have a duty to make my mind up on the votes that we are going to have today? I am one of those who voted for withdrawal on the withdrawal agreement. That was the first time in my life that I have ever cast any kind of vote contemplating Britain leaving the European project and the European Union. I thought that the agreement was perfectly harmless and perfectly obvious, and could have been negotiated years before, with citizenship rights, legally owed debts that we are obviously going to honour and an arrangement that protected the Irish border—the treaty commitment to a permanently open border.

The independent hon. Member for North Down (Lady Hermon) is the only Irish Member we have who agrees with the majority of the Irish population, who would prefer to remain. Like me, I think that she accepts the reality, but I know that she thinks the backstop is an important defence of the interests of Ireland with an open border. It is quite absurd to reopen that question. I am glad to say that the Prime Minister is still very firmly committed to a permanent open border, and I congratulate her on that. She is not going to break our solemn treaty commitments and set back our relationship with the Republic of Ireland for another generation. I realise that the Prime Minister has been driven to this by the attitudes of quite a number of Government Members, but I personally cannot see what the vague alternative to a perfectly harmless backstop that we are now going to explore is; nor do I see what the outcome is going to be. Our partners—or previous partners—in the European Union cannot understand quite what we are arguing for either, so we move from having a deal to not having a deal.

Let me just say what I will vote for. I am not going to go through it amendment by amendment, because Members are waiting to move those amendments. I shall vote for anything that avoids leaving with no deal on 29 March. It is perfectly obvious that we are in a state of such

chaos that we are not remotely going to answer these questions in the 60-odd—fewer than 60—days before then. We need more time. The Prime Minister says that there are only two alternatives: the deal we have got, which she is now wanting to alter and go back and reopen; or no deal on 29 March. That is not true. A further option—and my guess is that the other members of the European Union would be only too ready to hear it opened up as a possibility—is that we extend article 50 to give us time to actually reach some consensus. I think that it would create quite some time, and there are problems over the European Parliament and so on. I have always said that we can revoke it, while making it clear to the angry majority in the House of Commons that they can invoke it again, with their majorities, once we are in a position to settle these outstanding issues, which, as we sit here at the moment, we are nowhere near to resolving, and we are right at the end of the timetable. The alternative to no deal is to stay in the Union for as long as it takes to get near to a deal that we are likely all to be able to agree on and that the majority of us think is in the national interest.

Sir Oliver Letwin (West Dorset) (Con): I think that my right hon. and learned Friend will therefore be joining me in the Lobby in support of what is known as the Cooper amendment. Does he agree that in changing Standing Orders, the House of Commons, if it has a majority to do so, is doing something that the House of Commons has done since Standing Orders were created, and did before the Government took control of the Order Paper in 1906?

Mr Clarke: Absolutely. We will not debate the constitutional history, but people are trying to invoke the strictest interpretation of Standing Orders going back to attempts in the late 19th century to stop the Irish nationalists filibustering, which brought the whole thing grinding to a halt. Now we are saying that as this Parliament has the temerity to have a range of views, some of which are not acceptable to the Government, Standing Orders should be invoked against us to discipline us. Anyway, I will not go back to that, but I agree with my right hon. Friend.

The other thing that I shall vote for is another thing that supports the Prime Minister's stated ambition for the long-term future of the country: open borders and free trade between ourselves and our markets in the EU, as demanded by our business leaders, our trade union leaders, and, I think, most people who have the economic wellbeing of future generations at heart. I think the only known way in the world in which we can do that is to stay in a customs union, and also to have sufficient regulatory alignment to eliminate the need for border barriers. I do not mind if some of my right hon. and hon. Friends prefer to call the customs union a "customs arrangement" or if they care to call the single market "regulatory alignment". I do not feel any great distress at their use of gentler language to describe these things. Nevertheless, something very near to that is required to deliver our economic and political ambitions.

It is also the obvious and only way to protect the permanent open border in Ireland. We do not need to invent this ridiculous Irish backstop if the whole United Kingdom is going into a situation where it has an open border with the whole European Union in any event. The Irish backstop was only invented to appease those

people who envisaged the rest of the British Isles suddenly deciding to leave with no deal before we had finished the negotiations in Europe. Well, let us forget that. Let us make it our aim—it will not be easy but it is perfectly possible—to negotiate, probably successfully, with the other 27 an open trading economic and investment relationship through the single market and the customs union.

Lady Hermon: I am very grateful to the Father of the House for allowing me to intervene. I just want to say ever so gently that in his very nice tribute to the hon. Member for North Down, I think he might have accidentally referred to the lady as an Irish Member of this House. No, I am very much a British Member of this House. However, he is absolutely right that I feel passionate about protecting the Belfast agreement—the Good Friday agreement—and the peace that it has delivered in the past 20 years across Northern Ireland and across the whole United Kingdom. The backstop was there to protect that peace, and I am very sorry that the Prime Minister has moved away from that today.

Mr Clarke: I apologise to the hon. Lady, but I must explain to her that I refer to her and her colleagues as Irish Members of Parliament in the same way that I would refer to myself as an English Member of Parliament, or perhaps to a colleague as a Welsh or Scottish Member of Parliament. [HON. MEMBERS: "Northern Irish."] She is Northern Irish. I can assure her that not only do I agree entirely with the views she just expressed about what we are seeking here, but I am as keen a Unionist as she is, and I do not wish to see the break-up of the present United Kingdom. I think that she and I are in total agreement.

The other thing I would support, which arises in the context of one of the amendments we are talking about, is that the Government obviously should no longer resist this House having indicative votes. It is absurd that we have been trying to get a debate and a vote on some of the more obvious things for months now, and as time goes on, the Government are still trying to make it difficult to have a vote on them. When we have the votes, no doubt the Government and the Opposition will start imposing three-line Whips on everybody to take a narrow focus, trying to take us all back towards the failed withdrawal agreement or the rather confused Labour party policy and ensuring that we shoot down every other sensible proposition. There are quite a lot of sensible propositions flying around the House that are superior to the policy of the Government so far and certainly superior to the policy of the Leader of the Opposition. Indicative votes enable us in the time available—to shorten delay further—to give an expression of will and an instruction to the Government about the nature of the long-term arrangements that we want.

To go back to where I started, the circumstances at the moment mean that we have to strive to restore confidence in our political system, our political institutions and, above all, this House of Commons and ensure that an outcome of that kind emerges, because if this shambles goes on much longer, I hate to think where populism and extremism will take us next in British democracy.

3.36 pm

Ian Blackford (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP): As always, it is a pleasure to follow the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke). I look

[*Ian Blackford*]

forward to spending a considerable time with him in the Lobby this evening as we vote for amendments that offer hope to the people of all these islands.

I want to impress upon the Prime Minister the decision of the people of Scotland in the 2016 referendum and what she must now do to respect their wishes. During the Scottish independence referendum campaign in 2014, the Scottish Tory leader Ruth Davidson promised that voting no meant that Scotland would remain in the EU. Scotland did not vote for a Tory Brexit, but we are being dragged out of the European Union by Westminster against our will. The Prime Minister talks about this being a family of nations and says that Scotland's voice will be respected. Where is the respect for the views and wishes of the people of Scotland, who have demonstrably said that they wish to remain EU citizens?

Angus Brendan MacNeil: Is it not the reality that polling in Scotland shows that the European Union remains more popular with the Scottish people than the United Kingdom? That should be heard loud and clear in this place—the European Union is more popular with Scots than the United Kingdom.

Ian Blackford: That is correct, and it is little surprise, because the European institutions show respect to the people of Scotland, which this Government do not.

The Prime Minister promised that a no vote would see Scotland's future as an equal partner, but we now see Westminster taking powers off the Scottish Parliament against the wishes of the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish people. [*Interruption.*] I should not do this, but I will. I hear from a sedentary position the hon. Member for Stirling (Stephen Kerr) saying, "What powers?" Obviously, he has forgotten that he voted for the withdrawal Act, which interfered with the powers of the Scottish Parliament laid down in the Scotland Act—powers over fishing, powers over the environment and powers over agriculture. The Tories sat back and allowed the Scottish Parliament to be emasculated. The 13 Scottish Tories acted against the interests of the people of Scotland, as they have done time and again.

The Westminster campaign against Scottish independence said that high street banks were making plans to leave Scotland, yet now, because of this Government's Brexit, Standard Life Aberdeen is setting up a hub in Dublin, and Lloyds Bank is looking at a Berlin base.

Even last week during Prime Minister's questions, the Prime Minister tried to tell me to drop the SNP policy of independence, yet in June 2017 the leader of the Scottish Tories, Ruth Davidson, said:

"Let me be clear: nobody, not me, not anyone, is expecting the SNP to give up on independence. That's what it believes in & it's a perfectly honourable position to take."

It is a perfectly honourable position to take.

Let me be very clear: Scotland must no longer be left at the mercy of events. Whatever happens here, the SNP will not be dropping its policy of independence. Whatever turmoil and hardship this Tory Government try to drag our nation through, Scotland will and must have the right to determine its own future and to choose to be an independent nation within the European Union. I can see Members shaking their heads. They are shaking their heads because they are running scared. Like the

Prime Minister, they fear they would lose an independence referendum. The Scottish people are sick and tired of being told what the Prime Minister wants them to do. Scotland's needs are much more important than what the Prime Minister wants. Scotland needs the power to take its own decisions. That is the only way we can stop the Tories driving us off the cliff edge and into disaster.

Dr Caroline Johnson (Sleaford and North Hykeham) (Con): The right hon. Gentleman made the point that the Scottish people should have what the Scottish people want. Did the Scottish people not indicate their wish to remain part of the United Kingdom?

Ian Blackford: I can only assume that the hon. Lady was not listening to what I said, because the fundamental fact is that we were promised that we would stay in the European Union.

What the Tories find very difficult to accept is that when the Scottish National party went to the people of Scotland, we asked in our manifesto for the right to go back to the people of Scotland if there was a material change of circumstances, and that is exactly the position we are in today. There is a majority in the Scottish Parliament for a referendum on Scottish independence, yet what we hear from the Conservatives is, "Now is not the time," disrespecting the mandate that the people of Scotland gave to their elected parliamentarians. I will say this to Conservative Members: if our First Minister calls for a section 30 authority, based on democracy, then this House must respect the will of the Scottish people through their elected parliamentarians.

That is the only way to stop the punitive cuts from universal credit and amend the hostile environment that sends talented workers away from our shores. The vote on the immigration Bill is just the latest indication of Westminster voting against Scotland's national interest. We embrace free movement of people. We welcome those who choose to make a future for themselves in Scotland. We thank those who wish to add to our cultural diversity. This place wants to slam the door shut, pull up the drawbridge and retreat into isolation.

We watch the official Opposition go through trials and tribulations about whether they should oppose a narrow-minded immigration policy from this Government. Labour has lost its moral compass. Then we have the Scots Tory MPs meekly going through the Lobbies. Theresa's Lobby fodder are supporting legislation that will damage Scottish industries and our public services, and damage Scotland's ability to attract labour and to grow our economy. The Scottish Tories are acting against our national interest, and Labour is stuck on the sidelines.

A majority of MSPs and Scottish MPs returned at the last two elections support holding an independence referendum in the circumstances in which we find ourselves. Scotland will not be ignored. The UK Government have ignored the views of the people of Scotland. Our Parliament—our Scottish Parliament—has already overwhelmingly rejected the Prime Minister's deal. Today, SNP MPs will vote in support of that mandate from Scotland's Parliament, and we will continue to vote down the blindfold Brexit deal that will drive our economy off the cliff edge.

There are just 59 days to go until Brexit day, and the deal on the table is done; it has been dead in the water for months, yet the Prime Minister is still seeking to run

down the clock and push that deal through this House. That is incredibly reckless and risky. How can she be allowed to behave in such a manner? She has no hope of controlling this House; she cannot even control her disunited party. If anyone is still in any doubt about it, we are in this mess today because Conservative Members gambled our economic future over a decade-long internal feud in the Tory party. They should all hang their heads in shame. Quite simply, that party is not fit to govern, because it has a track record of putting its fractured party interests before the national interest—not what the Prime Minister calls the national interest, but the interest of all the nations that make up the UK.

David Duguid (Banff and Buchan) (Con): On the Scottish national interest, I totally respect the Scottish National party's position: it has always campaigned for independence, because that is what the SNP does. However, does the right hon. Gentleman agree that in the 2017 general election, the majority—56%—of voters in Scotland voted for parties that were committed to delivering on Brexit? The percentage of the vote for parties against Brexit actually reduced. [*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. That is extraordinary behaviour from the hon. Member for Central Ayrshire (Dr Whitford), who is an illustrious doctor. She is ranting from a sedentary position; I cannot believe that she rants in that way in the middle of her surgeries. It is unbecoming of somebody of her status and high esteem in the House of Commons.

Ian Blackford: Of course, we come to this place under the rules that have been laid down, and under the rules of elections in this country, the SNP won 35 of 59 Scottish seats at Westminster. That is a majority for the Scottish National party in this Parliament. The Conservatives can only dream of having a majority. The Prime Minister went to the country on the basis that she would come back with an overwhelming majority; she came back with a bloody nose and a minority Administration who rely on the votes of the Democratic Unionist party, having handed over vast sums of money to keep themselves in any kind of power.

Today, as the Prime Minister faces a vote on her motion, the threat of resignations overshadows the debate. We know that senior Ministers have refused to rule out resigning if no deal is not taken off the table. Politicians play a slow game, and time is running out for businesses. The Under-Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, the hon. Member for Watford (Richard Harrington) said that the Prime Minister's attempt to put pressure on moderate MPs to back her deal to avoid a disorderly Brexit was "a disaster for business".

The chief executive of Airbus, Tom Enders, said the business

"could be forced to redirect future investments"

in the event of no deal. The chief executive of Siemens, Jürgen Maier, said:

"The thing all of us won't be able to manage is a no-deal"

and now the British Retail Consortium warns of food shortages and empty shelves.

Just dwell on this: Sainsbury's, Asda, Marks and Spencer, the Co-op, Waitrose and Costcutter all warn of not having sufficient supplies and of shelves lying empty.

We are used to seeing images of empty shelves in war-torn or failing states, but there is a real threat of empty shelves in the United Kingdom in less than two months. Still the Prime Minister refuses to take no deal off the table. I point the finger of blame at the Prime Minister and her Government. The primary responsibility of any Government is to protect their citizens. We have a massive failure of leadership. If there are shortages of food and medicine, that will be a response to the failures of this Government. There is genuine, heartfelt fear and alarm from some of our biggest businesses.

Mrs Anne Main (St Albans) (Con): What is the right hon. Gentleman's objection to enabling the Prime Minister to probe the EU on what it is prepared to give way on, to help to deliver the deal that he would like? What is so objectionable in new amendment (n)? Can he give any reason for not supporting it?

Ian Blackford: This is a complete fantasy. All of us play with the Good Friday agreement at our peril. The peace in Ireland has been hard won. The European Union has reached agreement with the UK on the Prime Minister's draft deal on the basis of making sure that we enshrine the Good Friday agreement. None of us should be playing with fire and seeking to unwind the Good Friday agreement. That is the effect of what would happen. It is the height of irresponsibility to go down that road. [*Interruption.*] I am going to come on to the backstop in more detail later.

The Prime Minister could make it clear today that she will bring measures before Parliament to rule out no deal. Prime Minister, it is in all our national interests to remove the threat of supply shortages that is a threat to food safety—remove it today.

Drew Hendry (Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey) (SNP): Is it not also a fact that in addition to the companies who issued those warnings, the Road Haulage Association has been saying for over a year that it is madness to consider a no-deal situation? What will happen is that those people at the furthest reaches of the supply chain—my constituents and my right hon. Friend's constituents—will be those worst affected by the no-deal scenario that the Government are hanging over the heads of this Parliament and the people of all the nations of the UK.

Ian Blackford: My hon. Friend is quite correct. We have integrated supply chains on the basis of the single market, which has been in place since the 1990s. There are very real threats to food supply on the basis of no deal. It is the height of irresponsibility for the Government not to rule it out.

Caroline Lucas: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for giving way, because he is making a really powerful case about what no deal could really look like. He says there could be food shortages and, crucially, that food prices could go up. Does he share my anger at the voices behind me that he perhaps did not hear? When he was talking about food prices going up and the fact that there could be food shortages, Members behind me were saying, "Well, let them go to the chippy instead." Does he share my anger about the way in which our constituencies would be affected by no deal?

Ian Blackford: I am sorry to hear that that remark was made. This is a really important debate. There is a responsibility on each and every one of us to take these issues seriously. *[Interruption.]* I want to make some progress and I will take some interventions later.

The Prime Minister will do nothing. She remains in office but not in power, transfixed like a rabbit caught in the headlights. There is a failure to deliver leadership. To use a food analogy, the Prime Minister is past her sell-by date. Focusing on backing MPs into a corner with the only options on the table her deal or no deal is ridiculous. I urge Members to resist the pressure. We cannot allow the UK Government to run down the clock and bully MPs into backing this terrible deal. Pretending there is a binary choice between her woeful deal and a catastrophic no deal is completely reckless. It is false. It is not the case and Members must have the courage to stand up against it. We have the power in this place to send this shambolic deal packing. We have the power to amend the deal to protect all our citizens. We have the power to end this charade. Members on all Benches: have courage, have conviction and have some integrity. Do not send our economy off the cliff edge with this deal or with no deal.

Stephen Kerr (Stirling) (Con): I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for giving way. He has made some very powerful points, quoting the voices of business saying that there should not be no deal. I also believe there should not be no deal; I believe there should be a deal. Does he also accept that those same voices of business, giving evidence to Select Committees, have said, for the very reasons he is giving, that there should not be no deal and that we should support the Prime Minister's deal with the European Union because it provides for an orderly and smooth Brexit?

Ian Blackford: The businesses I speak to recognise the benefits of the single market and the customs union. There is no Brexit option that will leave us better off than the status quo. I will come on to the economic arguments about that. Our job is to protect the economic interests of our citizens, but Brexit will lead to job losses throughout the United Kingdom. We have already seen the news about the European Medicines Agency and the European Banking Authority—they have gone—and about Jaguar Land Rover and others. It is the height of irresponsibility for politicians, on the basis of ideology, to threaten the economic circumstances of their citizens, but that is what is happening. The Tory party's myopic view of Brexit is leading these nations out of the European Union.

Anna Soubry: May I gently say to the right hon. Gentleman that we will soon have only three hours of debate left? There are seven amendments, and many Back Benchers—I am not one of them—wish to speak. I look forward to joining him in the Lobbies this evening on many of these amendments. Many of us are grateful for his support.

Ian Blackford: I am grateful to the right hon. Lady for her intervention, but it is the Prime Minister who has set the timeline for this debate. I am speaking as the leader of the third party, as I am entitled to do. Given that that issue has been raised, I ask this question: where are the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition?

Alan Brown (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): Going back to the intervention of the hon. Member for Stirling (Stephen Kerr), is it not insane to say that agreeing to the Prime Minister's deal will lead to an orderly Brexit? All it would do is put stuff into a transition period, during which time we would not know what is happening. Even the Prime Minister is now arguing that she needs to go back and change the backstop. There is no orderly Brexit, and there is no deal to agree.

Ian Blackford: The Government like to talk about an implementation period, but what are they implementing? They only thing they have come forward with is a deal to leave the European Union. The relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union is to be left to the future, and there is no knowing how long that will take. According to the papers in front of us, it will supposedly happen within a two-year period, but many believe that it could take five years or perhaps even longer. There is no certainty with what the Government are bringing forward.

We have still not seen any economic assessment of the Government's deal. Either the Prime Minister has not instructed her Government to conduct one, or they will not publish it due to the reality of the hardship that her deal will bring. We are being asked again to vote for a blindfold Brexit and to sleepwalk into the future without facts and analysis from the Government about what the deal means for our economy. It is an insult to this House and each and every Member in it.

I wish to ask the Prime Minister a question—I hope she reads this in *Hansard*, as she is not here. Will she publish the details of the impact of her deal on the economy and contrast it with the status quo? The Government are refusing to end the shroud of secrecy and publish an economic analysis, but let me remind the House of the facts. Analysis by Scottish Government officials found that by 2030, under a free trade agreement, GDP would be £9 billion lower than it would have been if we had stayed in the EU—equivalent to £1,600 per person in Scotland. The Bank of England has warned that crashing out of the EU without a deal would be worse than the 2008 financial crisis, with house prices plummeting by as much as 30% and the Bank of England rate being hiked to 4%. Brexit uncertainty is already damaging our economy to the tune of £600 per household per year. Jobs and investment are at risk, and our economy is set to be weaker and smaller. How can any Member of this House countenance that?

We were elected to protect our citizens, not punish them, but Brexit will inflict undue pain across all parts of the United Kingdom. With this deal or no deal our constituents are set to suffer, and we cannot allow that to happen. Some Brexiteers argue that we will be okay without the internal markets of the EU. They are in cloud cuckoo land, harking back to the past. I say this to them: it is over.

Let us look at the facts. The UK's trade with County Cork is worth almost as much as its entire trade with South Africa. Trade with Ireland is worth more to the UK than trade with India, Japan, New Zealand and Australia put together. As "Scotland's Place in Europe" demonstrated, even if the UK signs agreements with the 10 biggest non-EEA single country trading partners, including the USA, China and Canada—a process that would take many years—that would cover only 37% of

Scotland's current exports. By contrast, 43% currently go to the European Union. The idea that we will be better off outside the European Union is a fallacy.

Chris Philp (Croydon South) (Con): If trade volumes are the principal determinant of policy in this area, would the right hon. Gentleman not agree that, given that 61% of Scotland's exports go to the rest of the UK and only 17% to the EU, the most important Union for Scotland is the United Kingdom?

Ian Blackford: I find that remarkable. There we have a threat to the people of Scotland from a Conservative Member. I thought we believed in free trade. We are not talking about barriers to trade with the island of Ireland, so why on earth would there be barriers to trade with Scotland? It is about time the Conservatives stopped threatening the people of Scotland, because that is exactly what they are doing.

It is demoralising to sit here today listening to the merry-go-round of Tory infighting and Labour fence-sitting. There is no leadership from these two parties. I genuinely feel for those across the UK who voted for the Tories and Labour and have been so badly let down. Now their cowardice threatens us all: our livelihoods, yes, but also our culture and communities and the type of society we could be. Our cultural ties with Europe run deep throughout Scotland. The auld alliance is perhaps the best known of Scotland's ancient ties. France and Scotland enjoy deep cultural ties and have agreed a mutual cultural statement of intent, which the Scottish Government signed in 2013. We share a rich Celtic history of story-telling and traditional music and a great love of piping.

Such was the wealth of intellectual exchange between Scotland and Europe that in Kirkwall's library in the 1680s there were books from Amsterdam, Kraków, Brussels, Rostock, Paris, Leipzig and dozens of other places. Our relationship with Germany dates back to 1297, when William Wallace wrote to the martyrs of Lübeck and Hamburg declaring Scotland open for business. In case Members are unaware, immigration was around long before the EU and will be around long after. It is, after all, a global phenomenon.

David T. C. Davies (Monmouth) (Con): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. On a point of clarification, the right hon. Gentleman just suggested there was a relationship with Germany going back to the 1200s, but Germany did not exist in the 1200s.

Mr Speaker: I am very grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his historical exegesis, from which the leader of the Scottish National party can choose to think he can either benefit or not benefit. It is a matter for him, not the Chair.

Ian Blackford: I think I will treat it with the contempt it deserves, Mr Speaker.

By 1914, Scotland had nearly 25,000 European residents, mostly from southern and eastern Europe. Between 1891 and 1901, 25% of the immigrants came from Italy. The majority came mainly from Russia and Poland and settled mostly in the west of Scotland, and they were welcomed, just as migrants today are welcomed. Almost 50% of male immigrants worked in coal mining and about 12% in tailoring, while most of the Italian migrants became more involved with restaurants and retail.

We have so much to lose from Brexit and nothing to gain. I plead with Members to change course. If they do, history will remember their act of courage. Today, Members have an opportunity to preserve our opportunities with Europe—our cultural links, our shared values, our economic ties and our solidarity in coming together to find a way forward.

Voting for the SNP amendment will respect the votes of the people of Scotland in 2016. They must not and will not be dragged out of the EU against their will. Scotland's voice has been ignored for too long. The SNP will continue to press for the best possible outcome for the people of Scotland, and if our voice is not respected—if Scotland is continuously silenced and sidelined by this Tory Government—this place will not be forgiven.

The days of Westminster having a veto over Scotland's future are over. Only as an independent country can Scotland thrive; and friends, we will thrive. The discussions today about ditching the backstop are just internal Tory matters. They can fight and squabble, but the EU is united and clear. It will not accept any changes to the backstop in the withdrawal agreement.

Angus Brendan MacNeil: One of the things that I think the Prime Minister did not quite convey or understand, or forgot, is that the backstop is a compromise. It is a compromise based on the fantasies of the technologies that she has promised will come. If she is right and those fantasies are true, she does not need to worry about the backstop. She would not need to worry if the technology that is being used on the Swiss border were available. I suggest that the Europeans have used a backstop because they know that the fantasies are exactly that.

Ian Blackford *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Order. I am cautiously optimistic that the right hon. Gentleman is approaching his brief peroration. [*Interruption.*]

Ian Blackford: If Members want to hear more, I am happy to carry on.

My hon. Friend is absolutely correct. I would say to the Prime Minister that there are two ways in which we could fix the backstop. The first is staying in the European Union, but the second is staying in the single market and the customs union. That is the fundamental point: that is the only way in which it is possible to remove any need for the backstop from the agreement. The Taoiseach is clear about the fact that the backstop is not up for grabs, so why do Members not get real? Why does the Prime Minister not stop fudging it?

The Prime Minister needs to own up to her own delayed mess, extend article 50, and do it today. That is the only way in which to give this place time to find a solution.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Order. With immediate effect, a 10-minute limit will now apply to Back-Bench speeches, but I do not anticipate that it will last very long.

4.6 pm

Mr Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford and Woodford Green) (Con): I will accept your guidance, Mr Speaker.

[Mr Iain Duncan Smith]

It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Ian Blackford) for plenty of reasons, but specifically because he happens to have what I think is possibly the most beautiful constituency in the country—and my heart is there because both my parents are buried there, as are many of my ancestors. There are some links between us, beyond a wee drop now and then.

In the limited time available to me, I want to respond to what was said by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. She gave us a challenge—quite rightly, I think—at the beginning of what was, I must say, an excellent speech. She said that we had spent a lot of time telling everyone what we were against and that now we must say what we were in favour of. In accepting that challenge, I shall say what I am against, and then come on to what I am in favour of. I shall do that quickly, I hope.

I shall oppose the amendment tabled by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr Grieve). He remains a friend, an honourable friend, and he is much admired: he was, I thought, an excellent Attorney General. However, I disagree with him on this specific issue. I do not think—this is my view, and we will have different feelings about it—that the House needs another process, or mechanism, to allow it to decide what it is in favour of or against. I think that all multiple motions of this kind end up with a place like this going nine ways from Sunday, and we do not end up with any kind of agreement. I think that the amendment process is a way of deciding what we are in favour of. My right hon. and learned Friend will push his amendment tonight, and I think we will then get an idea of whether the House really does think that.

Let me comment in the same light, but for a different reason, on the amendment tabled by the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) proposing a delay. Like my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, I do not think that, of all the things we need right now, we need to book a delay regardless of what we are actually delaying for. I am conscious of the way in which the Commission has responded to the idea of a delay in recent days. Its response has been, “We do not want you to delay, because we do not want you to crash into all our procedures that we have now allowed. For instance, you are not taking part in the European elections—we do not want those to be disrupted—and we do not know what it is that you want to delay for.”

The amendment contains no appendage, as it were, telling us what the delay might actually be about. I can understand someone saying, “We are near the end of an agreement, but we have run out of time a bit,” but that is different from simply crying out for a delay. I think that, ultimately, it comes down to the fact that, as many on the right hon. Lady’s own side have said, it will then become a reality that we are opposing the delivery of Brexit. Those who vote for the amendment tonight will have to face that challenge: perhaps the delay is really all about stopping Brexit. However, I will leave the right hon. Lady to deal with that herself. I admire her enormously, as I would, but on this issue, I disagree with her completely.

As for the amendment tabled by my right hon. Friend the Member for Meriden (Dame Caroline Spelman), again, I just do not think that this one works. The issue

of a delay—even expressed as it is in the terms of a motion—brings me back to where I was earlier. I hope that my right hon. Friend will forgive me, but I will not support her tonight. I shall go with the Prime Minister on this.

I want to make two further points and then a comment about what I think I must support tonight. I voted against the agreement; I did so because I felt it was too full of problems and issues that would not be settled and would give a lack of clarity, and so I expressed my view. I have not voted against the Government for well over 20 years, and I did not particularly enjoy doing it, but I did so because I felt that we needed to rethink this and go back and make some changes. So I am pleased tonight that the Prime Minister has come back.

I challenge those who say that the only thing available is the backstop as it is. That is not altogether true; it depends what question is being asked. An open border, which is the key question that Ireland wanted, can be settled by a much simpler backstop. I am in favour of a backstop; I think it is fair for Ireland and Northern Ireland to want guarantees that there will be an open border, so I am in favour of an open border and of that guarantee. I am just not in favour of the complexity and nature of the demands that left Northern Ireland separated in terms from this Union that we are in favour of keeping Northern Ireland in. That led to serious and significant problems. I believe that the protocol that we have, and that I have been to see the negotiating team in Brussels over, is the key to the way we go forward, and I believe its response to us was positive. I therefore think it would be good to take that process back to Brussels.

This brings me to what has emerged overnight, which I have been involved with myself, although not absolutely in the frontline. It is an agreement between those of us who take different views about Brexit in my party. I am thinking in particular of my hon. Friend the Member for North West Hampshire (Kit Malthouse) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Nicky Morgan). I say absolutely genuinely to my colleagues that we might be divided about these issues, but we must now strive to find some kind of compromise. I say that as if it is somehow a discovery, but it is not really; I do genuinely think we have the prospect of moving towards that. So however we vote tonight, I hope we will, bit by bit, get behind the process that my colleagues have put forward with those of other colleagues who have taken a very different view about Brexit. I think this is wholly feasible, and I am in full support of this, given the nature of it. I therefore recommend that all of us, despite how we end up voting tonight, recognise that in delivering leaving the European Union in line with the vote that took place in the referendum, this offers a real opportunity not just for Members on my side of the House but for Members opposite who believe that it is right to deliver Brexit to get behind it.

So now I come to what I am in favour of, which started with the issue of this internal agreement here. We need what the Prime Minister described today: we need to express that view. The Prime Minister was clear on a number of points that I particularly wanted to hear. I wanted to hear whether she was determined to ensure that, where necessary, we looked for legally binding change and that change therefore would change the complexion of the agreement that she had, and she said that today. I also thought she was very clear to the

whole House that she is not going to assume that, were a particular amendment to be passed, it would mean we would all agree with whatever she came back with, and she has absolutely guaranteed that we will return with a chance to vote on that; I think that is clear.

I am also pleased that the Prime Minister answered my hon. Friend the Member for Stone (Sir William Cash) on the question about the extent of the legal powers and the adjudication of the Court of Justice in the Bill to follow; I thought it was strong of her to do that. Many would have avoided that question, as it is complex. Most of my hon. Friend's questions are quite complex, but she dealt with this one and dealt with it well.

Trying to keep to the time limit for speeches, I shall now simply say that on that basis, having voted against the agreement, I am now going to support the amendment of my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale West (Sir Graham Brady). I shall support it tonight, not because I give a blank cheque and not because I think that therefore we will have solved the problem; I give this support to him, and therefore to what the Prime Minister has said is the Government's position, because I believe it is necessary for us now to send the Prime Minister back with a fair wind and a sense that this House has agreed that it wants her to go and renegotiate, and to take that change and that desire to deliver Brexit on time on 29 March with her over there to Brussels and achieve what I hope and believe, with strength and determination, she will be able to achieve in those negotiations. I wish her well, and I therefore will be voting tonight to support that amendment because I think it will be, for me, the greatest expression of my good will for a Prime Minister for whom, notwithstanding our disagreements sometimes, I have the greatest respect.

4.15 pm

Yvette Cooper (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab): I rise to speak to amendment (b) and to support amendments (a), (g), (i) and (j). I also support amendment (h), but it has not been selected.

There are two months to go until the end of the article 50 time limit. The Prime Minister's deal was rejected comprehensively, fundamentally because I think all sides shared the view that it would weaken us abroad and in the negotiations ahead. It represents a blindfold Brexit that would weaken our negotiating hand. The Prime Minister is not instilling confidence that she has a plan to sort this out. I am really worried that the delay, the drift and the chasing of unicorns mean that we could end up with no deal by accident, even though that would hit jobs, our NHS and our border security, and put up food prices for the poorest families in the country.

I have called many times on the Government to support a customs union. Like many across this House, I want the Government to get a good Brexit deal that can pull people together and command support across the country, but I see no sign of that happening right now, and the clock is ticking. I am very worried by the warnings I have had from Haribo, Burberry, West Yorkshire police, GMB, manufacturers, trade unions and small businesses in my constituency about the consequences of us going over the edge of a cliff.

Mr Paul Sweeney (Glasgow North East) (Lab/Co-op): Does my right hon. Friend share my dismay at how Government Members have reacted to industry's concerns?

Even Airbus, our largest aerospace company, has been subject to vitriol and hostility. Surely such responses defy all logic.

Yvette Cooper: My hon. Friend is right. We should be able to have a calm and measured debate, not all this shouting.

There have been different ways to do this at every stage. Two years ago, the whole House came together when both remain and leave voters voted to trigger article 50. I voted to do so and called at the time for a cross-party commission to oversee the options and negotiations. I called repeatedly on the Prime Minister to consult and to build consent. I went to see Ministers about it, and I went to see them again a few weeks ago to see if progress could be made and to urge them to reconsider the red lines. I made customs union-related proposals to Select Committees and, through the Select Committee on Home Affairs, suggested reforms to security co-operation and immigration as part of the Brexit process. Many of us have called repeatedly on the Government to simply pin down what they think the future of our country and of our relationship will be, instead of this blindfold Brexit in which nothing is resolved.

We have also called on the Government to build consensus. As I said after the general election, if we want a sustainable deal that does not unravel in a year or two and does not end up being undermined because there is so much disagreement, not just in this House but across the country, efforts must be made to build consensus on a deal. None of that has happened, and none of it is happening now either. Instead, we feel more divided and our country feels angrier and more confused than ever. People are sick of all the chaos, and the problem we face is that if we end up with no deal in just two months' time, that chaos and that division will get worse.

The Prime Minister's repeated delays mean that there is a real risk that the issue will not be resolved on time. There were 24 months to negotiate under article 50: five of them were used for a general election and another 16 were run down before the Government even came forward with the Chequers plan. It was left until 22 months had gone before we even had a vote in Parliament on the Prime Minister's deal. There was no consultation on her red lines and Parliament was not given a vote on the mandate.

Those delays and failings are why we are here now. Unless the Prime Minister changes direction and her approach, I fear we will reach the brink. Saying the same things again and again will simply make it more important to have in place my amendment and my Bill, to ensure there is a safety net to prevent no deal on 29 March. I have always believed that the Prime Minister would not let that happen and that she would flinch when it came to the crunch; that she is not the sort of person who would want to make other people suffer because of her delays and mistakes. However, when I look into her eyes now, I am worried that that has changed because she is trapped.

Every time the Prime Minister has had the chance to pull back and reach out, she has done the opposite. Every time she has had the chance to think about the country, she has instead turned to the party. Every time she has had the chance to build bridges, she has instead

[Yvette Cooper]

turned to the hardliners who simply want to set those bridges on fire. That is why I and a group of other, cross-party MPs and Committee Chairs have put forward amendment (b) and this Bill—to try to get the Prime Minister to think again and to make sure that Parliament has a safety net.

The amendment makes time to pass a Bill. It would give the Prime Minister and the Government until the end of February to sort things out. If they have not done so by then, MPs would get a binding vote at the end of February on whether to seek a bit more time and to extend article 50. We should bear it in mind that that would be just one month before the UK could crash out with no deal at all.

Neither the amendment nor the Bill blocks Brexit or revokes article 50—nor should they. They simply give Parliament the right to vote on whether to extend article 50 if time has run out.

Mr Mark Harper (Forest of Dean) (Con): I have looked at the right hon. Lady's Bill in great detail. Will she confirm that clause 1(5) leaves open the prospect of an amendment being passed that would mean that article 50 could be revoked, not just extended?

Yvette Cooper: That is certainly not my intention with the Bill. It is about giving the House the opportunity to extend article 50 if we need more time, and to be able to decide the length of the extension. The whole point is that the motion put to the House would be amendable and those amendments would be binding.

Alex Sobel (Leeds North West) (Lab/Co-op): My right hon. Friend is making an excellent speech. She talks of building consensus. I see consensus on both sides of the House for an extension of three months. If that were the will of the House, would it be possible for us to have an extension of three months only?

Yvette Cooper: It absolutely would be possible for the House to restrict any extension to three months. In fact, it would be possible to restrict it to three days, should Parliament choose to do so. We are not proposing that a specific time period should be decided now. The whole point is that it should be a decision at the end of February. My hon. Friend is right that that is what Parliament would be able to do.

Seema Malhotra (Feltham and Heston) (Lab/Co-op): Does my right hon. Friend agree with me, and would she confirm to the House again, that this is not about extending article 50, but about allowing Parliament to make the decision in the event that there is no deal and that the next step facing us is crashing out with no deal?

Yvette Cooper: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We would be taking no decisions today, and we would be taking no decisions next Tuesday, when we would discuss the Bill. Instead, we would simply be saying that, at the end of February, with just one month to go before we get to the end of the article 50 process, it would be for Parliament to decide whether to seek an extension, and how long that should be for.

Charlie Elphicke (Dover) (Con): Will the right hon. Lady give way?

Yvette Cooper: I am going to make some progress because I am worried about getting through everything in the time.

We should also be clear about why the amendment is needed. I know there are some on the Government Benches who say to the Prime Minister, first, that no deal might be desirable and, secondly, that it might be better than any kind of extension beyond 29 March. I strongly disagree. Other people will suffer if we in this Parliament, and this Government, allow no deal on 29 March.

Haribo in Pontefract is worried about the Government's contingency planning for a 75% to 90% reduction in the volume of EU trade through our ports. That will hit the ingredients that they bring in from abroad. That is bad for Starmix, obviously, but it is also bad for jobs and for investment. For Burberry, which makes Yorkshire macs in Castleford that it sells all over the world, that would mean an impact on supply chains and manufacturing production. Burberry contacted me to say that it respects the outcome of the referendum and remains hopeful of an orderly withdrawal and a workable transition, but it is deeply worried about no deal. Listen to Airbus, Ford or Jaguar Land Rover. We should be standing up for British manufacturing, the very backbone of our national economy. We should be helping our industry to compete with the best in the world, not holding it back or doing it in.

It is even worse for small businesses, because entrepreneurs who have mortgaged their house or used their life savings to set up, say, a florist that depends on bringing flowers in from the Netherlands cannot cope with delays in transit. Some of those small businesses could end up going under because of delays and decisions in this House and by this Government.

For our public services, it is just shocking. What have we come to when our NHS is having to spend millions of pounds on stockpiling medicines and on fridges and air freight and when it is being told that it needs to call in the Navy? That money should be going into patient care.

I am most worried of all that tariffs on food—the WTO tariffs that some people are so blasé about—will hit the poorest families hardest. Some 14 million of our fellow citizens, including 4.5 million children, are already living in poverty. In Airedale in my constituency, local councillors have set up a holiday lunch club. Children are going hungry when they do not have a free school meal, because their parents cannot afford their food bills. Are the Government really going to stand back and let tariffs be put on our food, pushing more of those families into poverty, if we end up with no deal? It will not be Government Ministers or the hard-liners who pay the price; it will be the poorest families in the country.

We have also had warnings about the real threat to national security. Last week, the country's most senior counter-terrorism police officer, Neil Basu, described no deal as a "very bad place" for this country and Europe, because we will lose the crucial databases and criminal tools that we use. The top police officers who are making those warnings are not "Project Fear".

Their job is to reassure, and they work and they cope with whatever situation people throw at them, and when they are warning of the risks of no deal, we should be supporting them and not making it harder for them to do their crucial job of keeping us safe.

I know how hard this debate is for many on both sides of the House. Accusations, false claims, fake news and abuse are being thrown about, and I know how hard it seems to have become to have a calm, common-sense debate without words being lifted or twisted. I know, too, how much many people want somebody else to take responsibility, and I fear that that is what the Prime Minister and Ministers want, but we cannot be cowardly about it.

The Prime Minister is running out of time. Too few dare say it, but everyone knows it. Before it is too late, we have to be honest. I urge people to support amendment (b) to give the House a chance to discuss the Bill, because if we cannot be honest at such an historic time, I do not know what politics is for.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr Speaker: Order. An eight-minute limit applies with immediate effect.

4.27 pm

Mr Dominic Grieve (Beaconsfield) (Con): I cannot deny that I have found the process of Brexit one of the most wearisome and unpleasant periods of my time in this House, but the cloud has a little bit of a silver lining. I find this afternoon that an amendment I first proposed last summer, which was vehemently denounced by some of my right hon. and hon. Friends as being about to break the party apart, and that I brought back just before Christmas, and passed with the help of many right hon. and hon. Members, now appears to have something to commend it to the very people who denounced it then. I note with pleasure that amendment (n) appears to command some support among Conservative Members, and from my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, but it could not even have been brought up for consideration if the system that had been devised for this House, simply to have motions in neutral terms be unamendable, had been followed. I derive some slight satisfaction from that.

I now tempt the House to accept another amendment, amendment (g), and I will briefly explain why. We are mired in complete paralysis. The deal that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister brought back, which I suspect is probably the best deal available, does not commend itself to many of my right hon. and hon. Friends. If they voted to leave, it does not meet their dreams at all. What about somebody like myself? When I look at the deal objectively, from the point of view of an ex-remainer, I simply cannot understand how we are going to be better off leaving on such terms than remaining in the European Union.

Sir William Cash: Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr Grieve: No, I am going to make some progress, if I may.

In those circumstances, we have to find a way forward. Throughout the times that I have tabled amendments for this House to consider, I have tried to avoid objectives

and look at process. Frankly, we could do with more days of debate of this sort unless or until we reach agreement. Of course, if we do reach agreement, with this amendment we can have another business of the House motion and we will just drop the remaining sitting days. It is rather sensible to set aside six days between now and the end of March when this House can debate, free of the interference of government, which I have to say I am afraid has sought consistently to restrict debate into an absolute straitjacket of what it wanted to hear and nothing else. If we have those days, it will help us, just as we are actually starting to tease out this afternoon, to make a little bit of progress towards compromise.

Of course my views are well known about the desirability of a further referendum, and I will come back to them right at the end, but I am perfectly aware that many Members in this House do not agree with that, even if they also share my regret at what we are doing in leaving the EU. But that in no way diminishes for me the value of these days, and I agree entirely with the Father of the House and with my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin) that the idea that this is some constitutional abomination simply does not bear scrutiny; we are in control of our Standing Orders and changing them in this way to get the debates we need is entirely in keeping with the traditions of this House and the fact that the Government, in this area, simply do not enjoy the majority that some Governments have normally used to suppress it.

Sir William Cash: Somebody who refers to national suicide, as my right hon. and learned Friend did the other day, is now moving towards a proposition that involves constitutional homicide, but let me put it another way. Does he agree that he voted for the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018, which states unequivocally that the European Communities Act 1972 will be expressly repealed? Therefore, is what he is now saying going to contradict that, because he does not want the 1972 Act to be expressly repealed—yes or no?

Mr Grieve: I say to my hon. Friend that he is familiar enough with the constitutions of this country and this House to know that this House can propose, debate, pass and revoke laws—we do it quite often sometimes, including laws that have never actually been implemented. So this House can do what it thinks is right at any given moment, and that is the flexibility we need. I tabled my amendment in the spirit of trying to reach some sort of understanding of where the majority might lie to bring this unhappy episode to a conclusion. I have also made it clear that in doing that one has to keep in mind and respect the decision of the earlier referendum, but that does not mean—I will come back to this in a moment as well—that one simply says that one is going to drag the country out on terms that nobody very much seems to support and towards a future that on the face of it looks pretty bad. To do that would be an abdication of our responsibility.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has also said that this House should say what it wants and what it does not want. May I say to her that knowing what one does not want can be quite a good starting place to understanding where compromise is reached over what one is prepared to accept? There are amendments down this evening on no deal that I shall support, because it is

[Mr Grieve]

quite clear to me that this House utterly rejects no deal. Therefore, I will vote for those as well and I ask the House to vote for my amendment, which is neutral in objective but which will give us the opportunity we need to continue developing the debate we have to have if we are to resolve this matter sensibly.

There is then amendment (n), which I have to say is quite tempting in some ways. Our party has deep divisions over Brexit, and we know the pleasure we get when, because of the respect and affection we have for each other, we can all vote together. We did it when we supported my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on the motion of confidence. For that reason, it is very tempting to be told that we should just vote for amendment (n) and send some message that we might just be close to resolving our disagreements with the EU, and doing it collectively. I have some slight anxiety about this, however.

The backstop is indeed a rather humiliating thing, which is why Democratic Unionist party Members do not like it. As a Unionist, I can understand that, to the bottom of my heart, because it highlights the fact that when we leave the EU, the EU is going to continue to have a hold constitutionally over some of the things that we do. But the truth is that the backstop is just the outward sign of a much more profound truth: that ever since we signed up to the Good Friday agreement to resolve, on a permanent basis, an outstanding constitutional issue of identity on the island of Ireland, we have bound ourselves to keep an open border. The unpleasant truth is that that is incompatible with the aim of some right hon. and hon. Friends, who want to take us to a future in which we diverge on tariffs and regulation, and which inevitably therefore leads to a hard border having to be introduced.

I fear that our being asked to support amendment (n) this evening is a piece of displacement activity—something in which I am afraid the House has specialised in the past two and a half years, and which one often sees young children doing when they are asked to face up to something they do not like. That seems to me to be what the amendment is about because, first, it is quite clear that the EU will not negotiate on it—although I do accept that if you do not ask, you do not get—and secondly, even if we were to get the backstop removed, the trouble is that what some of my right hon. and hon. Friends are asking for is inevitably going to bring this conflict into the open once we are gone. If I may gently say so to them, this is one of the issues that we need to debate in those six days that I hope I may have set aside for the House. There is a lack of trust about future intention that makes 29 March completely irrelevant, because the truth is that the disputes about the nature of our state and how we relate to those around us will resume immediately afterwards.

For those reasons, I am afraid I cannot support amendment (n), but I am delighted to have provided—if only by my previous amendment, at least—an opportunity to this House to start having a dialogue. I very much hope we can pursue that.

4.37 pm

Hilary Benn (Leeds Central) (Lab): I think we all realise that today's debate is predominantly about process, but that cannot hide one essential truth: we are facing a

crisis; our country is in a state of suspended animation because of that crisis; and the intemperate nature of the debate—partly here today and certainly outside the Chamber—is a consequence of that crisis, because in truth every single one of us present is anxious about what is going to happen to our country.

Following the defeat of the Prime Minister's withdrawal agreement and political declaration, she said that she would reach out, and I welcomed that, although it would have been much better had it been done two years ago. We now know that she is not for turning on the political declaration but seeks somehow to change the backstop. I am all for optimism, but I somehow doubt that the EU is for turning on this issue either. Unless the Prime Minister knows something that we do not, I do not see how it is going to be changed.

Stephen Kinnock (Aberavon) (Lab): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the fact that Guy Verhofstadt has today said:

"The deal we have is fair and cannot be re-negotiated. The backstop is needed because of UK red lines and was crafted by the UK and the EU to secure the Good Friday Agreement... We remain open to positive changes regarding the future relationship and it is time for a more consensual cross-party approach to deliver this"?

Does that not make it absolutely clear that the Prime Minister's approach is a charade, and it needs to be stopped now?

Hilary Benn: I fear that my hon. Friend is right, as the Prime Minister will find out. She will have to return to the House, I suspect, and say, "I am sorry, but I could not get the thing to which some Members object removed." I simply say that if Members do not want Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom to have different rules, and if they want to ensure that, in all circumstances, goods can flow freely without tariffs, delays, paperwork or checks then it is the political declaration that needs to be changed.

Mr Pat McFadden (Wolverhampton South East) (Lab)
rose—

Hilary Benn: I will give way, but then I want to make progress.

Mr McFadden: In supporting amendment (n), the Prime Minister has driven a coach and horses through the deal that she asked us to endorse a fortnight ago. If my right hon. Friend is right that she cannot secure legal change in the withdrawal agreement, what can she come back with on 13 February?

Hilary Benn: Well, in truth, it is very hard to see what she can come back with if my right hon. Friend is correct in his assessment. It is odd, to put it very gently, that we are spending so much time on the backstop, which is something that the Government signed up to more than a year ago, when we really should be debating the most important issue: the future of our relationship with our European neighbours. The reason why the defeat was so large, certainly in relation to those on the Opposition Benches, is that we are not prepared to sign up to a deal that, far from giving the nation certainty about the future of that relationship, has shrouded it in fog and mist that is entirely of the Government's

own making. My preferred approach, as Members will probably know, is to be part of the European economic area and a customs union. Other Members have different views, which is why I put down the amendment calling for indicative votes as recommended by the Select Committee. Although the Prime Minister today appeared to be unenthusiastic about indicative votes, she spent most of her speech hoovering up indicative suggestions, mainly from those on her own Benches. I gently say to her that, one day, she may find herself climbing into the “little rubber life-raft”—to quote a former Prime Minister—of indicative votes. Until that central issue is addressed and until the Government are honest with the House about the choices that we have to make, we will continue to remain in our current state—businesses will continue to remain uncertain about their future and, frankly, the public will continue to ask us, “What on earth is going on?” That brings me to the amendments that seek to prevent us from leaving the EU without an agreement in just 59 days’ time.

Sir Oliver Letwin: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that if we are to succeed in using indicative votes as a process for getting to resolution, hon. Members on both sides of the House and from all parts of the House will have to be willing to sacrifice their first preference and ask instead the question, “What can I tolerate?”

Hilary Benn: I say to the right hon. Gentleman, as I have said to the House before, in the end, if we are to make progress, people will have to compromise. It is a very British tradition, which seems to be somewhat lacking in the process at the moment.

The Select Committee took a lot of evidence and we came to a very, very stark conclusion, and I will quote what we said:

“A ‘managed no deal’ cannot constitute the policy of any responsible Government.”

I do not think that that conclusion will come as a surprise to the Prime Minister. She knows it, most of the Cabinet know it, business knows it and the House knows that the damage that would be inflicted, and the sheer practical difficulties of leaving on 29 March, mean that this is an outcome that cannot possibly be contemplated. I know there are those on the Government Benches who say, “Oh, it’s all exaggerated.” What I do not understand is why it is that they, with great respect, appear to know more about the consequences of no deal than do the businesses that import things, that make things and that export things.

David T. C. Davies *rose*—

Hilary Benn: No, I will not give way.

Those businesses do not want tariffs, bureaucracy, delays and checks. The truth is that no one has any idea about what customs officers in Calais will do on the first day and the second day if there is a no-deal Brexit, but, eventually, those officers will have to start checking goods, because we will be a third country. Every lorry that is stopped—

Charlie Elphicke: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way.

Hilary Benn: No, I will not give way.

Charlie Elphicke: On that point—

Hilary Benn: No.

The lorries will be backed up from Dover, and a lorry stuck on the M20 cannot be in Germany to pick up the car parts that car plants in Britain require in order to function.

When we add in what my right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) said about security in her powerful speech, as well as the uncertainty for citizens here and abroad—maybe some British citizens will feel that they must return to the United Kingdom because of that uncertainty—then we realise why this is a prospect that cannot be contemplated. I would not want to be the Government who had to explain to the British people why these things were happening, when the Government were responsible in the first place.

Although many of us may still cling to the hope that the Prime Minister will not take us out of the EU with no deal, I am not absolutely sure. That is why I will vote enthusiastically for amendment (b) in the name of my right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford and amendment (g) in the name of the right hon. and learned Member for Beaconsfield (Mr Grieve).

Charlie Elphicke: On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: I hope that this is a point of order, not a point of frustration or irritation, which would be an abuse of the procedures of the House.

Charlie Elphicke: I do not wish the House to be inadvertently misled. The proportion of lorries that are checked is 1.3%.

Mr Speaker: I am immensely grateful to the hon. Gentleman, but that is an expression of opinion and political debate, which is not a matter for arbitration by the Chair.

Hilary Benn: I shall also vote for amendment (j) tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds West (Rachel Reeves), and amendment (i) in the names of the right hon. Member for Meriden (Dame Caroline Spelman) and my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Jack Dromey).

Whatever happens, it is now quite clear that we are going to need more time. One day, the Prime Minister will stand up at the Dispatch Box—unless she is required by the House to do so before then—and say, “I am now applying for an extension to article 50.” Although she may not be willing today to face up to the real choices that confront us, the day will soon come when she will have to, because there is a choice to be made in this House about the future relationship that we want.

As the Prime Minister is asking for suggestions, here is mine: we should ask the European Union now to negotiate the details of the future relationship. When the EU says, “Well, we can’t do that; of course we can’t sign an agreement,” we can point to paragraph 23 of the political declaration, which mentions

“no tariffs, fees, charges or quantitative restrictions”.

It talks about building and improving on

“the single customs territory...which obviates the need for checks on rules of origin.”

[Hilary Benn]

Note that it says “no tariffs”, not zero tariffs. No tariffs means a customs union. The problem is that the Prime Minister cannot bring herself to say those words. If we have been able, in the negotiations thus far, to reach agreement on something as specific as no tariffs, there is no reason in principle that we cannot do the same with all the other things that need to be sorted out. If that did happen, the fears on the Government Benches and the Opposition Benches about what the future relationship might look like could be resolved, and at that point, while remaining members of the EU, we could vote on whether we accepted the withdrawal agreement.

While I very much hope that the House of Commons will take control of the process, I absolutely agree with the right hon. and learned Member for Beaconsfield, when he said that there is nothing unconstitutional about us doing our job. There is nothing unconstitutional about my right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford in effect bringing forward a private Member’s Bill and, through her amendment—if it is successful—putting it on the Order Paper for 5 February.

Heidi Allen (South Cambridgeshire) (Con): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Hilary Benn: I am concluding.

We pass private Members’ Bills every year and there is nothing wrong about that. We need to take control of the process because the Government have clearly lost control of it. The moment will come when we have to decide what we want, and not just how we get to the point of decision. For any progress to be made on that in future, what we will need more than anything else—the right hon. Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin) alluded to this in his intervention—is open minds, rather than minds that are closed to the risks that are now facing our country.

Mr Speaker: There is now a six-minute time limit.

4.48 pm

Dame Caroline Spelman (Meriden) (Con): It is always a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn), who spoke with great wisdom and clarity, as always.

A no-deal Brexit would have not just a huge economic cost, but a huge human cost, and that is what drove me to table amendment (i). The hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Jack Dromey) and I are co-authors of this amendment, and we are neighbours. We have seen the lives of our constituents transformed by the renaissance of manufacturing in our region. It now exports more than any other region to the EU, which is its principal market. But Brexit is putting this at risk. As a group of cross-party MPs, we began meeting six months ago to discuss how to help, as we are already losing jobs—not just because of Brexit, but it has made it worse. We co-authored a letter to the Prime Minister calling for a no-deal Brexit to be ruled out, and I thank those who signed it. It attracted 225 signatures from MPs of six parties from all over Britain. The signatories are remainers and leavers, but we agree on one thing—we are against a no-deal Brexit.

Hardly a day goes by without another business calling for no deal to be prevented. Yesterday, it was the supermarkets, which fear their shelves will be empty. Before that, it was the security analysts advising us of increased risks and before that, Airbus, Rolls-Royce, Siemens, Ford, and the National Farmers Union and other farming organisations. The list is simply endless. The CBI has described this as a monumental act of self-harm to be avoided at all costs. Crashing out without a deal simply makes our exports instantly less competitive.

The Government say that it is not their policy to leave with no deal, so let us rule it out. The threat of no deal has been used as a stick to get more concessions, but in my view that card has played out. It has not secured the needed changes, as on the backstop, for example. So as a former negotiator, I would flip that card round the other way as a carrot, offering to take no deal off the table in return for concessions that will get the deal over the line.

I want to be clear: I am not blocking Brexit. I am committed to honouring the referendum result. I voted for the withdrawal agreement; I have read all 585 pages. I urge colleagues perhaps to have a fresh look at it. It may not be perfect, but local businesses tell me that it is good enough and works for them.

Mark Pawsey (Rugby) (Con): In addition to the businesses themselves, does my right hon. Friend welcome the communications from the workers in those businesses, particularly Jaguar Land Rover, who have communicated with Members of Parliament such as myself to tell me their concerns about a no-deal Brexit?

Dame Caroline Spelman: My hon. Friend is quite right. As a fellow west midlander, he will know that many of us had a personal handwritten letter, or an original email, about the impact—the human cost—on our constituents’ lives, which we simply cannot ignore.

I know that others need persuading about the withdrawal agreement. I encourage colleagues to read the document produced by the House of Commons Library, “What if there’s no Brexit deal?” This document could usefully inform six days of debate, because we ought to debate what the House of Commons Library tells us are the really important issues that we need to consider.

Heidi Allen: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Dame Caroline Spelman: I am short of time now, so I ask my hon. Friend to allow me to continue.

As no deal looms, just think of the human cost. Hundreds of young people like the single mums on my council estates got apprenticeships, then well-paid work in manufacturing, and now their jobs are at risk. Voting no to no deal means that we must agree a deal. The longer the uncertainty continues, the harder it gets for business. Stockpiling is costly and inefficient—the cost comes off the bottom line, and in the end that costs jobs. Just-in-time supply chains will be “not-in-time” with any hold-up at the border, and some factories are already stopping production to limit the disruption.

If we agree that no deal is not an option, then it is incumbent on all party leaders to get round the table—and I think I heard the Leader of the Opposition say today that he would. The Malthouse initiative is an example of a new contribution to break the deadlock. But to

negotiate any new deal with the EU will take time and cause an inevitable delay, and I am with the Leader of the House in trying to keep delay to a minimum. The Leader of the Opposition does not seem to have read my amendment because he thinks that it calls for a delay. It does not, because time costs money for business.

We know that there is a majority for “no to no deal” in this Parliament because it was voted on as part of the Finance Bill, but the sheer complexity of that put some people off, including me. So this is a simple vote on whether colleagues support no deal or not. As the commentators say, it is not “processy”. I am surprised that, having been defeated on this issue once, the Government might still want to whip against this amendment—but then, these are not normal times in politics.

The public are weary with the Brexit debate. It is not quick and painless, as promised. They want us to come together in the national interest, and we can do that by agreeing that no to no deal means that there has to be a deal. I am not a natural rebel. Indeed, I do not accept that label as someone supporting something that commands a majority in this House. I see that the Speaker’s chaplain is here to remind us all that we need to be respectful. I am a peacemaker, and I urge all parties in the House to come together in an outbreak of pragmatism and to agree a deal. To vote for my amendment commits us all to that quest.

4.55 pm

Sir Vince Cable (Twickenham) (LD): We have had an emotional and raucous debate, whereas, as the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) said, the people outside are looking for something rather more calm, deliberative and constructive.

The central issue we are addressing today is how we dispose of the no-deal option. As the right hon. and learned Member for Beaconsfield (Mr Grieve) pointed out, there is an overwhelming majority in this place to do that, and a whole series of amendments have been tabled to achieve it. The amendments go about it in different ways: the amendment tabled by the right hon. Member for Meriden (Dame Caroline Spelman) is a declaratory statement; the right hon. and learned Member for Beaconsfield wants a better process; and the hon. Member for Leeds West (Rachel Reeves) and the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford want more time. None of the amendments in themselves provides a solution, but they are an important and positive step on the way, and we should support them.

The issue we have to address is why the whole concept of no deal is out there. Let us be clear: it is a choice. It will not be imposed on the UK by the European Union. The UK has the legal authority to stop it, and if it is not stopped, it is a choice. It is out there because there is a complex game of chicken going on. The option of no deal was used initially to try to frighten the European Union, but that had no effect whatever. It has been used to frighten wavering Members of Parliament; we will see how many do waver. It certainly had an impact on frightening business.

One thing that worries me about today’s debate is that this game of chicken has now acquired a dangerous new twist. If there is support for the amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Altrincham and Sale West (Sir Graham Brady), the Government will go back to Europe to ask for what they call “alternative arrangements”,

but we have no idea what those are. I have heard no mention today of Chequers. Does anybody remember Chequers? Six months ago, the Prime Minister held a special summit to discuss alternative arrangements. The best brains in Britain were employed to look at technological solutions, and the others were rejected. There were no alternative arrangements. Has somebody invented something in the last six months? If so, we have not been told about it. I am not always cynical, but I think there is nothing in it, although that remains to be seen.

The Government will go back to the European Union, and the EU will be very polite—I think it genuinely wants to help the Government—but it will ask, “What is all this about?” and it will say no, not because it wants to but because it has to. The Government will then come back here, and there will be another round of anger. I am sure that it will not be the Prime Minister or the hon. Member for Altrincham and Sale West, but people will say, “Ah, you see? It’s all these bloody Europeans. They’re blocking it and pushing us out. They’re going to cause mayhem. It’s all their fault.” The ugly nationalism lurking under the surface will bubble up. That is what is in store, and the Government’s action today makes that more likely.

We talk about no deal as if it is a hypothetical possibility, but it is real, and it is now. Partly because of the job I had in the coalition Government, I spend a lot of time talking to businesses big and small around the country, and they all say to me that no deal is happening now. They are having contracts cancelled, either directly or because a company down the supply chain is losing a contract. They are piling up inventories that they do not need, at great cost. Estate agents are having travel cancelled because of the need for three months’ notice. The impact is already being felt. Companies are absorbing it, as they would, but a few months down the track, the economic impact will be very real.

The private enterprise system depends on what Keynes called “animal spirits”, and one of the animal spirits is panic. There is a real danger now of panic getting hold in the way it did 10 years ago in a different way in the financial crisis. The longer we leave no deal on the table, the greater the risk of that happening and of its consequences.

There are other alternatives, and there is one we are not discussing tonight. The Prime Minister is quite right when she says, as she often does, that the alternative to no deal is a deal. She is absolutely right, but there are two deals already on the table: there is the one she has negotiated, and the one we already have. There is also the option that we are not debating today, but which I think we will probably come back to, of saying we should put that choice to the public. The Government say this is horrendous and that it will stir up deep social divisions, but I just ask her to consider whether the social divisions that might be accentuated in that way are greater than the social divisions that would be created if we have a no-deal world, which we are in danger of heading towards. That is why I and my Liberal Democrat colleagues will return—I am sure there will be a greater appetite for this in a few weeks’ time—to considering the option of going back to the public to have the final say.

5 pm

Sir Graham Brady (Altrincham and Sale West) (Con): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for calling me. I think the right hon. Member for Twickenham (Sir Vince Cable) should

[*Sir Graham Brady*]

beware that, while perhaps not wishing to do so, he may sometimes be talking up the possibility of panic and spreading gloom and despondency unnecessarily. I have a short time available to me, but I will take less than the six minutes if I possibly can, because my points are few and simple.

In the more than 21 years since I have been in the House, I have to say that this is the first time I have experienced tabling an amendment and then winning the support of a Prime Minister for it. In her opening remarks, the Prime Minister did of course mention amendment (n). I rise to support the amendment that stands in my name and those of my hon. Friend the Member for South West Wiltshire (Dr Murrison), the Chairman of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee—elected, of course, by the whole House—and my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Damian Green), as well as many others on both sides of the House.

I will oppose the amendments that seek to delay the article 50 process and those that might rule out some of the options. I do so without any suggestion that these are necessarily deliberately intended to damage the process of Brexit, but I think they carry considerable dangers in them. Those who seek to delay the process risk removing the pressure point or decision point—the moment of decision—that is bringing greater focus to the negotiations at this point. It has been palpable in the last couple of weeks that we have seen more evidence of flexibility from the EU side in the negotiations and a greater willingness to look at how it might assist the United Kingdom to come to an arrangement with which we can agree that can take us out of the European Union in an orderly and managed way. There is a real danger in that.

Mr Clive Betts (Sheffield South East) (Lab): What legally binding change to the arrangements does the hon. Gentleman now feel the EU will sign up to that it would not have signed up to a few weeks ago?

Sir Graham Brady: I will come on to those matters. I have very little time, but I assure the hon. Gentleman that that is my intention in speaking in this debate.

First, however, I wish to turn to the amendments that deal with procedure. I entirely accept what my right hon. and learned Friend the Father of the House said: it is the right of this House to change procedure. However, I would make a slightly different point, which is that I think it is unwise to change procedure without forethought. It is unwise to change procedure on the hoof or to do it for a particular purpose.

Heidi Allen: Does my hon. Friend appreciate that the reason why Members on both sides of the House are having to table such amendments is that we have had over two years of Parliament not being involved in the biggest decision facing our country for generations? The fact that we have been ignored means we have not been able, in a representative democracy, to represent our constituents.

Sir Graham Brady: My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr Grieve) made it very clear that he welcomed some of the changes that have

taken place, as well as the debate that we are having, but that was not a dramatic procedural change; I am talking about things that go right to the heart of how this place is run. As Mr Speaker will recall, many years ago I had the pleasure of serving on the Select Committee on Reform of the House of Commons, which became known as the Wright Committee, and I have a long history of interest in reform of Parliament. I am very proud of changes that we achieved, and we sought to achieve others as well. However, I warn colleagues of the danger of doing these things without considerable forethought and consideration; we are often stuck with changes for many years or decades, and they can have unintended consequences.

I shall speak briefly to my amendment (n). I tabled it having seen the agreement reached at Chequers and the progress made towards a withdrawal agreement that clearly not all of us could embrace with great enthusiasm. It became obvious to me, for a variety of reasons, including the fact that we do not have an overall majority in the House of Commons and the complexity of the arrangements, that it would be necessary to compromise. As we worked towards the withdrawal agreement, I thought we might reach a point at which there was a compromise that we could embrace, if only with a lack of huge enthusiasm. However, there was in the withdrawal agreement one compromise too far. It was not, it is important to say, the whole concept of a backstop. The compromise too far was the possibility that, as brought forward, the backstop arrangement, which was explicitly never intended to be other than temporary, could become a permanent arrangement, and so lock in a situation in which Northern Ireland was treated differently from the rest of the United Kingdom perpetually and in which the whole United Kingdom was locked in the customs union in perpetuity. That is why I could not support the withdrawal agreement when we voted two weeks ago, and I know it was the most important, but not the only, reason why so many Conservative colleagues—and, I think, Democratic Unionist colleagues—were unable to bring themselves to support the agreement.

After the defeat of the agreement by such a big majority, the fashionable idea took hold that there was simply nothing that the House could agree—no majority for any arrangement that could possibly deliver the result of the referendum and take us out of the European Union in an orderly fashion. I do not believe that that is true. I hope to demonstrate with amendment (n) that there is an agreement that can win majority support in the House of Commons. By voting for the amendment, we can send the Prime Minister back to Brussels to negotiate, having strengthened her hand.

Lady Hermon *rose*—

Sir Graham Brady: I would very much like to give way to the hon. Lady, but I have used up my two allowed interventions.

We can send the Prime Minister back in a strengthened position, able to say that she has a real mandate from this House, and to ask for real change.

5.8 pm

Rachel Reeves (Leeds West) (Lab): I rise to speak to amendment (j), which is in my name and the name of other right hon. and hon. Members, and to express

support for the amendments tabled by the Leader of the Opposition, by my right hon. Friends the Members for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) and for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn), by the right hon. Member for Meriden (Dame Caroline Spelman) and by the right hon. and learned Member for Beaconsfield (Mr Grieve).

I am motivated to move amendment (j) because I want so much to rule out leaving without a deal on 29 March. If there is just a month before we are due to leave the European Union and we do not have a deal, extending article 50 is the way to achieve ruling that out. I come to this debate with the evidence we have taken on the Select Committee on Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy ringing in my ears. Businesses have many views about where, and with what sort of deal, they want to end up, but what unites them is a determination not to crash out of the European Union without any deal at all, because of the impact that would have on free and frictionless trade, which businesses have grown to rely on through our membership of the European Union over the past decades.

We heard evidence from Honda, which warned our Select Committee that every 15 minutes of delay at the border cost £850,000; from the Food and Drink Federation, which talked about how European businesses could

“hoover up the markets that have previously been well served by UK companies”;

from pharmaceutical companies; and most recently from the British Retail Consortium.

Emma Reynolds: Does my hon. Friend agree that the threat of no deal is already having a material effect? Businesses in the west midlands tell me that they are already putting orders on hold and withdrawing or postponing investment decisions because of the threat of no deal.

Rachel Reeves: I absolutely agree. Passing my amendment would give the certainty to businesses that we will not crash out and that they do not have to look to offshore more work and potentially lay off more workers to build up their inventory supply. It will give workers certainty. Trade unions are also saying that the very worst thing for our economy and for people working in our economy is to crash out without a deal. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford said, it will also provide assurance to families and pensioners, particularly those on fixed incomes who are incredibly worried about the rising costs of essentials in the shops when they are already struggling with the cost of living.

Mark Pawsey: The hon. Lady is a very effective Chair of the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee. She heard, as I did, businesses argue for no deal, but in the main businesses say they recognise that the Prime Minister's deal, while having many faults, is better than the continued uncertainty. Why is the hon. Lady not able to accept that contention from the businesses we have heard? Why does she think that her method of continuing the process is better than accepting what we heard businesses say?

Rachel Reeves: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. He and the hon. Member for Eddisbury (Antoinette Sandbach) are fantastic members of my

Select Committee—as are all the members. The deal has been rejected; all my amendment says is that, if we get to 26 February and we still have agreed not agreed a deal just 31 days before we are due to leave the European Union, we need at that point to have in place a mechanism to give us more time. That is simply what my amendment would do. It does not propose that we extend article 50 today and it does not come to a conclusion about the final deal, but it does say that we need time to get this right, to secure a deal so that we do not crash out without a deal. For business and, as other Members have said, for policing and security, we must avoid the chaos that we all know will occur if we crash out without a deal. I believe that the Prime Minister knows that, too. The amendment would give her and the Government the space to get the right deal.

The most obvious way to ensure that we do not leave without a deal is to take no deal on 29 March off the table. The way to do that is to put in its place this mechanism to extend article 50 if we get to 26 February without having secured a deal. It will give us the time we desperately need to get this right. It is exactly the opposite of the dangerous tactic of running down the clock and putting pressure on Members to agree a deal that many of us think and believe very strongly is a bad deal for our country.

Mr Betts: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Rachel Reeves: I will not give way, because of the time, if that is okay.

My amendment is very simple. It calls on the Government to extend article 50 in the event that we do not have a deal by 26 February. The Prime Minister could still come back to the House on 13 or 14 February and if she can get her deal through Parliament, the amendment will become irrelevant. The Prime Minister still has another month to secure agreement, but the amendment would give us further time if that is necessary. My amendment does not specify an amount of time for which we should extend article 50. It would be up to the Government to agree that with our counterparts in the European Union.

My amendment differs from amendment (b) tabled by my right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford. My right hon. Friend, rightly, is trying to secure through legislation an extension to article 50 if needed, because so many of us have lost trust and lost faith in this Government. They have let us down on too many occasions. My amendment does not seek to go as far, although I very much support her amendment and will be voting for it this evening.

There are many alternatives, so let us explore them with the time that we have left. Let us try to find consensus and compromise. Let us not box ourselves in, get this wrong and have to live with the consequences either of a bad deal or of crashing out without a deal. We are all under conflicting pressures. We have duties to our constituents and obligations to our parties, and we must also listen to our consciences. I believe that, on such issues, we must put those interests aside and act in the national interest. We must rise to that challenge when we vote this evening.

My message to right hon. and hon. Members about the merits of my amendment, and why I hope they will support it, is straightforward. If they voted to leave and

[Rachel Reeves]

want to see Brexit resolved but are worried about the danger of a no-deal Brexit, it would remove that risk. If they are pushing for a Norway-plus solution, it would keep open that possibility. If they are looking to protect environmental standards, consumer and workers' rights, the customs union and a strong single market deal, it would allow them to continue making that argument and win it. If they want a people's vote, but accept that the immediate priority must be to take no deal off the table, it is a key part of that process.

With the countdown clock ticking down by the day, we must all work together and agree a way forward by joining forces to end any prospect of a no-deal Brexit. We must have time to come up with a workable solution. We must not let down our country and crash out of the European Union without a deal, so I urge hon. Members to support my amendment.

Mr Speaker: A five-minute limit now applies.

5.16 pm

Dominic Raab (Esher and Walton) (Con): It is always a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Leeds West (Rachel Reeves), who made her case powerfully and cogently. I want to strengthen the hand of this Prime Minister and this Government in returning to Brussels. I believe that there is a range of changes that would render the withdrawal agreement—in particular, the backstop—acceptable to me and to hon. Members across the House.

There could be a sunset mechanism or an exit mechanism, over which we exercise control but with assurances to our friends and partners in Dublin about its exercise. I listened very carefully to the right hon. Member for Twickenham (Sir Vince Cable), who talked about whether that is possible. It is possible. Michel Barnier said very clearly on 24 January, in relation to a no-deal scenario, that the EU side

“would be obliged to carry out controls on goods arriving in the Republic of Ireland. My team have worked hard to study how controls can be made paperless or decentralised, which will be useful in all circumstances.”

He later confirmed and clarified:

“We will have to find an operational way of carrying out checks and controls without putting back in place a border”.

We must be clear that this is not a question whether it can be done; it is a political choice. Paragraph 23 of the political declaration was clarified to make clear a transition to a best-in-class free trade agreement.

In the brief time available, let me address the two key amendments. I listened very carefully to the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper), and I am worried about the constitutional precedent that she would set. Most of all, her amendment and the Bill that would follow purport to be neutral in relation to process, but in their substance they are a Pandora's box. They would mandate a nine-month extension for negotiations, but the EU has ruled out such a long extension.

Yvette Cooper: To make it absolutely clear, the intention is not to mandate nine months. I think that would be very unhelpful. The point is that any motion that is tabled at the end of February should be amendable,

and it should be for the House to decide at that point. If necessary, we can make that clearer as the Bill progresses to avoid any unhelpful conclusions.

Dominic Raab: I thank the right hon. Lady for that, but the Bill states nine months very clearly, and the EU has made it clear that it would need to know the strategic objective of any extension.

Nick Boles (Grantham and Stamford) (Con) *rose*—

Mr Harper *rose*—

Dominic Raab: I will make a bit of progress, and then I will certainly take at least one more intervention.

The Bill nowhere sets out the substance of the approach that the right hon. Lady would seek to pursue. It is not clear if it is the Norway option or the second referendum option. It is neutral—in fact, it is empty—on the substance. I have listened to her carefully and with respect throughout these debates, and I will take her advice. Back in February 2018, she said:

“The Government have said they do not want to be in the single market, but they have not told us what they want instead... the clock is ticking and when you are running out of time, you cannot keep kicking the can down the road”—[*Official Report*, 5 February 2018; Vol. 635, c. 1212-13.]

And yet that is precisely what her amendment and Bill would do. Just last November, on the 500 pages of the Government's withdrawal agreement and political declaration, she said to the House:

“This is not a deal for the future; it is just a stopgap... We have no idea where this is heading”—[*Official Report*, 26 November 2018; Vol. 650, c. 33.]

Again, I gently and respectfully say that her amendment and Bill are vulnerable to the very charge that she herself levelled at the Government and the Prime Minister. Just moments ago—I listened to her speech carefully and with respect—she talked about avoiding a blindfold Brexit, but I am afraid her approach is precisely a blindfold approach.

It is not clear whether the right hon. Lady backs the Norway option or a second referendum, but I worry most that, as she said, the period is amendable. Without her setting out a positive proposal, I am afraid there is the understandable fear that it is a ruse to reverse or frustrate Brexit. There will be people who, because of the absence of her setting out a substantive credible alternative, will fear just that.

Nick Boles: My right hon. Friend persists in ignoring what the right hon. Lady told him about the true intention of the Bill, which I support. It is very clear that, if amendment (b) were passed, there would be two opportunities to amend the length of the extension, both during the Bill's passage through all its Commons stages next Tuesday, when a majority would be required, and through the motion the Government would need to table on 26 February. It is entirely scurrilous to suggest there is a hidden plot to revoke Brexit when both she and I have been explicit that we would never vote for it. The only way it could be amended is if there was a majority in Parliament.

Dominic Raab: The problem my hon. Friend has is that, although he has powerfully made the case for the Norway option, I have also read the cogent case made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for

Beaconsfield (Mr Grieve) in *The Sunday Times* for why that is wrong and we should have a second referendum. With just two months to go until Brexit, the amendment is a climbing frame for everyone with a different view. I fear most, however, that this would encourage the EU to delay at the eleventh hour of the negotiations in the hope that we will settle for worse terms and undermine the Prime Minister at exactly the point we need to reinforce her hand.

I turn to amendment (n), tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale West (Sir Graham Brady). Initially, I thought this rather a vague amendment, but I understand precisely what he is seeking to achieve. The Government should have tabled an amendment of their own, but the Prime Minister has come to the Chamber and given three assurances: one, that the changes we will seek will be legally binding changes to the withdrawal agreement; two, that she will seriously consider the substantive proposals in what I can only call the Mogg-Morgan-Malthouse compromise; and three, that the revised deal will be returned to this House for a further, effectively meaningful vote. On that basis, I will vote for the amendment. I want to send the Prime Minister back to Brussels with a strong and clear sense of what this House will accept. That is the best way—in fact, the only way—to get a deal acceptable to the House and the country.

5.24 pm

Nigel Dodds (Belfast North) (DUP): It is a privilege to follow the right hon. Member for Esher and Walton (Dominic Raab). Let me say at the outset that we have had very good discussions with the Government and, indeed, with Back Benchers in both parties in recent days, and that, for the reasons that he gave, we agree that the right approach is to vote for amendment (n) in order to give the Prime Minister the backing that will indicate to the European Union that there is a way through this which can command support in the House.

The Prime Minister's agreement to bring back any final deal for a meaningful vote, the fact that she will seek legally binding changes, what she has said about reopening the withdrawal agreement, and the fact that serious consideration will be given to options that can bring together those on the Brexiteer and remain sides of the argument are all powerful reasons for supporting the amendment. I believe that there is a way through the current difficulties and deadlock, but some of the options presented in other amendments do not, in my view, command a majority. We must be realistic about that.

We, certainly on these Benches, want a deal: we do not want a no-deal outcome. However, the idea of taking no deal off the table is more likely to lead to a no-deal outcome than anything else, because that is exactly what will ensure that the EU holds out and gives absolutely nothing in any future negotiations. I have dealt with the Irish Government—Irish Governments of different hues—over many years, and that is exactly the approach that they have told us they will take, so it should not come as any surprise.

The Prime Minister has focused on the issue of the backstop. We have some other issues with the withdrawal agreement and the political declaration, but the backstop is the main issue, and if it is dealt with, that will mean that we can get a withdrawal agreement through the House. I do not need to rehearse all the reasons why the backstop was so difficult for us as Unionists. However,

the right hon. and learned Member for Beaconsfield (Mr Grieve) described it as damaging to the Union, the Father of the House, the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke) described it as a ridiculous proposition, and the Prime Minister herself has criticised it in strong terms as something that no one wants and everyone detests. Yet it remains at the heart of our debate. We must address the fact that with it in place, we cannot support the withdrawal agreement.

People say that the position cannot possibly be revised. However, as the right hon. Member for Esher and Walton has just said, Michel Barnier himself, when he had to deal this week with the criticism that came the way of the European Commission's spokesperson who had said that there would have to be a hard border in the event of no deal, said "No, no, there does not have to be one." I will not repeat the quotation that the right hon. Gentleman has just given, but the fact is that if we can have no hard border in a no-deal situation, that will certainly be possible in the event of a withdrawal agreement and a deal.

The position in the Irish Republic is not as homogeneous as people think. Its Prime Minister, Leo Varadkar, said the other day that in the event of no deal we would have to send troops to the Irish border. The Irish Government swiftly retreated from that. The Prime Minister was out in Davos. He may have been mixing with all sorts of characters—I do not know who those could possibly be—and he obviously got carried away with the rhetoric. Some wild stuff is being said.

One of the most damaging arguments, which is of concern to many Unionists—and we in the House speak for the vast bulk of Unionists who are concerned about the implications of the backstop—is that this is designed to protect the backstop and the Good Friday agreement, as amended by the St Andrews agreement. It does nothing of the sort. Lord Bew, one of the architects of, or the people behind, the Good Friday agreement, said in a recent article for Policy Exchange that it drives a coach and horses through the agreement. We need to be realistic about this.

Ian Paisley (North Antrim) (DUP): I believe that Lord Bew went even further in the other place last week, when he said:

"there is one great problem with the backstop: it does not protect the Good Friday agreement."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 5 December 2018; Vol. 794, c. 1012.]

He has made that point repeatedly. Surely that is the issue: as he has said, the backstop drives a coach and horses through the agreement.

Nigel Dodds: That is absolutely right, and I urge Members on both sides to read what Lord Bew has said. He voted to remain; he is a supporter of the Good Friday agreement; read what he said about this, instead of listening to some of the myths that are about. For instance there is the myth that the open border is part of the Good Friday agreement—the Belfast agreement. The Belfast agreement does not mention anything to do with an open border; this is a complete myth. What we want in Northern Ireland—on all sides—is no hard border on the island of Ireland; we in our party are absolutely committed to no hard border on the island of Ireland, but not at the expense of creating borders down the Irish sea with our biggest market and affecting the integrity of the United Kingdom.

[Nigel Dodds]

That has got to be the sensible position, and I believe now that if we get behind the amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Altrincham and Sale West (Sir Graham Brady) and send the Prime Minister out to Brussels with that strong support behind her, we can achieve something that people have said is not possible: we can get this deal sorted out for the good of all our country.

5.30 pm

Damian Green (Ashford) (Con): It is a great pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Belfast North (Nigel Dodds) as someone who was both present and involved when the confidence and supply arrangement was originally signed. I am delighted that it is in such robust health today.

I rise, as indeed the last two speakers did, to support amendment (n) in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale West (Sir Graham Brady). I do so partly because the House now needs to say something positive. The Prime Minister was right when she said in her opening speech that we all know what we do not like collectively; we now have to start moving down the path quite quickly of things that we do like.

Three issues have arisen during this debate where I would invite Members on both sides to question the conventional wisdom. First, both sides appear to agree that there should be no more delay, but many in all parts of the House will be tempted by amendments tonight that will lead to more delay; that seems to me to be slightly incoherent. The second point that I have heard time and again is that there is something wrong with the Prime Minister radically changing the backstop arrangements when she put them forward so strongly. It seems to me that when something is put to the House of Commons and it is defeated by 230 votes, there is a certain degree of common sense involved in changing it radically. That seems to me to be sensible. Thirdly, there is the temptation, not just of colleagues in this House but people outside, to assume that everything said by anyone representing the Commission, the European Parliament or any other European body must be taken as gospel whereas anything said by a British politician must be taken as a negotiating stance. Speaking as someone who is a lifelong pro-European and who campaigned hard for remain, I must say that we do need to show a bit more realism, and occasionally a bit more cynicism. Guy Verhofstadt has been quoted in this debate; good man though he is in many ways, I have never noticed him particularly advancing the interests of this country, nor is he paid to do so.

It is clear that given the result of the referendum—a narrow victory—the winners must win but the losing 48% who accept the result want a smooth and orderly Brexit. We need a new deal after the last vote and therefore several things are important. First, we need to start changing the tone of the debate both inside this Parliament and outside. We have seen some of the hatred and bile that has been introduced into our politics by the passions aroused on this, and it is the responsibility of us all to try to drain that bile—to try to improve the tone of the debate. Apart from one or two instances at the start, it seems to me that our debate this afternoon is a model of how to do it. We all respect each other's views, and we know that everyone on all sides has

strong views. Many of us who are not just conventionally hon. Friends but are actual friends will be going into different Division Lobbies tonight, and that is as it should be, as long as we can continue the civilised tone.

I support amendment (n) because it gives us the outline of a new deal that might be successful in negotiations with Europe and certainly gives the British Government a coherent position following the loss last time. I will not vote for any of the other amendments, partly for constitutional reasons. I think that the distinction between Parliament holding the Executive to account and Parliament trying to become a quasi-executive, even in limited terms, is a confusion that we should not consider.

Although other amendments are in some ways attractive, the amendment on the indicative vote is perhaps premature. I take the Prime Minister's point that those of us who are very against no deal will have an opportunity to express that opposition. I am absolutely at one with those colleagues who say that no deal would be a disaster.

Sir Oliver Letwin: I just want to understand the import of what my right hon. Friend is saying. He and I are genuine friends but we will go through different Lobbies to vote on the amendment tabled by the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper). I will also vote for amendment (n), which obviously we hope will succeed, but if it does not succeed and the Prime Minister comes back in the middle of February, as she has said she will, unwilling to ask for a delay, would he then change his mind about the constitutional propriety of avoiding a no-deal exit through Parliament?

Damian Green: I am delighted that my right hon. Friend is asking me to address hypothetical questions. Let us see where we are in two weeks' time. Certainly, as I have said before, I will do whatever it takes to avoid a no-deal Brexit. The method chosen may not be exactly right, but he and others with immensely fertile brains may yet, I hope, have two weeks to think again or, even better, may not need to. I hope that the focusing of minds in this country is reflected by a focusing of minds in Brussels and, indeed, in Dublin.

Mr Owen Paterson (North Shropshire) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that much the best way of guaranteeing that no deal does not happen is to keep no deal on the table so that we keep pressure on the European Union to talk in a serious manner?

Damian Green: My right hon. Friend may well be right. Certainly, throughout the negotiations, the Government have made the perfectly sensible point that anyone entering into a negotiation saying, "Whatever happens, I am going to take a deal at the end of it," is unlikely to get a particularly brilliant result. To some extent, that is what happened to the British Government in the negotiations before the referendum. We all know that one of the things that might have changed the result would have been if David Cameron had come back with a better and more generous deal from Europe. I think there is a degree of validity in my right hon. Friend's point, even though I think this may be the first time we have ever agreed on a European issue in our more than 20 years in this House.

Today is obviously important for the Government and for the negotiations, and it is also important for Parliament, because it gives Parliament a chance to be positive—not just to reject a deal, but to point a way forward. In a terrible time for democratic politics, this would be a glimmer of hope—a shaft of light—to show that this House can contribute to finding a solution to the most difficult political problem that this country has faced for decades. I hope that today and over the coming days the House and the Government can rise to the gravity of that problem.

5.38 pm

Mr Pat McFadden (Wolverhampton South East) (Lab): The Prime Minister came along this afternoon and encouraged Parliament to drive a coach and horses through the agreement that she spent two years concluding and hour after hour at the Dispatch Box defending. She had a choice when the House rejected that agreement a couple of weeks ago. She could have tried to form a coalition across the House for common ground, but instead she chose to throw her lot in with the ERG to try to revise the backstop—something she has repeatedly said could not be done. She made it clear today that she is talking not just about the future political declaration but about legal change to the withdrawal agreement itself.

It should be remembered that this backstop is not some foreign imposition. The commitment to no hard border arises out of commitments that we have made as a country and that we repeated in the December 2017 phase 1 agreement with the European Union, but now we are committed to watering it down or doing something to undermine it.

I speak today to support the amendments tabled by my right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper), the right hon. and learned Member for Beaconsfield (Mr Grieve), my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds West (Rachel Reeves) and the right hon. Member for Meriden (Dame Caroline Spelman), which try to avoid no deal. There are two reasons why I think we should do that.

The first is responsibility. Leaving the European Union without a deal in place would have extremely damaging consequences for the country, and it is our duty as responsible politicians to try to avoid them. There has been a legion of warnings, so let me just mention a couple.

Last week, the chief executive of Airbus, which directly employs 14,000 people in the country and sustains many tens of thousands more jobs, including many in Wolverhampton's valuable aerospace cluster, warned that leaving on the basis of no deal would be a disaster, and the ideology behind it was "madness". For his pains, he was attacked on the basis of his nationality. What has happened to our politics when that is what happens?

Also last week, the Road Haulage Association warned of chaos in transport if we go down the no-deal route. Just yesterday, Britain's major food retailers warned of both shortages of food and higher prices for consumers if no deal happens. Who will pay the price for that? Our constituents on low incomes, who cannot afford higher food prices, will pay, as a result of right-wing nationalist ideology.

David T. C. Davies: I visited the port of Holyhead with at least one of the right hon. Gentleman's colleagues on Monday. They said that it was time that MPs dampened

down the hysteria about no-deal Brexit, and that they were quite prepared for it. That is what the officials in the port of Holyhead said to us yesterday.

Mr McFadden: I am quoting the chief executive of Airbus, the Road Haulage Association and the country's major food retailers. These are not my warnings—these are their warnings.

There was a time when such things would have carried some weight, but we are in a time when our politics has so changed that such warnings are simply dismissed as irrelevant. Even worse, there are voices who almost lust for the chaos. I believe that, as responsible politicians, we should not will an end that brings about job losses or rising prices for our constituents. It is not the rich, right-wing ideologues who will pay the price. It is people who work in the manufacturing industry and people who need affordable food prices in the shops.

There is a second reason to avoid no deal. There is the argument that somehow we just need to get this thing over the line; that people are bored of Brexit, and they just want this done. That is irresponsible. It is simply not the case that we will be able to stop talking about this on 30 March, because all the big questions about the future remain unanswered. They have not been left for another day because that is in the national interest; they have been left for another day because to make the fundamental choice would upset one part of the Conservative party and would mean the slaying of the Brexit unicorns.

Of course it is tempting to tick the box and get a deal—any deal—over the line. There is maybe part of us that wishes to say to our constituents, "We have delivered you Brexit, and if it turns out to be not what you wished, well, that is not our problem." That is an irresponsible illusion. We do no service to the public if we try to pull the wool over their eyes in exchange for a quiet life for ourselves in the short term. I understand the temptations of it, because of course some people are angry and frustrated, but many more will be angry if we are not candid with them about the Brexit future ahead.

The second reason to avoid no deal and to have an extension is therefore the opportunity to give clarity on the future ahead. We have not done that so far. The Prime Minister's strategy is to avoid that for party reasons, to run down the clock and to have all the questions answered later. We have a greater duty to the country and our constituents, and that is the reason to avoid the strategy of running down the clock and to use an extension for the purpose of giving clarity about the country's future, on the basis of the reality of Brexit and not the irreconcilable promises made about it thus far.

5.44 pm

Sir Oliver Letwin (West Dorset) (Con): Unlike the right hon. Member for Wolverhampton South East (Mr McFadden), I am a very easy man to please. I voted for the Prime Minister's first deal; I shall vote for whatever she brings back; and I am going to vote for the Brady amendment. I am past caring what deal we have; I will vote for it to get a smooth exit.

The fact is that tonight we are faced with a choice of huge significance for our country, but it is not about the deal we do or do not get eventually, which I suspect in

[Sir Oliver Letwin]

the long run will have to be done through some kind of consensus we have not yet found in this House. We are not really voting about that tonight.

The 29th of March is not an abstract fact; it is going to happen. There is going to be a 29 March, which is a real day, and what we are really voting about tonight is the question whether, in the absence of this House taking action, we will leave the EU without a deal—in fact, in the absence of the House taking action tonight rather than two weeks from now, because I do not believe that vote is really going to happen. I am perfectly aware that some very old friends of mine, whose integrity and passion I respect and admire, believe that leaving without a deal is a perfectly tolerable outcome, or even a good outcome, for this country. I respect that opinion, but I do not share it.

I am also aware that many people think the Conservative party will suffer if it is seen in any way to do anything that delays the exit date. I accept that there is some suffering, and I have experienced some of it in my constituency. I have experienced some of it through the tirades of those who send me emails and the like. I accept that.

What my hon. Friends ignore is what will happen, first, to this country, which should be our first preoccupation, and, secondly, to our party if we leave on 29 March, taking the risks involved in not having a deal, and it goes wrong. Incidentally, I entirely accept that it might be perfectly all right, but it might not. If it is not, it will be Conservative Members and our Government—it will not be Opposition Members, some unseen force or the EU—to whom those difficulties will be attributed by the population of our country. When the people elect a Government, they expect that Government to look after them and not to impose risks and difficulties.

If those risks materialise, our party will not be forgiven for many years to come. It will be the first time that we have consciously taken a risk on behalf of our nation, and terrible things will happen to real people in our nation because of that risk, and we will not be able to argue that it was someone else's fault. I beg those Conservative Members who are still in doubt—I know there are many who are not—to consider that issue when we go into the Lobbies tonight.

Finally, I will say one word on the question whether amendment (b) and the Bill proposed by the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) and my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham and Stamford (Nick Boles) is some kind of constitutional outrage. The Father of the House spoke about it, as did my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr Grieve), and I will add a word.

It is a fine thing to debate constitutional process, but if one is going to do so, it is important to read the books. It is important to know what our constitution is. There is one pre-eminent authority on the law of our constitution, and the one thing that A. V. Dicey makes clearer than anything else in his very large book is that the House of Commons has undisputed control of its own procedures. The Standing Orders of the House of Commons, which Bagehot tells us are the nearest thing in this terrible constitutional melee to a constitution in our country, are under the control of this House. There is

nothing improper, wrong or even unusual about changing Standing Orders by a majority of this House of Commons. Until 1906, the Government did not have control of the Order Paper. It was invented for a particular reason that the Government should have that control, but there is no need for them to have it in future.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr Speaker: Order. After the next speaker, the time limit will have to be reduced to three minutes, because everybody has been taking interventions, which is very consistent with the rules of debate but, obviously, truncates the opportunities of other right hon. and hon. Members.

5.50 pm

Liz Saville Roberts (Dwyfor Meirionnydd) (PC): I am proud that my name is on amendments (o), (g), (b) and (j). We also support amendments (a) and (i), but not amendment (n). That is because the Brexiteers' modest proposal to the problem of Ireland is Swiftian in its grotesquery, its historical ignorance and its single, 360°, all-encompassing blind spot.

In June 2016, the Prime Minister, in a last-ditch attempt to win the referendum, explained how customs checks between Northern Ireland and Ireland would be inevitable if we were pulled out of the EU. What followed was a series of warnings from customs experts, culminating in Eric Pickett, an authority in WTO rules and international law, telling MPs in February 2017 that giving Ireland special treatment would be a strict violation of WTO law. When Mrs May triggered article 50 a mere month later, with the help of the Labour party, she started the clock on Brexit without having the faintest idea how she might avoid running roughshod over the Good Friday agreement. Now, two years later, we are still debating whether or not we need a backstop designed to avoid the dangerous chaos of a hard border. All the while, the clock is ticking and this place cannot find a resolution, and all the while the Prime Minister's status is sinking before our eyes. Will she take the peoples of the UK down with her? Or will she put all four nations before unforgivable party loyalty and turn to us for answers?

There are plenty of answers the Prime Minister could choose on today's Order Paper. Not all of them perfect—some of them attempt to have cake and eat it—but some of them are necessary and rational compromises. They are necessary to avoid the no-deal-by-default scenario towards which we accelerate with every passing day. The Labour party's indifference makes it just as culpable. Last night's last-minute one-line Whip against the Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill is illustrative of the Labour party's intentional apathy towards all things Brexit. The amendment tabled by the Opposition Front-Bench team today is a masterclass in fence-sitting. Let me be clear: their self-serving ambiguity is paving the way to a no deal.

Brexit is a thinly veiled assumption by the British Government of their right to centralise power and concentrate wealth. I am not talking about taking back control and money from the EU; I am talking about using Brexit as an excuse to take powers back from Wales and spend ever more per head in London than in Wales than they currently do. The economic disparity between Wales and London is already the worst in the

European Union. It is not possible to overstate the grotesqueness of our current inequality. Inner London's GDP is 614% of the EU average, while West Wales and the Valleys, where I live, possesses a regional GDP of 68% of the same EU average. Westminster has always seen fit to benefit most that which is closest to its heart, and its heart is in south-east England. As for the rest of us, we are as we always have been—peripheral, expendable, beyond the pale.

This place indulges itself with endless, abstract angels-on-a-pinhead debates about backstops, safe in the knowledge that most of us here will probably be all right in a no-deal scenario. I was in Holyhead yesterday, with the hon. Member for Monmouth (David T. C. Davies). What we were told by people in the port of Holyhead is that they probably can survive day one of no deal, but they have no idea what is happening in the weeks after that—they have no idea whatsoever. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is going there this week to deal with pets and racehorses; the grand national is a week after we come out and most of the horses come through Holyhead. We will be all right here in a no-deal scenario; it is real people, constituents of mine and of all hon. Members—the hill farmers, the factory workers, the mums and dads; and, ultimately, the children—who will pay the real price for our time-wasting. I beg the Prime Minister: let us move on, rule out no deal and allow the House to work, at least for once, for the people and not for her party.

Mr Speaker: A three-minute limit now applies on each Back-Bench speech.

5.54 pm

Priti Patel (Witham) (Con): With two months to go until 29 March, it is hardly surprising that we are once again debating our withdrawal from the European Union. It is pretty obvious that we should be much further ahead in the process. Of course, the warning signs have been there for months, as all Members have said: from the minute the backstop went down to the Chequers agreement and the withdrawal agreement, which were of course not right for our country. I voted against the withdrawal agreement.

At this crucial time, we need leadership, which is why I welcome the Prime Minister's very clear statement today. She should be commended for the way she handled strong questioning and rightly addressed many of the challenges relating to the withdrawal agreement. She should be particularly commended for reopening the negotiations on the withdrawal agreement. I would like to hear more from the Government about whether they have engaged in discussions and are preparing to hear from the European Commission whether it is prepared, willing and able to reopen the negotiations and get that legally binding change to the withdrawal agreement.

It is right that we now concentrate all efforts on delivering the referendum mandate. We cannot have more statements or glorified letters of assurances; we must get that clear, legally binding change to the text of the withdrawal agreement. When the negotiations are reopened, we need to ensure that the right people are engaged and involved in the process.

Ian Paisley: Does the right hon. Lady agree that yes, obviously, a legal textual change is now being sought, but that should not come as any surprise because the

words of amendment (n) are already in paragraph 27 of the political agreement, of which Europe has been aware since November last year?

Priti Patel: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right, which is why there is now an opportunity for us to land a clear commitment on the future relationship and on every aspect of the trading relationship and to remove some of the ambiguity in the political declaration.

It is important to recognise—as I think all Members do—that Parliament must deliver on the referendum mandate, and we have the opportunity to do so. The Prime Minister was right to refer to Conservative colleagues who were on either side of the referendum argument but have put forward new proposals that seek to provide certainty and clarity. They seek to unite the country in getting that compromise, including by extending the key issues around implementation, replacing the backstop and supporting the future UK-EU free trade arrangement, as well as by seeking co-operation in security matters and guaranteeing citizens' rights going forward.

I was reassured by the Prime Minister's remarks today, which is why her hand should be strengthened when she goes back to Brussels. I have called for the Government to go back to Brussels again and again since I voted against the withdrawal agreement. We must leave on 29 March so that we can position ourselves as an outward-looking, global, free-trading country, and as a nation that is on that mission of economic and democratic renewal. I will support amendment (n). We have to find the right degree of unity and compromise to strengthen the Government and the Prime Minister to go, as she herself stated today, back to Brussels to deliver for Britain.

5.58 pm

Jack Dromey (Birmingham, Erdington) (Lab): The right hon. Member for Meriden (Dame Caroline Spelman) is passionate about the Land Rover plant in her constituency, as I am passionate about the Jaguar plant in Erdington. The plants have transformed the lives of tens of thousands throughout Birmingham and the west midlands. Together, the two plants are a symbol of the success of the automotive industry. But we have lost a thousand jobs at the Jag over the past 12 months, and we recently saw the announcement of 4,500 job losses. That is why the chief executive of JLR, Ralf Speth, said no to no deal. With the greatest of respect, some right hon. Members on the Government Benches should show a degree of humility. There are some who pretend that they know more about cars than the people who make cars, more about building ships than the people who build ships and more about keeping our country safe than the head of counter-terrorism.

During the next stage, we have a duty to honour the outcome of the referendum and to do everything possible to reach agreement, but it is clear beyond any doubt that the deal on offer will not pass and that no serious progress is being made towards delivering a deal that will defend the national interests and also pass Parliament. Therefore, in saying no to no deal, the right hon. Member for Meriden and I hope that the Government listen. Everything possible in terms of cross-party negotiations needs to be done to reach an agreement, but, crucially, that needs to be underpinned by the amendment from my right hon. Friend the Member for

[Jack Dromey]

Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper), which would prevent us going over the cliff on 29 March if the Government refuse to listen.

The Government cannot be allowed to treat the House of Commons with contempt or to ignore the views of its Members. Going into a serious negotiation, we have to move beyond the Tory party talking to itself. We must do right by the country. It should no longer be, “My deal or no deal,” and no longer should we be taken ever closer to the cliff. All this matters for the security of our country, for medicines, for industry, for farming, for food and for retail. The voices are loud and clear and they need to be listened to.

In conclusion, I am someone of an Irish background, but I am also someone who believes in a proud United Kingdom. This is a great country with great potential. I do not want us to become a fearful, fractured, inward-turning country at the margins of Europe—a country that is weakened in the world and impoverished for a generation. Our destiny is to be a truly great Britain—not a country plunging into the abyss and decades of despair, which is what will happen if we go out on 29 March without a deal.

6.1 pm

Mr Edward Vaizey (Wantage) (Con): I have followed three principles since the country voted to leave the European Union: to respect the referendum result and deliver Brexit; not to have a second referendum; and to avoid no deal. I voted to implement article 50. I supported the withdrawal agreement out of my own free will with no offers of gongs or jobs. Members can imagine therefore that I have taken with a pinch of salt the protestations—the butter-would-not-melt-in-my-mouth protestations—of the hard Brexiteers as they wish the Prime Minister well, with a heavy heart, as they send her back to Brussels, assuring her of their good will.

I will continue to support the Prime Minister: I supported her when the hard Brexiteers tried to oust her as Prime Minister; I supported her in the no-confidence vote; and tonight in the Lobby I will support her. I will vote for the Grieve amendment. The Prime Minister says that it is time for Parliament to say what it wants, not what it does not want. This is what the Grieve amendment does, and it is a modest constitutional proposal. I do not support the ERG in its proposal to prorogue—the first such prorogation of Parliament since Charles I—or in its instruction to Her Majesty not to pass Parliament’s legislation. I support merely a modest amendment that supports the Prime Minister.

I support the Spelman amendment, because I do not want no deal. The Prime Minister has said from the Dispatch Box that she wants to avoid no deal. I back the Prime Minister and I back Spelman. I support the Cooper amendment because the Prime Minister needs time to get her deal right, because I know that the hard Brexiteers will vote her down on 14 February, so she needs the time to get things right. I back Cooper and I back Boles. I am afraid, however, that, because I support the Prime Minister I cannot support the Brady amendment. I back the Prime Minister’s withdrawal agreement, and unlike some people in this House, I will not turn my back on it and neuter it with a fake clause, pretending that it is amending an agreement when it is doing no such thing.

I wish the Prime Minister well in the full knowledge that Parliament can come forward and actually say what it wants to do. Our bluff can be called and we can come forward with our own proposals. I back her in her withdrawal agreement and I back her in avoiding no deal. I am pleased and delighted to remain a loyal supporter of the Prime and her policy on Brexit.

6.4 pm

Lisa Nandy (Wigan) (Lab): It was embarrassing to be part of the pantomime that started this debate earlier and that could not contrast more with the levels of anxiety that I hear out there in the country whenever I am allowed to go home. These debates have largely generated far more heat than light, and I have been glad to hear many Members, in the debate that has ensued, recognise that we are breaking our democracy. We urgently have to build common ground. That is why amendment (f) in the name of my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn), which seeks to narrow down the options with a series of indicative votes, is an incredibly helpful suggestion. So, too, is amendment (h) in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Stella Creasy), along with myself and many others, proposing a citizens’ assembly. This has been used as a mechanism in many other countries, including Ireland, to break similarly controversial deadlocks.

The importance of amendment (h) is that the 46 MPs who are signatory to it come from all different Brexit positions and none. That proves that there are a number of us in this House who are willing to step out of the trenches and start to compromise. This matters because HOPE not hate produced a report today that clearly shows that attitudes around the country are hardening and people’s willingness to compromise is being reduced. We are seeing fear, anger and a rise in activity from the far right in that fertile ground in a way that I have not seen since I was growing up as a child in the 1980s.

It is astonishing that the Prime Minister came here today still talking to the House as if she can have it both ways. She told my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Melanie Onn) that she is seeking to strengthen workers’ rights, but then she told this House that she is backing the Baker plan, which on page 31 junks the non-regression clause and seeks to dilute existing employment rights protections. The Prime Minister seems determined to tilt right and try to get this through with a small group of hard Brexiteers in her own party, but how does she honestly think that she is going to maintain that fragile coalition all the way through the legislation that will be required to pass this?

That is why, reluctantly, I have come to the conclusion that today I will support amendment (b) in the name of my right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper). That is not because I think that extending article 50 to the end of the year is by any means sustainable; it is not and the public will not accept it. They will not forgive us if we go over the summer and try to re-elect MEPs to a Parliament that we were supposed to have left three months before.

There is not enough understanding in this House of how little trust there is that we mean what we say when we say we respect the result of the referendum, and we cannot afford to kick the can down the road any longer.

But this amendment is now the only mechanism that this House has to try to avoid a no-deal scenario and to start making real decisions about how we are going to respect the result of the referendum, protect jobs and heal this divided country.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Oh! Well, I would have called a particular hon. Gentleman who seems to have beetled out of the Chamber. That is most unfortunate. I hope the fellow is not indisposed. But Mr Charles Walker is here, and that is important.

6.7 pm

Mr Charles Walker (Broxbourne) (Con): I have an admission to make: I am not an intellectual. [HON. MEMBERS: “No!”] No, I am not. I really have tried it for the past few months, but I just cannot get on with it, so I am not going to give a highbrow, intellectual speech. My speech will be more of a three-minute cry of frustration, because I really, really do want to leave the EU; I have campaigned for it for a number of years and I am very keen to go.

We have talked at length about unicorns, and the proudest stallion unicorn of all is the unicorn of perfection—a unicorn that canters across broken fields with unrealisable dreams underfoot. But the unicorn of perfection must sadly be slayed, because perfection does not exist. When I am out in my constituency, meeting people who do not email me and do not write to me, so they are not self-selecting, they say three things to me: “Get on. Get on. Get on.” These people voted to leave. These people voted to remain. But they want to get on and they want this Parliament to make a decision. They have accepted the result of the referendum.

It will be impossible for this House to come up with a perfect deal—a bowl of porridge that everyone finds to their satisfaction. But we can find something that 80% of our fair-minded constituents can get behind and say, “Do you know what? As a fair-minded citizen of this country, I’d have liked a little more of that and a little less of this, but I can live with it. I can get on and move on, and we can have certainty.” It is impossible for this House to appeal to the implacable 10% who bookend the 80%—the remainers who want to remain at any cost and the leavers who want to leave at any cost. The demands of these people cannot be met by this House.

That is why tonight I will be supporting the amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale West (Sir Graham Brady). I will go through that Division Lobby to hopefully give the Prime Minister further instruction to go back to the EU and deliver a deal that 80% of my country and my constituents can unite behind.

6.10 pm

Angus Brendan MacNeil (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): We have 59 days to go, or, as James Melville said on Twitter a little earlier, 28 parliamentary sitting days to go.

Last time I spoke on this, as you probably remember, Mr Speaker, I mentioned Fintan O’Toole’s book, “Heroic Failure: Brexit and the Politics of Pain”, and the pain we are all feeling at the moment. The quote I used then was the Turkish proverb,

“An Englishman will burn his bed to catch a flea.”

It is worth reflecting a bit more on what Brexit has done. The methodology of Brexit, Fintan O’Toole points out in the book, is this:

“It will triumph by teaching the English to take trivial things—the petty annoyances of regulation—very seriously indeed, and to regard the serious things—jobs, communities, lives—with sincere and studied triviality.”

That is what we are seeing in the middle of this Brexit nonsense. All options of Brexit are bad. The Prime Minister knows this. In a sleight of hand today, she alluded to it by talking of the balance between the referendum and the economics. But of course, if we look at the economics alone, this is a bad deal.

The Government have got themselves into the invidious position of making promises to Ireland and making promises to other people that they would be outside the customs union and the single market and still have frictionless trade. I am talking of unicorns and made-up fantasies. They then had an opponent at a negotiation saying, “This is nonsense. Give us some assurance, have a backstop,” and the backstop came along. Now this House is saying, “See that backstop, that assurance we gave on the fantasies we were talking about—we now want you to negotiate away our assurance and our fantasies.” Westminster has got to take a step back and see the nonsense it is finding itself in.

Amendment (q) was not selected today, but I would encourage people in future to join the queue. It is an amendment to revoke article 50, tabled in my name and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Perth and North Perthshire (Pete Wishart). This is something the UK has control of until 29 March. The UK can get itself out of the hole it has dug for itself through the fantasies that Mr O’Toole expanded on greatly in his book. A lot could be done to prevent the damage that is coming down the road. If we leave on 29 March or in December 2020, MPs here, particularly whoever is in the governing party, will have to face that. Maybe this is one of the reasons Labour does not want a general election. Who wants to be the Government on 29 March or in December 2020 when you leave and you have queues in Dover, you are damaging the economy and you have empty shelves? Whoever is holding the parcel when that music stops is going to find themselves in great trouble.

Ian Paisley: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the genius in any negotiation is to achieve an agreement and that agreement implies that two sides have come to a common cause? Is not the fatal flaw of what Europe has done that it has not accepted that Britain cannot agree with this?

Angus Brendan MacNeil: No. The agreement was reached. This is the funny thing. The agreement was reached, and now the Prime Minister, having not talked to the House of Commons, comes back to the House of Commons and finds that it thinks that her agreement is a dud agreement. She has now been sent to scurry back to Europe to beg the Europeans because the shire Tories want something different. They had an agreement but then they were scared of the agreement and sent the Prime Minister to go and get another one. In the beginning, we did not want any parliamentary involvement at all. Conservative parliamentarians, in particular, were abdicating their responsibility as MPs and hiving this

[Angus Brendan MacNeil]

off to the Government. Then when the Government came back, it was not good enough, deepening the mess of Brexit. This is exactly the problem we have here today.

We should take a further step and consider this idea that going out of the customs union and the single market is bad for you. There are about 12 customs unions across the world between about 100 countries. The exceptionalism about the UK is utterly baffling, and it is so baffling because these people are trying to damage their communities and their businesses. It does not matter how often we say it, but this is the point of Brexit. This is what Brexit is going to end up with—damage to jobs and damage to business. Airbus and other companies are dismissed because, as Fintan O'Toole said, the serious things are regarded with “studied triviality”. I am at the end of my tether trying to talk to these guys. This is why Scotland is moving on. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Ian Blackford) said, we are moving towards independence—we have to. This is a mess.

6.14 pm

Nick Boles (Grantham and Stamford) (Con): In the short time available to me, I will not try to match my right hon. Friend the Member for Wantage (Mr Vaizey), who said almost everything that I would have said and much more entertainingly. I will try to explain why I have taken a step that many of my hon. Friends consider to be somewhat rash—the step of signing the amendment tabled by the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) and supporting the Bill promoted by her.

The reason I have done so is that on the morning after the referendum, I sent a message to my constituents in which I committed to do my best to make a success of Brexit. Since then, I have left hospital in a wheelchair to vote for triggering article 50, and I have voted with the Government in every single Division on the withdrawal Act and every other piece of legislation advancing the delivery of a successful Brexit—unlike, I would point out, 117 of my fellow members of the Conservative party, including all the members of the ERG.

I am seriously committed to making a success of Brexit, but there are two parts to that sentence. There is Brexit and there is success, and Brexit on 29 March with no deal will not be a success. It will be a disaster. It will sour the British people against the operation of their Government for a generation, and I cannot have that on my conscience.

I will tell the House what the proposed amendment and Bill would do. They would rule out a no-deal Brexit on 29 March. They do not rule out a no-deal Brexit forever, because the only way of doing that is to revoke Brexit. I will never vote for that, and the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford will never vote for that. I do not believe that more than 100 Members of this House will ever vote to revoke Brexit, because that would be a political disaster at least as cataclysmic as the economic and human disaster of a no-deal Brexit on 29 March.

What we seek is to buy ourselves a little time to find a compromise and make a success of Brexit. I hope that we will be successful with this amendment tonight, but if we are not, it will be because the Prime Minister made

a pledge at the Dispatch Box to come back to the House on 14 February with a motion that is equivalent to this one and equally amendable. My hon. Friends and I from across the House will move an equivalent amendment again, with an equivalent Bill attached, and I hope that Members will support them.

6.17 pm

Liz Kendall (Leicester West) (Lab): The Prime Minister is asking the House to back an amendment to a deal that she said could not be amended, to give her a mandate to negotiate with the EU that she said she never needed and to reopen a withdrawal agreement that she insisted could not be reopened. I do not know whether the Prime Minister genuinely believes that she can get the EU to reopen negotiations despite the fact that it has said it will not; whether she has finally succumbed to the ERG's myth that she just has to somehow stand up to the EU and it will give us all the benefits of membership with none of the responsibilities; or whether she knows that this is all a charade and is in fact continuing her plan to run down the clock and blackmail MPs into backing her bad deal, because leaving the EU with no deal is even worse.

What I do know is that we are in a complete and utter mess. Many Members of this House know that, and members of the public know it, too. The mess has been caused by a lack of honesty about the choices that Brexit inevitably brings. Brexit has always been a choice between staying as close to the EU as possible, to protect jobs and prevent a border in Ireland, giving up our say over the rules and getting some kind of free trade agreement, which will inevitably mean more barriers to trade than being a member and seeing a border on the island of Ireland, or leaving the EU with no deal at all, with all the risks and uncertainty that that brings for jobs, businesses and the Good Friday agreement.

If the Prime Minister and the Government will not take the lead in facing up to these choices and being honest with Members of this House and the public, then Parliament must, and the first step has to be to rule out no deal. Many hon. Members have spoken about the risks of this, but I would just say that for many Members from the east midlands—Members such as me from Leicester—the threats to food and drink manufacturing are real. Some 46,000 jobs depend on food and drink manufacturing, and we know that there could be serious disruption to food supplies and rising business costs and consumer prices if there is no deal.

I will vote for all amendments that seek to rule out no deal, but I believe the most important of these is amendment (b) in the name of my right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper). It is the only one that will lead to legislation that requires the Prime Minister to request an extension of article 50, rather than simply urging her to do that through a motion of this House. As my right hon. Friend has said, the House can amend her Bill to specify how long the extension should be. My view, however, is that any extension must be for a purpose, and that purpose is being honest and straight with the public about the real choices we face in our long-term relationship with the EU. I urge Members to back that amendment tonight.

6.20 pm

Sir Edward Leigh (Gainsborough) (Con): It may be a bit of cliché now, but I say to the hon. Member for Leicester West (Liz Kendall) that the best way to prevent no deal is to vote for a deal. [*Interruption.*] Well, I am afraid it is pretty obvious.

We have heard so much in this debate about compromise, and we have all had to compromise. This is where I agree with my right hon. Friends the Members for Ashford (Damian Green) and for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin). We come to this debate from different directions—I voted to leave in the referendum, and we only won by 52% to 48%—and we cannot get a deal for ourselves that gives us 100% of what we want, so we have to settle for most of what we want.

Frankly, what the Prime Minister has provided us with is leaving the EU, getting control of migration and, after a process of perhaps two or three years, getting out of the customs union. I am not a hard Brexiteer or a soft Brexiteer, but a measured Brexiteer, and that is what the Prime Minister is trying to do. We cannot of course have government by a sub-committee of the 1922 committee. We cannot keep kicking this can down the lane, as we have been told again and again. We have to come to a decision, and probably within the next two weeks we will have to make that final decision.

I say to the Government that I, like so many of my colleagues, will be supporting amendment (n). We want to give the Government some negotiating push to try to resolve this, but we have heard again and again that the EU will not contemplate any amendment to the withdrawal agreement. I say—and I repeat—that there is a solution to this, and we may have to do this in the end if we are going to get this deal through Parliament and reassure in particular our colleagues from Northern Ireland: we may have to issue a letter of reservation, under the Vienna convention, to the treaty. It would say that as both parties agree that the backstop is temporary, if it proves not to be temporary but subsists after 2021, we reserve the right under the Vienna convention to end the backstop and get out of it.

The EU could of course refuse to ratify the treaty, but we do not have to issue the letter of reservation at the time. I believe, however, that if we make absolutely clear our intention that the backstop should be temporary—that is what we have all agreed: the EU has agreed, the DUP has agreed, the Conservative party has agreed, the Labour party has agreed—and we are all agreed, this problem is surmountable. However, the Government must now take action.

I just make one final plea. We talk so much about compromise. At the end of the day, although the Prime Minister is accused of running down the clock, she is doing her level best to deliver what the British people want. So let us finally support her, and let us push this deal over the line.

6.23 pm

Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): I rise to speak in favour of amendment (g) and to make the case that the amendment is vital in enabling Parliament to take control, frankly, from a Government who are in denial and in disarray. I must say that I find any opposition to amendment (g) from Conservative Members quite perplexing, given that so many of them were in the forefront of saying that Brexit was all about restoring

parliamentary sovereignty. Now it seems as though they regard parliamentary sovereignty as a bit of an inconvenient obstacle to getting their own way.

The amendment is vital to allowing us to avoid the catastrophe of no deal. Let me make it very clear that for my constituents in Brighton no deal would be a catastrophe—a catastrophe for our tourism industry, for businesses, for our universities and research and for families and communities who are built on free movement and will fight to the end to stop free movement ending. The amendment does not bind the House to any particular outcome; it simply gives Parliament the time and space to make an honest assessment of the available options.

I want to say a few words about amendment (n)—the so-called Brady amendment. It takes fantasy to a new art form. I do not know how many times the EU has to say that it is just not possible to re-open negotiation on the withdrawal Bill. The amendment is perhaps an extraordinary way of trying to get the Conservative party to hold together, but it will not stand up to any kind of contact with external reality. Right now, EU officials tell us that they are preparing a statement that says that it would not be possible to open up an agreement that was negotiated over the past 20 months. Sabine Weyand, the deputy chief negotiator, said yesterday:

“There’s no negotiation between the UK and EU—that’s finished.”

Crossing one’s fingers, screwing up one’s eyes and just wishing it was otherwise is not a good negotiating strategy.

I appeal to Conservative colleagues to focus on what is in front of us—on practical ways to avoid the catastrophe of no deal, which will hurt the poorest hardest and for which the Prime Minister has absolutely no mandate. To those Conservative Members who seem to think that threatening no deal is effective with our European counterparts, I point out that it is tantamount to someone standing with a pistol to their head and saying, “I’ll fire it if they don’t do what I want.” It is not a very sensible negotiating strategy.

In my last few words, I want to say how much I support amendment (h) on having a citizens’ assembly. If I had more time, I would say more about it.

Mr Speaker: We rue the absence of that further time.

6.27 pm

Johnny Mercer (Plymouth, Moor View) (Con): It is a privilege to follow the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Caroline Lucas). I again give this caution: we do not seem to be listening in this House. If we continue to say, “This is a Conservative party problem,” we fundamentally misunderstand why people voted for Brexit. We can go on and on about the machinations of the Conservative party and about the party being united, but people in this country, in working-class areas, voted in swathes for Brexit. What were they voting for? I tell the House now that it was not stuff to do with the Conservative party.

We are limited in our options. I was particularly touched by the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin). I understand—I can kind of feel—his trepidation about no deal, and absolutely share it; but we cannot get rid of no deal by taking that option away, because without that, we have nothing to fall back on. Should we have done this at the beginning? Yes. Should we have bound Opposition parties into this, and have made this an endeavour of

[Johnny Mercer]

national renewal? Of course we should, but we are where we are, and we cannot capitulate and let the United Kingdom fall out on a deal that is not good enough.

We have one option left, and that, I am afraid, is to support the Brady amendment. Many of us in this place have said that the Northern Ireland backstop is the problem, so we must now do what the EU keeps saying we cannot do: get behind the Prime Minister and show that we are united on that front. Let us get a result on that backstop agreement—something: a sunset clause, or some sort of unilateral exit—and then let us get on and deliver it. Let us get into the realm of possibility.

I see the exciting new proposals that came forward today; I am pretty lukewarm about them, to be honest, because this has been going on for two years. We have a deal, but there are aspects of it that are not good enough. Let us tackle those aspects, focus on what we are doing and actually deliver Brexit. Let us get this done, so that we can get out of the European Union on 29 March and get on with something else. I have sat through the debate, and it has been extraordinarily painful to hear the arguments rehashed again and again. I have huge respect for those who continue to say, “This or that is going to happen,” and “This or that is what I want,” but we are here now; we are starting now. The agreement has a fundamental flaw that we cannot accept, but let us get on and do something about the backstop that is within the realms of what we can do. If we ask for too much—for the unreasonable—the European Union will shut the door. Let us ask for something deliverable, get that backstop amended, and get out the European Union.

6.30 pm

Stella Creasy (Walthamstow) (Lab/Co-op): There has been much talk today about finding consensus across the House. The consensus that should trouble us all is the consensus between the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke) and my hon. Friend the Member for Wigan (Lisa Nandy) when they talk about the contempt the British public have for the process they are seeing unfolding before their eyes: the pantomime that we are becoming in Parliament, the questions they have about what on earth is going on in this place and the plague on all our houses that they see.

I have gone through all the amendments and tonight I will support the amendments in the name of my right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper), the right hon. and learned Member for Beaconsfield (Mr Grieve), my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Jack Dromey) and Labour Front Benchers to try to make some progress. The honest truth, however, is that we have heard many powerful speeches today and there will be little progress.

In the short time available to me, I want to talk about amendment (h). It was not selected, but it speaks to Einstein’s principle that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result. We are living through that in this place as we talk but do not listen to each other.

Citizens’ assemblies are not about replacing MPs, or about cancelling or giving up on Parliament. They are not about saying parliamentary democracy cannot work;

they are about making it work with the public. They are also about stopping the games that we have seen being played in this place: the horse trading and the unicorn hunting that has meant that we are in this gridlock. Parliaments around the world have used citizens’ assemblies as a circuit breaker to all the bad habits that now inhabit this place. Everybody here claims to know the will of the people on these issues when the truth is that nobody does, because nobody has actually asked them. It is 250 people randomly selected to represent the British people: not the “Question Time” audience or those who will bother to turn up, but people sorted by their age, ethnicity, gender and social class, excluding politicians and those who work for them. Not aye or no, but looking at the priorities and feeding back into our discussions. We would be free as a Parliament to say no to what they said, but after just 10 short weeks of deliberation we never know what a pair of fresh eyes might bring to this debate. Certainly, that has been the experience in Ireland, Iceland, Canada and Australia. It would equally have leave and remain, Norway, Canada and any other flavour of Brexit.

The Prime Minister was right when she said that nothing has changed, but it can get worse. I ask Members whether they truly think progress can be made in the next 10 weeks, or whether it might just be worth looking at whether there is a better way that we can learn from. The public are watching. They need us to do better. Let us give it a shot.

6.33 pm

Mr Mark Harper (Forest of Dean) (Con): As colleagues will know, I voted against my party for the first time in my career when I could not support the Prime Minister and the Cabinet’s withdrawal agreement. I felt it breached two very important manifesto commitments, largely around the Northern Ireland protocol, putting barriers in the way of different parts of the United Kingdom and potentially trapping us in an indefinite customs union.

I want to give the Prime Minister the best opportunity to go back to the European Union and secure the changes that are necessary. In my judgment, supporting the amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale West (Sir Graham Brady) provides the best opportunity to support the Prime Minister in her return to the European Union.

I do not want to make her task more difficult. That is why I think it is fundamentally wrong to rule out a no-deal Brexit. The best way to secure a Brexit with a deal is to get a deal before this House that can get its support. My right hon. Friend the Member for Meriden (Dame Caroline Spelman) said she thought there was some merit in ruling out a no deal to get something in return. The problem is that if this House rules out a no-deal Brexit without the Prime Minister getting something in return, that makes her life more difficult. It makes it more difficult for her to secure a deal and less likely that we will get the deal we need to rule out a no-deal Brexit.

The amendment in the name of the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) is flawed for that reason. We have already established that her Bill has a number of problems. I understand that the Labour Front-Bench team is not keen on the length of the delay; her Bill says it would be nine months. I asked her a question and established that the Bill could be used—I accept not by her or my hon. Friend

the Member for Grantham and Stamford (Nick Boles), but by others—as a mechanism for cancelling Brexit, against the wishes of the public. The Bill needs more scrutiny than the one day in which it would be rammed through this House.

I say to my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin) that it is perfectly proper for the House to look at its procedures, but if it decides to ram through a piece of contested legislation that has not been agreed to in a procedure usually used for emergency legislation agreed by both Front-Bench teams, I think Back Benchers will rue that precedent, because a future Government will use it to ram through legislation without proper scrutiny. I urge the House to reject amendment (b).

6.36 pm

Joanna Cherry (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): I rise to support the SNP amendment that seeks an extension to article 50 and to oppose the amendment in the name of the hon. Member for Altrincham and Sale West (Sir Graham Brady). The most pertinent point that has been made this afternoon in relation to what is being called the Brady amendment is that the backstop is the inevitable consequence of a clash between the Prime Minister's red lines and our obligations under the Good Friday agreement. Therefore, as the right hon. and learned Member for Beaconsfield (Mr Grieve) said, the Brady amendment is the sort of displacement activity that is engaged in by children who are asked to do something that they do not want to do. I make no apology for repeating that analogy, because it was fantastic.

As I have been sitting here this afternoon listening to Conservative Members waxing lyrical about the Brady amendment, *The Guardian* correspondent in Brussels and other respected correspondents have reported that the European Union is preparing to issue an immediate rebuttal and publish a statement rejecting any renegotiation of the withdrawal agreement in the event of amendment (n) being passed. Tony Connelly, the very well respected RTE journalist, tells us that Jean-Claude Juncker phoned the Prime Minister at lunch time today to tell her that the Brady amendment is pointless. [*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. There are a lot of noisy conversations taking place. The hon. and learned Lady must be heard.

Joanna Cherry: I am sure they do not want to hear it, because it is not convenient. What we have been engaged in today is another waste of time. It is a charade and, frankly, a joke.

Last Friday was the birthday of Robert Burns, who famously said,

“Oh wad some power the giftie gie us

To see ourselves as ithers see us!”

Today, the UK Government and this Parliament are seen as the laughing stock of Europe. A BBC correspondent on the radio this morning said that the other member states are getting the popcorn out, mesmerised by what is going on in this House.

Peter Grant (Glenrothes) (SNP): Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that, as well as being pointless because it will never be agreed, tinkering with the backstop is potentially dangerous? If we gave the backstop

its correct description—the Good Friday peace agreement guarantee—tinkering with it would be seen to be as reckless as it actually is.

Joanna Cherry: I entirely agree. I ask myself the following question: what kind of a Prime Minister spends months—years—negotiating a deal, and then supports someone else's amendment, which drives a coach and horses through it, as the right hon. Member for Wolverhampton South East (Mr McFadden) said? We are in this mess because of the Prime Minister's red lines and the Conservative and Unionist party's deceit and foolishness.

Another famous Scottish writer—Walter Scott—once wrote:

“Oh, what a tangled web we weave

When first we practise to deceive!”

There has been constant deception. First, there was David Cameron's deception when he called his referendum and thought he could win it with the sort of scare tactics that were employed in Scotland during the independence referendum; then there was the deception employed by the leave campaign, the lies and the undeliverable promises made to ordinary decent people in this country; and now there is the deception of the Prime Minister pretending, so she can hang on to power for a few more days or weeks, that the Brady amendment is her saviour.

The delay provided for in the amendments that seek an extension is not the answer to the mess we are in. The answer for the United Kingdom is a second EU referendum, and the answer for Scotland is a second independence referendum. I believe that very soon Scotland will have to decide whether Scotland wants to be an unequal member of this Union or an equal member of the European Union—a member of a market of 60 million or a member of a single market of 500 million. The answer is a bit of a no-brainer.

6.40 pm

Keir Starmer (Holborn and St Pancras) (Lab): I have only 10 minutes, so I will get to the heart of the matter. Last Monday, the Prime Minister should have made a substantive and detailed statement setting out how the Government planned to proceed in the face of defeat—a plan B—but she did not. Instead, she has today taken a radically different course and indicated support for an amendment that cuts across the very deal she negotiated by requiring the backstop to be replaced with unspecified “alternative arrangements”. She said earlier it was not the first time the phrase had been used. It has been used twice in these negotiations in different ways: first to mean the future relationship itself and secondly to mean technology. It cannot mean the future relationship, because if we have a future relationship, we do not need a backstop; and if it means technology, it takes us back to the old idea of technology that is not there.

It is one thing for Back Benchers to lay an amendment at odds with the Prime Minister's deal, but it is quite another for the Prime Minister to support it, unless she has already got an indication from the EU that it could and would negotiate the necessary changes—but she has not. The danger is obvious: that the Prime Minister today may build a temporary sense of unity on her own Benches while in reality raising expectations she can never fulfil.

[*Keir Starmer*]

On 14 January, on the eve of the meaningful vote, the Prime Minister said at that Dispatch Box:

“I recognise that some Members wanted to see changes to the withdrawal agreement, a unilateral exit mechanism from the backstop, an end date or rejecting the backstop altogether... The simple truth is that the EU was not prepared to agree to this and rejecting the backstop altogether means no deal.”—[*Official Report*, 14 January 2019; Vol. 652, c. 826.]

Either that was correct, in which case the Government backing this amendment is absurd, or it was not, which raises its own equally serious issues. Earlier when confronted with this, the Prime Minister said you never know if you do not try, which is true, but we have been here before. She told us on 10 December that she was off to seek much lesser concessions, and she failed, so if we are going down the path of giving it a try, we need to consider what happens if we try and fail.

I listened carefully to the Prime Minister when she was challenged by my right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper), and she refused to rule out the prospect that she herself would apply for an extension of article 50 if this latest attempt to reopen issues, long thought closed, failed. I do not think this House should be so passive in the face of the high likelihood that we will be back here in two weeks facing that very prospect, which is why Labour will support the amendment seeking to prevent no deal, whether by an extension of article 50 or otherwise.

No deal would be catastrophic for jobs and living standards; it would weaken our security; and it would risk a hard border in Northern Ireland. Members should be under no illusion about this: no deal is not a way to prevent a hard border, but a way to guarantee it.

Mr Nigel Evans: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Keir Starmer: I will in a moment.

The first step in preventing the rush to no deal is to reduce the time pressure on the article 50 process. That is what some of the key amendments seek to do, and we will support them, but before there are cries of “Brexit delayed,” let us be clear: we are only at this stage, with 59 days to go, because the Government have run down the clock.

The word crisis is overused in this House, in our media and in our national debate, but we should be in no doubt that this is one of the greatest national crises our country has faced in a generation, and in the absence of leadership from the Government and this Prime Minister, Parliament must now act.

I recognise that there are concerns among some Members, including some on my own side, about voting for these amendments tonight, and I understand those concerns. I also understand the anger and frustration felt by many of our constituents about the handling of these negotiations and about the way in which this place has conducted itself in recent weeks.

Mr Evans *rose*—

Keir Starmer: However, we do not have the luxury of being bystanders in this debate. We are active participants. What our constituents are looking for is leadership, and it is time for us to provide it. We cannot say that we

want to prevent no deal if we are not willing to take steps to stop it. We cannot tell the people that we do not want no deal and then sleepwalk towards it. We must act, and we must act tonight. Our constituents will not forgive us—nor should they—if we dodge difficult questions.

Mr Evans *rose*—

Keir Starmer: The Prime Minister may pretend otherwise, but I want to be very clear: delay of article 50 is now inevitable, and it is irresponsible to pretend otherwise. That is the honest truth, and our constituents need to be told it. Even if the Prime Minister were to get a deal through the House in the coming weeks, a swathe of legislation would still need to be passed: six Bills, including a complex implementation Bill, and 600 statutory instruments. It is simply not credible to pretend that all that could be forced through in the remaining time. All that the amendments do is face reality.

Mr Evans: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Keir Starmer: I will not, because I do not want to leave the Secretary of State without the time that he needs.

The next task that the House will have to undertake is to explore credible alternatives to the Prime Minister’s deal that might be capable of gaining majority support in the House. That is not an easy task, but it is one that we need to get on with. Time is now needed in which to debate and vote on these options. That is why Labour’s Front-Bench amendment was tabled, and it is also why Labour supports amendment (g), in the name of the right hon. and learned Member for Beaconsfield (Mr Grieve), and amendment (f) in the name of my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn).

One of the great tragedies of this last two years is that we have had a Prime Minister who is unwilling to listen to Parliament and wants to push Parliament away, unwilling to build consensus and unwilling to listen to reasonable amendments. But the Prime Minister is now out of time, and Parliament must take control.

6.47 pm

The Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Stephen Barclay): Recent weeks have proved the strength and vigour of Parliament, but it is now time to agree its will. It is time for us to establish what deal the House is for, to deliver certainty to our citizens and businesses and to offer clarity to the European Union. As we debate inside the Chamber, we should not lose sight of the fact that outside, the EU rightly expects us to continue to respect our shared values: to protect citizens’ rights, to honour our international obligations and to preserve the integrity of the peace process and avoid a hard border. That is a commitment that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister holds extremely dear.

Indeed, many Members in all parts of the House find much in the withdrawal agreement that is common ground. That is an integral part of bringing the country back together as we move forward in the national interest. However, many of the amendments simply prolong uncertainty and delay, despite the paradox that they were presented in a spirit of making progress in the delivery of certainty.

Ms Angela Eagle: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Stephen Barclay: Unlike the shadow Secretary of State, I am happy to give way.

Ms Eagle: I thank the Secretary of State. I wonder whether he could enlighten the House about the phrase in the amendment tabled by the Chairman of the 1922 Committee, the hon. Member for Altrincham and Sale West (Sir Graham Brady). What are the “alternative arrangements” that they are going to barrel off to the EU to renegotiate in the next couple of weeks?

Stephen Barclay: If the hon. Lady had read the political declaration, she would know that the alternative arrangements are referred to in paragraph 19, but what she has drawn attention to is the stark difference between Labour and the Conservatives.

The amendment tabled by the Leader of the Opposition has barely been referred to today. Members on his own side did not even want to mention it as they referred to amendments tabled by Back Benchers. They did not seem to want to engage with it. That is because the Leader of the Opposition starts from a position of calling for unity, but cannot adopt the unified position of accepting an amendment from his own Back-Bench colleagues.

Mr Nigel Evans: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Stephen Barclay: I will happily give way.

Mr Evans: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for showing such great generosity in allowing Members to intervene on him. If Members vote for the possibility of extending article 50 this evening by up to nine months and the EU allowed it, has he estimated how many billions of pounds that would cost, and could he estimate where that money would come from—which public services would be damaged because that money was going to Brussels rather than public services in the UK?

Stephen Barclay: The reason we are willing to take interventions and debate is that we have a clear position from the Prime Minister, whereas the position of the Leader of the Opposition is confused. Is he for a second referendum, like the shadow Business Secretary, or does he support the position of the shadow Education Secretary who thinks a second referendum would be a betrayal? Does he or does he not support the position of Len McCluskey, who is willing to engage with the Prime Minister?

Angus Brendan MacNeil: The question should be turned the other way: has any estimate been made of the billions in extra revenue that will come to the Exchequer through trading in the best single market and customs union for an extra nine months—not the fee to be part of the club, but the money that is to be gained from trade while being in that club?

Stephen Barclay: The whole point is that indecision and delay would flow from the amendment of the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper), and indeed, as we saw in the debate, there is confusion as to what the date is: the amendment

refers to the end of this year, yet in her remarks she said that it might not be that long; she said that it might be shorter. In an exchange, my very good and hon. Friend the Member for Grantham and Stamford (Nick Boles) said that there would be further iterations where we could look at the timing, yet, as my distinguished predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Esher and Walton (Dominic Raab) pointed out, it is an empty vessel—in essence a Trojan horse in which there is indecision over delay.

Several hon. Members rose—

Stephen Barclay: I want to make some progress. The key point that flows from the point made by the hon. Member for Na h-Eileanan an Iar (Angus Brendan MacNeil) is that by not backing a deal we prolong the level of uncertainty, and that drives cost. That is exactly why so many businesses in Scotland as well as the rest of the United Kingdom say that the best way to end unnecessary costs under a no deal is to back the Prime Minister's deal.

What we see in the debate is a marked difference of focus. We have on the Benches behind me colleagues on different sides of the referendum debate, such as my right hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Nicky Morgan) and my hon. Friend the Member for North East Somerset (Mr Rees-Mogg), coming together to look at how they can work on solutions, and we have a proposal from my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale West (Sir Graham Brady) that will do just that. It will help us unlock the conversation with the European Union and get us even closer to delivering on the result of the referendum—a result, indeed, that so many on Opposition Members were committed to supporting in their manifesto.

Kate Hoey (Vauxhall) (Lab): Does the Secretary of State agree that, whatever we say in this House tonight, those who vote for amendments to delay article 50 and the whole process of leaving at the end of March will be seen by the public, even if they do not mean it, as wanting to stop Brexit?

Stephen Barclay: The hon. Lady is absolutely right: at best they delay Parliament in terms of getting clarity on an agreed plan, and at worst they disguise attempts to stop Brexit. It would be better if those Members who want to go back on their manifestos and indeed stop Brexit were more explicit about their intentions, because, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has repeatedly set out, there is only one way to stop no deal and that is to secure a deal or go back on the biggest vote in our democratic history.

In the remaining time, let me turn briefly to the Leader of the Opposition's amendment because it contradicts what was said by the shadow Trade Secretary who said that a customs policy would give the EU

“power to decide our tariffs & quotas with 3rd countries. We'd be forced to liberalise our market but have no reciprocal access to theirs”,

The Leader of the Opposition's amendment would leave the door open for a second referendum, which is something his own Front-Bench colleagues have said they oppose.

Emma Reynolds: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Stephen Barclay: Of course I will give way.

Emma Reynolds: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for giving way; he is being very generous. Can he spell out to the House—please do not refer to an article in the political declaration—what are the alternative arrangements to the backstop that the Government want to pursue with the EU?

Stephen Barclay: I have five minutes left and will come on to that point—[*Interruption.*] Unlike my opposite number, I will take interventions and I will come on to the alternative arrangements, because they go to the heart of the amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale West.

Before doing so, I want to touch briefly, in the time available, on the amendments tabled by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr Grieve) and by the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford. I do not for a minute question the principled spirit in which they have been proposed, but the reality is that they would have significant wider implications beyond Brexit. That is not just my view or, indeed, that of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. It is also the view of leading constitutional experts such as Philip Cowley and Vernon Bogdanor, the latter of whom said that

“the proposals...have international as well as domestic implications.” The House needs to consider carefully the lack of debate and clarity on the amendments’ proposed policy and the lack of certainty as to their intent and consequences. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Forest of Dean (Mr Harper), the former Chief Whip, has pointed out, the danger is that they will, in essence, act as a Trojan horse against the stated intention.

I do not for a minute doubt my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin) when he says that changing Standing Orders has precedence—of course it does—but there has been no debate about that with the Procedure Committee or in this House. The wider constitutional implications, which have been referred to by leading experts in the field, cannot simply be swept away in the short-term convenience of the moment.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Meriden (Dame Caroline Spelman) tabled a principled amendment, but she spoke of a simple vote on saying no to no deal. That issue was taken head on by the right hon. Member for Belfast North (Nigel Dodds) when he pointed out that the practical effect of taking no deal off the table would not facilitate the amendment’s intention. I absolutely agree with the right hon. Gentleman. It is not just DUP Members who hold that view. On 24 January, Michel Barnier himself said that

“it is not enough to vote against the No Deal...if no positive suggestions are put on the table, then we will be more or less bumpy or heading for the No Deal on March 30, as in an accident.”

The way to address no deal is by backing the deal of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

There has been much discussion of the proposal of my hon. Friend the Member for North West Hampshire (Kit Malthouse). Although it is not the subject of an amendment on today’s Order Paper, it has given us many technical questions to consider and we will seek the experts’ views. We will take forward the spirit of goodwill on which it builds, as part of reaching the common ground the House needs.

Lady Hermon: I have waited very, very patiently, but I have run out of patience. I would like the Secretary of State to explain to this House exactly what the alternative arrangements are. It is a straightforward question and we are entitled to a straightforward answer.

Stephen Barclay: That will be part of the negotiation that we will discuss in terms of the technical issues. What is not in doubt is that our commitment is shared by the hon. Lady, who has criticised Labour Members who, unlike the sister parties of the Labour movement in Northern Ireland, have not backed this deal or reflected the will of either the Labour movement in the south or that in the north. The fact is that they have walked away from the deal, even though the deal is the way to secure our steadfast commitment, which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister repeated today, to ensuring that no hard border returns to Northern Ireland.

Several hon. Members rose—

Stephen Barclay: Given that I have just a minute left, I will not give way.

Across leave and remain constituencies, we hear the same overwhelming call for the House to get on with it. Although 17.4 million people did not vote for no deal, they voted to leave. Time is of the essence. Citizens and business want certainty; the EU wants clarity; the Prime Minister needs a mandate and the House must therefore come together. It is time to act in the national interest. That is why the House should back amendment (n) tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale West.

7 pm

The Speaker put the Questions necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded at that time (Order, this day.)

Amendment proposed: (a), in line 1, leave out from “House” to end and add

“requires ministers to secure sufficient time for the UK Parliament to consider and vote on options to prevent the UK leaving the EU without a ratified Withdrawal Agreement and Political Declaration, and that those options should include:

(i) Negotiating changes to the draft Withdrawal Agreement and Political Declaration so as to secure a permanent customs union with the EU, a strong relationship with the single market underpinned by shared institutions and obligations, and dynamic alignment on rights and standards, in order to command a majority in the House of Commons;

(ii) Legislating to hold a public vote on a deal or a proposition that has commanded the support of the majority of the House of Commons.”—(*Jeremy Corbyn.*)

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The House divided: Ayes 296, Noes 327.

Division No. 307]

[7 pm

AYES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
Abrahams, Debbie
Ali, Rushanara
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
Amesbury, Mike
Antoniazzi, Tonia
Ashworth, Jonathan
Austin, Ian

Bailey, Mr Adrian
Bardell, Hannah
Beckett, rh Margaret
Benn, rh Hilary
Berger, Luciana
Betts, Mr Clive
Black, Mhairi
Blackford, rh Ian

Blackman, Kirsty
 Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta
 Blomfield, Paul
 Brabin, Tracy
 Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
 Brake, rh Tom
 Brennan, Kevin
 Brock, Deidre
 Brown, Alan
 Brown, Lyn
 Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
 Bryant, Chris
 Buck, Ms Karen
 Burden, Richard
 Burgon, Richard
 Butler, Dawn
 Byrne, rh Liam
 Cable, rh Sir Vince
 Cadbury, Ruth
 Cameron, Dr Lisa
 Campbell, rh Sir Alan
 Carden, Dan
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Chapman, Douglas
 Chapman, Jenny
 Charalambous, Bambos
 Cherry, Joanna
 Clwyd, rh Ann
 Coaker, Vernon
 Coffey, Ann
 Cooper, Julie
 Cooper, Rosie
 Cooper, rh Yvette
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy
 Cowan, Ronnie
 Coyle, Neil
 Crausby, Sir David
 Crawley, Angela
 Creagh, Mary
 Creasy, Stella
 Cruddas, Jon
 Cryer, John
 Cummins, Judith
 Cunningham, Alex
 Cunningham, Mr Jim
 Daby, Janet
 Davey, rh Sir Edward
 David, Wayne
 Davies, Geraint
 Day, Martyn
 De Cordova, Marsha
 De Piero, Gloria
 Dent Coad, Emma
 Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
 Docherty-Hughes, Martin
 Dodds, Anneliese
 Doughty, Stephen
 Dowd, Peter
 Drew, Dr David
 Dromey, Jack
 Duffield, Rosie
 Eagle, Ms Angela
 Eagle, Maria
 Edwards, Jonathan
 Efford, Clive
 Elliott, Julie
 Ellman, Dame Louise
 Elmore, Chris
 Esterson, Bill
 Evans, Chris
 Farrelly, Paul
 Farron, Tim

Fellows, Marion
 Fletcher, Colleen
 Flint, rh Caroline
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Frith, James
 Furniss, Gill
 Gaffney, Hugh
 Gapes, Mike
 Gardiner, Barry
 George, Ruth
 Gethins, Stephen
 Gibson, Patricia
 Gill, Preet Kaur
 Glindon, Mary
 Godsiff, Mr Roger
 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
 Hill, Mike
 Hillier, Meg
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hollern, Kate
 Hopkins, Kelvin
 Hosie, Stewart
 Howarth, rh Mr George
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Hussain, Imran
 Jardine, Christine
 Jarvis, Dan
 Johnson, Diana
 Jones, Darren
 Jones, Gerald
 Jones, Graham P.
 Jones, Helen
 Jones, rh Mr Kevan
 Jones, Sarah
 Jones, Susan Elan
 Kane, Mike
 Keeley, Barbara
 Kendall, Liz
 Khan, Afzal
 Killen, Ged
 Kinnock, Stephen
 Kyle, Peter
 Laird, Lesley
 Lake, Ben
 Lamb, rh Norman
 Lammy, rh Mr David
 Lavery, Ian
 Law, Chris
 Lee, Karen

Leslie, Mr Chris
 Lewis, Clive
 Lewis, Mr Ivan
 Linden, David
 Lloyd, Tony
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lucas, Ian C.
 Lynch, Holly
 MacNeil, Angus Brendan
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Mahmood, Shabana
 Malhotra, Seema
 Marsden, Gordon
 Martin, Sandy
 Maskell, Rachael
 Matheson, Christian
 Mc Nally, John
 McCabe, Steve
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
 McDonald, Stuart C.
 McDonnell, rh John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGinn, Conor
 McGovern, Alison
 McInnes, Liz
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McMahon, Jim
 McMorris, Anna
 Mearns, Ian
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Monaghan, Carol
 Moon, Mrs Madeleine
 Moran, Layla
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, Grahame
 Murray, Ian
 Nandy, Lisa
 Newlands, Gavin
 Norris, Alex
 O'Hara, Brendan
 O'Mara, Jared
 Onn, Melanie
 Onwurah, Chi
 Osamor, Kate
 Owen, Albert
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pearce, Teresa
 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
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reeves, Rachel
 Reynolds, Emma
 Reynolds, Jonathan

Rimmer, Ms Marie
 Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
 Rodda, Matt
 Rowley, Danielle
 Ruane, Chris
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
 Ryan, rh Joan
 Saville Roberts, Liz
 Shah, Naz
 Sharma, Mr Virendra
 Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Sheppard, Tommy
 Sherriff, Paula
 Shuker, Mr Gavin
 Siddiq, Tulip (*Proxy vote cast
by Vicky Foxcroft*)
 Slaughtar, Andy
 Smeeth, Ruth
 Smith, Angela
 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
 Swinson, Jo
 Tami, rh Mark
 Thewliss, Alison
 Thomas, Gareth
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick
 Thornberry, rh Emily
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Trickett, Jon
 Turley, Anna
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Derek
 Twigg, Stephen
 Twist, Liz
 Umunna, Chuka
 Vaz, rh Keith
 Vaz, Valerie
 Walker, Thelma
 Watson, Tom
 West, Catherine
 Western, Matt
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whitfield, Martin
 Whitford, Dr Philippa
 Williams, Hywel
 Williams, Dr Paul
 Williamson, Chris
 Wilson, Phil
 Wishart, Pete
 Woodcock, John
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:

**Nic Dakin and
Thangam Debbonaire**

NOES

Adams, Nigel
Afolami, Bim
Afriyie, Adam
Aldous, Peter
Allan, Lucy
Allen, Heidi
Amess, Sir David
Andrew, Stuart
Argar, Edward
Atkins, Victoria
Bacon, Mr Richard
Badenoch, Mrs Kemi
Baker, Mr Steve
Baldwin, Harriett
Barclay, rh Stephen
Baron, Mr John
Barron, rh Sir Kevin
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, Conon
Burt, rh Alistair
Cairns, rh Alun
Campbell, Mr Gregory
Cartlidge, James
Cash, Sir William
Caulfield, Maria
Chalk, Alex
Chishti, Rehman
Chope, Sir Christopher
Churchill, Jo
Clark, Colin
Clark, rh Greg
Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth
Clarke, Mr Simon
Cleverly, James
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
Coffey, Dr Thérèse
Collins, Damian
Courts, Robert
Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey
Crabb, rh Stephen
Crouch, Tracey
Davies, Chris
Davies, David T. C.
Davies, Glyn
Davies, Mims
Davies, Philip
Davis, rh Mr David
Dinenage, Caroline
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
Docherty, Leo

Dodds, rh Nigel
Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
Donelan, Michelle
Dorries, Ms Nadine
Double, Steve
Dowden, Oliver
Doyle-Price, Jackie
Drax, Richard
Duddridge, James
Duguid, David
Duncan, rh Sir Alan
Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
Dunne, rh Mr Philip
Ellis, Michael
Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
Elphicke, Charlie
Eustice, George
Evans, Mr Nigel
Evennett, rh Sir David
Fabricant, Michael
Fallon, rh Sir Michael
Field, rh Frank
Field, rh Mark
Fitzpatrick, Jim
Ford, Vicky
Foster, Kevin
Fox, rh Dr Liam
Francois, rh Mr Mark
Frazer, Lucy
Freeman, George
Freer, Mike
Fysh, Mr Marcus
Gale, rh Sir Roger
Garnier, Mark
Gauke, rh Mr David
Ghani, Ms Nusrat
Gibb, rh Nick
Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl
Girvan, Paul
Glen, John
Goldsmith, Zac
Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
Gove, rh Michael
Graham, Luke
Graham, Richard
Grant, Bill
Grant, Mrs Helen
Gray, James
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, rh Mr Philip
Hammond, Stephen
Hancock, rh Matt
Hands, rh Greg
Harper, rh Mr Mark
Harrington, Richard
Harris, Rebecca
Harrison, Trudy
Hart, Simon
Hayes, rh Sir John
Heald, rh Sir Oliver
Heapey, James
Heaton-Harris, Chris

Heaton-Jones, Peter
Henderson, Gordon
Herbert, rh Nick
Hermon, Lady
Hinds, rh Damian
Hoare, Simon
Hollingbery, George
Hollinrake, Kevin
Hollobone, Mr Philip
Holloway, Adam
Howell, John
Huddleston, Nigel
Hughes, Eddie
Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
Hurd, rh Mr Nick
Jack, Mr Alister
James, Margot
Javid, rh Sajid
Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
Jenkin, Sir Bernard
Jenkyns, Andrea
Jenrick, Robert
Johnson, rh Boris
Johnson, Dr Caroline
Johnson, Gareth
Johnson, Joseph
Jones, Andrew
Jones, rh Mr David
Jones, Mr Marcus
Kawczynski, Daniel
Keegan, Gillian
Kennedy, Seema
Kerr, Stephen
Knight, rh Sir Greg
Knight, Julian
Kwarteng, Kwasi
Lamont, John
Lancaster, rh Mark
Latham, Mrs Pauline
Leadsom, rh Andrea
Lee, Dr Phillip
Lefroy, Jeremy
Leigh, rh Sir Edward
Letwin, rh Sir Oliver
Lewer, Andrew
Lewis, rh Brandon
Lewis, rh Dr Julian
Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
Lidington, rh Mr David
Little Pengelly, Emma
Lopez, Julia
Lopresti, Jack
Lord, Mr Jonathan
Loughton, Tim
Mackinlay, Craig
Maclean, Rachel
Main, Mrs Anne
Mak, Alan
Malthouse, Kit
Mann, Scott
Masterton, Paul
May, rh Mrs Theresa
Maynard, Paul
McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick
McPartland, Stephen
McVey, rh Ms Esther
Menzies, Mark
Mercer, Johnny
Merriman, Huw
Metcalfe, Stephen
Miller, rh Mrs Maria
Milling, Amanda

Mills, Nigel
Milton, rh Anne
Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
Moore, Damien
Mordaunt, rh Penny
Morgan, rh Nicky
Morris, Anne Marie
Morris, David
Morris, James
Mundell, rh David
Murray, Mrs Sheryll
Murrison, Dr Andrew
Neill, Robert
Newton, Sarah
Nokes, rh Caroline
Norman, Jesse
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
Sandbach, Antoinette
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, rh Julian
Smith, Royston
Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
Soubry, rh Anna
Spelman, rh Dame Caroline
Spencer, Mark
Stephenson, Andrew
Stevenson, John
Stewart, Bob
Stewart, Rory

Streeter, Sir Gary
Stride, rh Mel
Stuart, Graham
Sturdy, Julian
Sunak, Rishi
Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
Swire, rh Sir Hugo
Syms, Sir Robert
Thomas, Derek
Thomson, Ross
Throup, Maggie
Tolhurst, Kelly
Tomlinson, Justin
Tomlinson, Michael
Tracey, Craig
Tredinnick, David
Trevelyan, Anne-Marie
Truss, rh Elizabeth
Tugendhat, Tom
Vaizey, rh Mr Edward
Vara, Mr Shailesh
Vickers, Martin

Villiers, rh Theresa
Walker, Mr Charles
Walker, Mr Robin
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:
Wendy Morton and
Iain Stewart

Question accordingly negated.

Amendment proposed: (o), in line 1, leave out from “House” to end and add

“notes that the Scottish Parliament, National Assembly for Wales and House of Commons all voted overwhelmingly to reject the Prime Minister’s deal; calls for the Government to seek an extension of the period specified under Article 50(3) of the Treaty on European Union; agrees a No Deal outcome should be ruled out; and recognises that if the UK is an equal partnership of nations, the 62 per cent vote to remain at the EU referendum on 23 June 2016 in Scotland should be respected and that the people of Scotland should not be taken out of the EU against their will.”.—
(*Ian Blackford.*)

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The House divided: Ayes 39, Noes 327.

Division No. 308]

[7.14 pm

AYES

Bardell, Hannah
Black, Mhairi
Blackford, rh Ian
Blackman, Kirsty
Brock, Deidre
Brown, Alan
Cameron, Dr Lisa
Chapman, Douglas
Cherry, Joanna
Cowan, Ronnie
Crawley, Angela
Day, Martyn
Docherty-Hughes, Martin
Edwards, Jonathan
Farrelly, Paul
Gethins, Stephen
Gibson, Patricia
Grady, Patrick
Grant, Peter
Gray, Neil
Hendry, Drew
Hosie, Stewart

Lake, Ben
Law, Chris
Lucas, Caroline
MacNeil, Angus Brendan
Mc Nally, John
McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
McDonald, Stuart C.
Monaghan, Carol
Newlands, Gavin
O'Hara, Brendan
Saville Roberts, Liz
Sheppard, Tommy
Stephens, Chris
Thewliss, Alison
Whitford, Dr Philippa
Williams, Hywel
Wishart, Pete

Tellers for the Ayes:
Marion Fellows and
David Linden

NOES

Adams, Nigel
Afolami, Bim
Afriyie, Adam
Aldous, Peter
Allan, Lucy
Allen, Heidi
Amess, Sir David
Andrew, Stuart

Argar, Edward
Atkins, Victoria
Bacon, Mr Richard
Badenoch, Mrs Kemi
Baker, Mr Steve
Baldwin, Harriett
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
Cartlidge, James
Cash, Sir William
Caulfield, Maria
Chalk, Alex
Chishti, Rehman
Chope, Sir Christopher
Churchill, Jo
Clark, Colin
Clark, rh Greg
Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth
Clarke, Mr Simon
Cleverly, James
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
Coffey, Dr Thérèse
Collins, Damian
Courts, Robert
Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey
Crabb, rh Stephen
Crouch, Tracey
Davies, Chris
Davies, David T. C.
Davies, Glyn
Davies, Mims
Davies, Philip
Davis, rh Mr David
Dinenage, Caroline
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
Docherty, Leo
Dodds, rh Nigel
Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
Donelan, Michelle
Dorries, Ms Nadine
Double, Steve
Dowden, Oliver
Doyle-Price, Jackie
Drax, Richard
Duddridge, James
Duguid, David

Duncan, rh Sir Alan
Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
Dunne, rh Mr Philip
Ellis, Michael
Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
Elphicke, Charlie
Eustice, George
Evans, Mr Nigel
Evennett, rh Sir David
Fabricant, Michael
Fallon, rh Sir Michael
Field, rh Frank
Field, rh Mark
Fitzpatrick, Jim
Ford, Vicky
Foster, Kevin
Fox, rh Dr Liam
Francois, rh Mr Mark
Frazer, Lucy
Freeman, George
Freer, Mike
Fysh, Mr Marcus
Gale, rh Sir Roger
Garnier, Mark
Gauke, rh Mr David
Ghani, Ms Nusrat
Gibb, rh Nick
Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl
Girvan, Paul
Glen, John
Goldsmith, Zac
Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
Gove, rh Michael
Graham, Luke
Graham, Richard
Grant, Bill
Grant, Mrs Helen
Gray, James
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, rh Mr Philip
Hammond, Stephen
Hancock, rh Matt
Hands, rh Mr Greg
Harper, rh 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
Hermon, Lady
Hinds, rh Damian
Hoare, Simon
Hoey, Kate
Hollingbery, George
Hollinrake, Kevin
Hollobone, Mr Philip
Holloway, Adam

Howell, John
Huddleston, Nigel
Hughes, Eddie
Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
Hurd, rh Mr Nick
Jack, Mr Alister
James, Margot
Javid, rh Sajid
Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
Jenkin, Sir Bernard
Jenkyns, Andrea
Jenrick, Robert
Johnson, rh Boris
Johnson, Dr Caroline
Johnson, Gareth
Johnson, Joseph
Jones, Andrew
Jones, rh Mr David
Jones, Mr Marcus
Kawczynski, Daniel
Keegan, Gillian
Kennedy, Seema
Kerr, Stephen
Knight, rh Sir Greg
Knight, Julian
Kwarteng, Kwasi
Lamont, John
Lancaster, rh Mark
Latham, Mrs Pauline
Leadsom, rh Andrea
Lee, Dr Phillip
Lefroy, Jeremy
Leigh, rh Sir Edward
Letwin, rh Sir Oliver
Lewer, Andrew
Lewis, rh Brandon
Lewis, rh Dr Julian
Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
Lidington, rh Mr David
Little Pengelly, Emma
Lopez, Julia
Lopresti, Jack
Lord, Mr Jonathan
Loughton, Tim
Mackinlay, Craig
Maclean, Rachel
Main, Mrs Anne
Mak, Alan
Malthouse, Kit
Mann, Scott
Masterton, Paul
May, rh Mrs Theresa
Maynard, Paul
McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick
McPartland, Stephen
McVey, rh Ms Esther
Menzies, Mark
Mercer, Johnny
Merriman, Huw
Metcalf, Stephen
Miller, rh Mrs Maria
Milling, Amanda
Mills, Nigel
Milton, rh Anne
Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
Moore, Damien
Mordaunt, rh Penny
Morgan, rh Nicky
Morris, Anne Marie
Morris, David
Morris, James
Mundell, rh David

Murray, Mrs Sheryll
Murrison, Dr Andrew
Neill, Robert
Newton, Sarah
Nokes, rh Caroline
Norman, Jesse
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
Sandbach, Antoinette
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, rh Julian
Smith, Royston
Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
Soubry, rh Anna
Spelman, rh Dame Caroline
Spencer, Mark
Stephenson, Andrew
Stevenson, John
Stewart, Bob
Stewart, Rory
Streeter, Sir Gary
Stride, rh Mel
Stringer, Graham
Stuart, Graham
Sturdy, Julian
Sunak, Rishi
Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
Swire, rh Sir Hugo
Syms, Sir Robert
Thomas, Derek

Thomson, Ross
Throup, Maggie
Tolhurst, Kelly
Tomlinson, Justin
Tomlinson, Michael
Tracey, Craig
Tredinnick, David
Trevelyan, Anne-Marie
Truss, rh Elizabeth
Tugendhat, Tom
Vaizey, rh Mr Edward
Vara, Mr Shailesh
Vickers, Martin
Villiers, rh Theresa
Walker, Mr Charles
Walker, Mr Robin
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
Wood, Mike
Wragg, Mr William
Wright, rh Jeremy
Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Noes:
Wendy Morton and
Iain Stewart

Question accordingly negated.

Amendment proposed: (g), at end, add—

“and orders that on 12 and 26 February and 5, 12, 19 and 26 March 2019—

(a) Standing Order No. 14(1) which provides that government business shall have precedence at every sitting save as provided in that order) shall not apply;

(b) a Motion in the name of the Chairman of Ways and Means “That this House has considered the United Kingdom’s departure from, and future relationship with, the European Union” shall stand as the first item of business;

(c) Standing Order No. 24B (Amendments to motions to consider specified matters) shall not apply to such motions;

(d) proceedings on the motion may continue for up to six and a half hours after its commencement, though opposed, and shall not be interrupted at the moment of interruption; and Standing Order No. 41A (Deferred divisions) will not apply; and

(e) at the conclusion of those proceedings, the Speaker shall put the questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the motion, which shall include the questions on any amendments selected by the Speaker, which may then be moved.”.—(*Mr Grieve.*)

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The House divided: Ayes 301, Noes 321.

Division No. 309]

[7.28 pm

AYES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
Abrahams, Debbie
Ali, Rushanara
Allen, Heidi
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
Amesbury, Mike
Antoniazzi, Tonia
Ashworth, Jonathan
Bailey, Mr Adrian
Bardell, Hannah
Bebb, Guto
Beckett, rh Margaret
Benn, rh Hilary
Berger, Luciana
Betts, Mr Clive
Black, Mhairi
Blackford, rh Ian
Blackman, Kirsty
Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta
Blomfield, Paul
Boles, Nick
Brabin, Tracy
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
Brake, rh Tom
Brennan, Kevin

Brock, Deidre
Brown, Alan
Brown, Lyn
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
Bryant, Chris
Buck, Ms Karen
Burden, Richard
Burgon, Richard
Butler, Dawn
Byrne, rh Liam
Cable, rh Sir Vince
Cadbury, Ruth
Cameron, Dr Lisa
Campbell, rh Sir Alan
Carden, Dan
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Champion, Sarah
Chapman, Douglas
Chapman, Jenny
Charalambous, Bambos
Cherry, Joanna
Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth
Clwyd, rh Ann
Coaker, Vernon
Coffey, Ann

Cooper, Julie
Cooper, rh Yvette
Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Cowan, Ronnie
Coyle, Neil
Crausby, Sir David
Crawley, Angela
Creagh, Mary
Creasy, Stella
Cruddas, Jon
Cryer, John
Cummins, Judith
Cunningham, Alex
Cunningham, Mr Jim
Daby, Janet
Davey, rh Sir Edward
David, Wayne
Davies, Geraint
Day, Martyn
De Cordova, Marsha
De Piero, Gloria
Dent Coad, Emma
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
Docherty-Hughes, Martin
Dodds, Anneliese
Doughty, Stephen
Dowd, Peter
Drew, Dr David
Dromey, Jack
Duffield, Rosie
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eagle, Maria
Edwards, Jonathan
Efford, Clive
Elliott, Julie
Ellman, Dame Louise
Elmore, Chris
Esterson, Bill
Evans, Chris
Farrelly, Paul
Farron, Tim
Fellows, Marion
Fletcher, Colleen
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
Greening, rh Justine
Greenwood, Lilian
Greenwood, Margaret
Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
Griffith, Nia
Grogan, John
Gwynne, Andrew
Gyimah, Mr Sam
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
Hill, Mike
Hillier, Meg
Hobhouse, Wera
Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
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, Helen
Jones, rh Mr Kevan
Jones, Sarah
Jones, Susan Elan
Kane, Mike
Keeley, Barbara
Kendall, Liz
Khan, Afzal
Killen, Ged
Kinnock, Stephen
Kyle, Peter
Laird, Lesley
Lake, Ben
Lamb, rh Norman
Lammy, rh Mr David
Lavery, Ian
Law, Chris
Lee, Karen
Lee, Dr Phillip
Leslie, Mr Chris
Letwin, rh Sir Oliver
Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
Lewis, Clive
Linden, David
Lloyd, Stephen
Lloyd, Tony
Long Bailey, Rebecca
Lucas, Caroline
Lucas, Ian C.
Lynch, Holly
MacNeil, Angus Brendan
Madders, Justin
Mahmood, Mr Khalid
Mahmood, Shabana
Malhotra, Seema
Marsden, Gordon
Martin, Sandy
Maskell, Rachael
Matheson, Christian
Mc Nally, John
McCabe, Steve
McCarthy, Kerry
McDonagh, Siobhain
McDonald, Andy
McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
McDonald, Stuart C.
McDonnell, rh John
McFadden, rh Mr Pat

McGinn, Conor
McGovern, Alison
McInnes, Liz
McKinnell, Catherine
McMorrin, Anna
Mearns, Ian
Miliband, rh Edward
Monaghan, Carol
Moon, Mrs Madeleine
Moran, Layla
Morden, Jessica
Morgan, Stephen
Morris, Grahame
Murray, Ian
Nandy, Lisa
Newlands, Gavin
Norris, Alex
O'Hara, Brendan
O'Mara, Jared
Onwurah, Chi
Osamor, Kate
Owen, Albert
Peacock, Stephanie
Pearce, Teresa
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
Reeves, Ellie
Reeves, Rachel
Reynolds, Emma
Reynolds, Jonathan
Rimmer, Ms Marie
Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
Rodda, Matt
Rowley, Danielle
Ruane, Chris
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
Ryan, rh Joan
Sandbach, Antoinette
Saville Roberts, Liz
Shah, Naz
Sharma, Mr Virendra
Sheerman, Mr Barry
Sheppard, Tommy
Sherriff, Paula

Adams, Nigel
Afolami, Bim
Afrayie, Adam
Aldous, Peter
Allan, Lucy
Amess, Sir David
Andrew, Stuart
Argar, Edward
Atkins, Victoria
Austin, Ian
Bacon, Mr Richard
Badenoch, Mrs Kemi
Baker, Mr Steve

Shuker, Mr Gavin
Siddiq, Tulip (Proxy vote cast
by Vicky Foxcroft)
Slaughter, Andy
Smith, Angela
Smith, Cat
Smith, Eleanor
Smith, Jeff
Smith, Nick
Smith, Owen
Smyth, Karin
Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
Sobel, Alex
Soubry, rh Anna
Starmer, rh Keir
Stephens, Chris
Stevens, Jo
Stone, Jamie
Streeting, Wes
Sweeney, Mr Paul
Swinson, Jo
Tami, rh Mark
Thewliss, Alison
Thomas, Gareth
Thomas-Symonds, Nick
Thornberry, rh Emily
Timms, rh Stephen
Trickett, Jon
Turley, Anna
Turner, Karl
Twigg, Stephen
Twist, Liz
Umunna, Chuka
Vaizey, rh Mr Edward
Vaz, rh Keith
Vaz, Valerie
Walker, Thelma
Watson, Tom
West, Catherine
Western, Matt
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Whitfield, Martin
Whitford, Dr Philippa
Williams, Hywel
Williams, Dr Paul
Williamson, Chris
Wilson, Phil
Wishart, Pete
Wollaston, Dr Sarah
Woodcock, John
Yasin, Mohammad
Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:
Nic Dakin and
Thangam Debbonaire

NOES

Baldwin, Harriett
Barclay, rh Stephen
Baron, Mr John
Barron, rh Sir Kevin
Bellingham, Sir Henry
Benyon, rh Richard
Beresford, Sir Paul
Berry, Jake
Blackman, Bob
Blunt, Crispin
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
 Campbell, Mr Ronnie
 Cartledge, James
 Cash, Sir William
 Caulfield, Maria
 Chalk, Alex
 Chishti, Rehman
 Chope, Sir Christopher
 Churchill, Jo
 Clark, Colin
 Clark, rh Greg
 Clarke, Mr Simon
 Cleverly, James
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
 Coffey, Dr Thérèse
 Collins, Damian
 Cooper, Rosie
 Courts, Robert
 Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey
 Crabb, rh Stephen
 Crouch, Tracey
 Davies, Chris
 Davies, David T. C.
 Davies, Glyn
 Davies, Mims
 Davies, Philip
 Davis, rh Mr David
 Dinenage, Caroline
 Docherty, Leo
 Dodds, rh Nigel
 Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
 Donelan, Michelle
 Dorries, Ms Nadine
 Double, Steve
 Dowden, Oliver
 Doyle-Price, Jackie
 Drax, Richard
 Duddridge, James
 Duguid, David
 Duncan, rh Sir Alan
 Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
 Dunne, rh Mr Philip
 Ellis, Michael
 Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
 Elphicke, Charlie
 Eustice, George
 Evans, Mr Nigel
 Evennett, rh Sir David
 Fabricant, Michael
 Fallon, rh Sir Michael
 Field, rh Frank
 Field, rh Mark
 Fitzpatrick, Jim
 Flint, rh Caroline
 Ford, Vicky
 Foster, Kevin
 Fox, rh Dr Liam
 Francois, rh Mr Mark

Frazer, Lucy
 Freer, Mike
 Fysh, Mr Marcus
 Gale, rh Sir Roger
 Garnier, Mark
 Gauke, rh Mr David
 Ghani, Ms Nusrat
 Gibb, rh Nick
 Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl
 Girvan, Paul
 Glen, John
 Godsiff, Mr Roger
 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
 Griffiths, Andrew
 Hair, Kirstene
 Halfon, rh Robert
 Hall, Luke
 Hammond, rh Mr Philip
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, rh Matt
 Hands, rh Greg
 Harper, rh Mr Mark
 Harrington, Richard
 Harris, Rebecca
 Harrison, Trudy
 Hart, Simon
 Hayes, rh Sir John
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver
 Heapey, James
 Heaton-Harris, Chris
 Heaton-Jones, Peter
 Henderson, Gordon
 Hepburn, Mr Stephen
 Herbert, rh Nick
 Hermon, Lady
 Hinds, rh Damian
 Hoare, Simon
 Hoey, Kate
 Hollingbery, George
 Hollinrake, Kevin
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holloway, Adam
 Hopkins, Kelvin
 Howell, John
 Huddleston, Nigel
 Hughes, Eddie
 Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
 Hurd, rh Mr Nick
 Jack, Mr Alister
 James, Margot
 Javid, rh Sajid
 Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard
 Jenkyns, Andrea
 Jenrick, Robert
 Johnson, rh Boris
 Johnson, Dr Caroline
 Johnson, Gareth
 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
 Lefroy, Jeremy
 Leigh, rh Sir Edward
 Lewer, Andrew
 Lewis, rh Brandon
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Liddington, rh Mr David
 Little Pengelly, Emma
 Lopez, Julia
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lord, Mr Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Mackinlay, Craig
 Maclean, Rachel
 Main, Mrs Anne
 Mak, Alan
 Malthouse, Kit
 Mann, John
 Mann, Scott
 Masterton, Paul
 May, rh Mrs Theresa
 Maynard, Paul
 McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick
 McPartland, Stephen
 McVey, rh Ms Esther
 Menzies, Mark
 Mercer, Johnny
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria
 Milling, Amanda
 Mills, Nigel
 Milton, rh Anne
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Moore, Damien
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Mundell, rh David
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll
 Morrison, Dr Andrew
 Neill, Robert
 Newton, Sarah
 Nokes, rh Caroline
 Norman, Jesse
 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
 Skinner, Mr Dennis
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, rh Julian
 Smith, Laura
 Smith, Royston
 Snell, Gareth
 Spencer, Mark
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, Bob
 Stewart, Rory
 Streeter, Sir Gary
 Stride, rh Mel
 Stringer, Graham
 Stuart, Graham
 Sturdy, Julian
 Sunak, Rishi
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Swire, rh Sir Hugo
 Syms, Sir Robert
 Thomas, Derek
 Thomson, Ross
 Throup, Maggie
 Tolhurst, Kelly
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Tredinnick, David
 Trevelyan, Anne-Marie
 Truss, rh Elizabeth
 Tugendhat, Tom
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Walker, Mr Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 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
Wood, Mike
Wragg, Mr William

Wright, rh Jeremy
Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Noes:
Wendy Morton and
Iain Stewart

Question accordingly negated.

Amendment proposed: (b), at end, add

“and is conscious of the serious risks arising for the United Kingdom from exit without a withdrawal agreement and political declaration and orders accordingly that—

(1) On 5 February 2019—

- (a) Standing Order No. 14(1) (which provides that government business shall have precedence at every sitting save as provided in that order) shall not apply;
- (b) a Business of the House Motion in connection with the European Union (Withdrawal) (No. 3) Bill in the name of at least 10 Members, including at least four Members elected to the House as members of at least four different parties and at least two backers of that Bill shall stand as the first item of business;
- (c) that motion may be proceeded with until any hour though opposed, shall not be interrupted at the moment of interruption, and, if under discussion when business is postponed, under the provisions of any standing order, may be resumed, though opposed, after the interruption of business; and Standing Order No. 41A (Deferred divisions) will not apply;
- (d) at the conclusion of debate on that motion, the questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on that motion (including for the purposes of Standing Order No. 36(2) (Questions to be put following closure of debate)) shall include the questions on any amendments selected by the Speaker which may then be moved; and
- (e) the second reading of the European Union (Withdrawal) (No. 3) Bill shall stand as the first order of the day; and

(2) In respect of the European Union (Withdrawal) (No. 3) Bill, notices of Amendments, new Clauses and new Schedules to be moved in Committee may be accepted by the Clerks at the Table before the Bill has been read a second time.”—(*Yvette Cooper.*)

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The House divided: Ayes 298, Noes 321.

Division No. 310]

[7.42 pm

AYES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
Abraham, Debbie
Ali, Rushanara
Allen, Heidi
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
Amesbury, Mike
Antoniazzi, Tonio
Ashworth, Jonathan
Bailey, Mr Adrian
Bardell, Hannah
Bebb, Guto
Beckett, rh Margaret
Benn, rh Hilary
Berger, Luciana
Betts, Mr Clive
Black, Mhairi
Blackford, rh Ian
Blackman, Kirsty
Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta
Blomfield, Paul
Boles, Nick
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben

Brake, rh Tom
Brennan, Kevin
Brock, Deidre
Brown, Alan
Brown, Lyn
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
Bryant, Chris
Buck, Ms Karen
Burden, Richard
Burgon, Richard
Butler, Dawn
Byrne, rh Liam
Cable, rh Sir Vince
Cadbury, Ruth
Cameron, Dr Lisa
Campbell, rh Sir Alan
Carden, Dan
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Champion, Sarah
Chapman, Douglas
Chapman, Jenny
Charalambous, Bambos

Cherry, Joanna
Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth
Clwyd, rh Ann
Coaker, Vernon
Coffey, Ann
Cooper, Julie
Cooper, rh Yvette
Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Cowan, Ronnie
Coyle, Neil
Crausby, Sir David
Crawley, Angela
Creagh, Mary
Creasy, Stella
Cruddas, Jon
Cryer, John
Cunningham, Alex
Cunningham, Mr Jim
Daby, Janet
Davey, rh Sir Edward
David, Wayne
Davies, Geraint
Day, Martyn
De Cordova, Marsha
Dent Coad, Emma
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
Docherty-Hughes, Martin
Dods, Anneliese
Doughty, Stephen
Dowd, Peter
Drew, Dr David
Dromey, Jack
Duffield, Rosie
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eagle, Maria
Edwards, Jonathan
Efford, Clive
Elliott, Julie
Ellman, Dame Louise
Elmore, Chris
Esterson, Bill
Evans, Chris
Farrelly, Paul
Farron, Tim
Fellows, Marion
Fletcher, Colleen
Foxcroft, Vicky
Freeman, George
Frith, James
Furniss, Gill
Gaffney, Hugh
Gapes, Mike
Gardiner, Barry
George, Ruth
Gethins, Stephen
Gibson, Patricia
Gill, Preet Kaur
Glendon, Mary
Goodman, Helen
Grady, Patrick
Grant, Peter
Gray, Neil
Green, Kate
Greening, rh Justice
Greenwood, Lilian
Greenwood, Margaret
Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
Griffith, Nia
Grogan, John
Gwynne, Andrew
Gyimah, Mr Sam

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
Hill, Mike
Hillier, Meg
Hobhouse, Wera
Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
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, Helen
Jones, rh Mr Kevan
Jones, Sarah
Jones, Susan Elan
Keeley, Barbara
Kendall, Liz
Khan, Afzal
Killen, Ged
Kinnock, Stephen
Kyle, Peter
Laird, Lesley
Lake, Ben
Lamb, rh Norman
Lammy, rh Mr David
Lavery, Ian
Law, Chris
Lee, Karen
Lee, Dr Phillip
Leslie, Mr Chris
Letwin, rh Sir Oliver
Lewis, Clive
Lewis, Mr Ivan
Linden, David
Lloyd, Stephen
Lloyd, Tony
Long Bailey, Rebecca
Lucas, Caroline
Lucas, Ian C.
Lynch, Holly
MacNeil, Angus Brendan
Madders, Justin
Mahmood, Mr Khalid
Mahmood, Shabana
Malhotra, Seema
Marsden, Gordon
Martin, Sandy
Maskell, Rachael
Matheson, Christian
Mc Nally, John
McCabe, Steve
McCarthy, Kerry
McDonagh, Siobhain
McDonald, Andy
McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
McDonald, Stuart C.

McDonnell, rh John
McFadden, rh Mr Pat
McGinn, Conor
McGovern, Alison
McInnes, Liz
McKinnell, Catherine
McMorrin, Anna
Mearns, Ian
Miliband, rh Edward
Monaghan, Carol
Moon, Mrs Madeleine
Moran, Layla
Morden, Jessica
Morgan, Stephen
Morris, Grahame
Murray, Ian
Nandy, Lisa
Newlands, Gavin
Norris, Alex
O'Hara, Brendan
O'Mara, Jared
Onwurah, Chi
Osamor, Kate
Owen, Albert
Peacock, Stephanie
Pearce, Teresa
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
Reeves, Ellie
Reeves, Rachel
Reynolds, Emma
Reynolds, Jonathan
Rimmer, Ms Marie
Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
Rodda, Matt
Rowley, Danielle
Ruane, Chris
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
Ryan, rh Joan
Sandbach, Antoinette
Saville Roberts, Liz
Shah, Naz
Sharma, Mr Virendra
Sheerman, Mr Barry
Sheppard, Tommy
Sherriff, Paula

Shuker, Mr Gavin
Siddiq, Tulip (*Proxy vote cast by Vicky Foxcroft*)
Slaughter, Andy
Smith, Angela
Smith, Cat
Smith, Eleanor
Smith, Jeff
Smith, Nick
Smith, Owen
Smyth, Karin
Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
Sobel, Alex
Soubry, rh Anna
Starmmer, rh Keir
Stephens, Chris
Stevens, Jo
Stevenson, John<pa>
Stone, Jamie
Streeting, Wes
Sweeney, Mr Paul
Swinson, Jo
Tami, rh Mark
Thewliss, Alison
Thomas, Gareth
Thomas-Symonds, Nick
Thornberry, rh Emily
Timms, rh Stephen
Trickett, Jon
Turley, Anna
Turner, Karl
Twigg, Stephen
Twist, Liz
Umunna, Chuka
Vaizey, rh Mr Edward
Vaz, rh Keith
Vaz, Valerie
Walker, Thelma
Watson, Tom
West, Catherine
Western, Matt
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Whitfield, Martin
Whitford, Dr Philippa
Williams, Hywel
Williams, Dr Paul
Williamson, Chris
Wilson, Phil
Wishart, Pete
Wollaston, Dr Sarah
Woodcock, John
Yasin, Mohammad
Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:

**Nic Dakin and
Thangam Debona**

NOES

Adams, Nigel
Afolami, Bim
Afriyie, Adam
Aldous, Peter
Allan, Lucy
Amess, Sir David
Andrew, Stuart
Argar, Edward
Atkins, Victoria
Austin, Ian
Bacon, Mr Richard
Badenoch, Mrs Kemi
Baker, Mr Steve
Baldwin, Harriett
Barclay, rh Stephen
Baron, Mr John
Barron, rh Sir Kevin
Bellingham, Sir Henry
Benyon, rh Richard
Beresford, Sir Paul
Berry, Jake
Blackman, Bob

Blunt, Crispin
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
Campbell, Mr Ronnie
Cartlidge, James
Cash, Sir William
Caulfield, Maria
Chalk, Alex
Chishti, Rehman
Chope, Sir Christopher
Churchill, Jo
Clark, Colin
Clark, rh Greg
Clarke, Mr Simon
Cleverly, James
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
Coffey, Dr Thérèse
Collins, Damian
Cooper, Rosie
Courts, Robert
Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey
Crabb, rh Stephen
Crouch, Tracey
Davies, Chris
Davies, David T. C.
Davies, Glyn
Davies, Mims
Davies, Philip
Davis, rh Mr David
Dinenage, Caroline
Docherty, Leo
Dodds, rh Nigel
Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
Donelan, Michelle
Dorries, Ms Nadine
Double, Steve
Dowden, Oliver
Doyle-Price, Jackie
Drax, Richard
Duddridge, James
Duguid, David
Duncan, rh Sir Alan
Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
Dunne, rh Mr Philip
Ellis, Michael
Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
Elphicke, Charlie
Eustice, George
Evans, Mr Nigel
Evennett, rh Sir David
Fabricant, Michael
Fallon, rh Sir Michael
Field, rh Frank
Field, rh Mark
Fitzpatrick, Jim
Flint, rh Caroline

Ford, Vicky
Foster, Kevin
Fox, rh Dr Liam
Francois, rh Mr Mark
Frazer, Lucy
Freer, Mike
Fysh, Mr Marcus
Gale, rh Sir Roger
Garnier, Mark
Gauke, rh Mr David
Ghani, Ms Nusrat
Gibb, rh Nick
Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl
Girvan, Paul
Glen, John
Godsiff, Mr Roger
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
Griffiths, Andrew
Hair, Kirstene
Halfon, rh Robert
Hall, Luke
Hammond, rh Mr Philip
Hammond, Stephen
Hancock, rh Matt
Hands, rh Greg
Harper, rh Mr Mark
Harrington, Richard
Harris, Rebecca
Harrison, Trudy
Hart, Simon
Hayes, rh Sir John
Heald, rh Sir Oliver
Heapey, James
Heaton-Harris, Chris
Heaton-Jones, Peter
Henderson, Gordon
Hepburn, Mr Stephen
Herbert, rh Nick
Hermon, Lady
Hinds, rh Damian
Hoare, Simon
Hoey, Kate
Hollingbery, George
Hollinrake, Kevin
Hollobone, Mr Philip
Holloway, Adam
Hopkins, Kelvin
Howell, John
Huddleston, Nigel
Hughes, Eddie
Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
Hurd, rh Mr Nick
Jack, Mr Alister
James, Margot
Javid, rh Sajid
Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
Jenkin, Sir Bernard
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
Lefroy, Jeremy
Leigh, rh Sir Edward
Lewer, Andrew
Lewis, rh Brandon
Lewis, rh Dr Julian
Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
Lidington, rh Mr David
Little Pengelly, Emma
Lopez, Julia
Lopresti, Jack
Lord, Mr Jonathan
Loughton, Tim
Mackinlay, Craig
Maclean, Rachel
Main, Mrs Anne
Mak, Alan
Malthouse, Kit
Mann, John
Mann, Scott
Masterton, Paul
May, rh Mrs Theresa
Maynard, Paul
McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick
McPartland, Stephen
McVey, rh Ms Esther
Menzies, Mark
Mercer, Johnny
Merriman, Huw
Metcalfe, Stephen
Miller, rh Mrs Maria
Milling, Amanda
Mills, Nigel
Milton, rh Anne
Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
Moore, Damien
Mordaunt, rh Penny
Morris, Anne Marie
Morris, David
Morris, James
Mundell, rh David
Murray, Mrs Sheryll
Murrison, Dr Andrew
Neill, Robert
Newton, Sarah
Nokes, rh Caroline
Norman, Jesse
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
Skinner, Mr Dennis
Smith, Chloe
Smith, Henry
Smith, rh Julian
Smith, Laura
Smith, Royston
Snell, Gareth
Spencer, Mark
Stephenson, Andrew
Stewart, Bob
Stewart, Rory
Streeter, Sir Gary
Stride, rh Mel
Stringer, Graham
Stuart, Graham
Sturdy, Julian
Sunak, Rishi
Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
Swire, rh Sir Hugo
Syms, Sir Robert
Thomas, Derek
Thomson, Ross
Throup, Maggie
Tolhurst, Kelly
Tomlinson, Justin
Tomlinson, Michael
Tracey, Craig
Tredinnick, David
Trevelyan, Anne-Marie
Truss, rh Elizabeth
Tugendhat, Tom
Vara, Mr Shailesh
Vickers, Martin
Villiers, rh Theresa
Walker, Mr Charles
Walker, Mr Robin
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

Wood, Mike
Wragg, Mr William
Wright, rh Jeremy
Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Noes:
Wendy Morton and
Iain Stewart

Question accordingly negated.

Amendment proposed: (j), at end, add

“and, in the event that the House of Commons has not passed a resolution approving the negotiated withdrawal agreement and the framework for the future relationship for the purposes of section 13(1)(b) of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 by 26 February 2019, requires the Prime Minister to seek an extension to the period of two years specified in Article 50(3) of the Treaty on European Union.”—(*Rachel Reeves.*)

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The House divided: Ayes 290, Noes 322.

Division No. 311]

[7.56 pm

AYES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
Abrahams, Debbie
Ali, Rushanara
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
Amesbury, Mike
Antoniazzi, Tonia
Ashworth, Jonathan
Bailey, Mr Adrian
Bardell, Hannah
Bebb, Guto
Beckett, rh Margaret
Benn, rh Hilary
Berger, Luciana
Betts, Mr Clive
Black, Mhairi
Blackford, rh Ian
Blackman, Kirsty
Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta
Blomfield, Paul
Boles, Nick
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
Brake, rh Tom
Brennan, Kevin
Brock, Deidre
Brown, Alan
Brown, Lyn
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
Bryant, Chris
Buck, Ms Karen
Burden, Richard
Burgon, Richard
Butler, Dawn
Byrne, rh Liam
Cable, rh Sir Vince
Cadbury, Ruth
Cameron, Dr Lisa
Campbell, rh Sir Alan
Carden, Dan
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Champion, Sarah
Chapman, Douglas
Chapman, Jenny
Charalambous, Bambos
Cherry, Joanna
Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth
Clwyd, rh Ann
Coaker, Vernon
Coffey, Ann
Cooper, Julie
Cooper, rh Yvette
Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Cowan, Ronnie
Coyle, Neil
Crausby, Sir David
Crawley, Angela
Creagh, Mary
Creasy, Stella
Cruddas, Jon
Cryer, John
Cunningham, Alex
Cunningham, Mr Jim
Daby, Janet
Davey, rh Sir Edward
David, Wayne
Davies, Geraint
Day, Martyn
De Cordova, Marsha
Dent Coad, Emma
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
Docherty-Hughes, Martin
Dodds, Anneliese
Doughty, Stephen
Dowd, Peter
Drew, Dr David
Dromey, Jack
Duffield, Rosie
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eagle, Maria
Edwards, Jonathan
Efford, Clive
Elliott, Julie
Ellman, Dame Louise
Elmore, Chris
Esterson, Bill
Evans, Chris
Farrelly, Paul
Farron, Tim
Fellows, Marion
Fletcher, Colleen
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
 Greening, rh Justine
 Greenwood, Lilian
 Greenwood, Margaret
 Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
 Griffith, Nia
 Grogan, John
 Gwynne, Andrew
 Gymah, Mr Sam
 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
 Hillier, Meg
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 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, Helen
 Jones, rh Mr Kevan
 Jones, Sarah
 Jones, Susan Elan
 Keeley, Barbara
 Kendall, Liz
 Khan, Afzal
 Killen, Ged
 Kinnock, Stephen
 Kyle, Peter
 Laird, Lesley
 Lake, Ben
 Lamb, rh Norman
 Lammy, rh Mr David
 Lavery, Ian
 Law, Chris
 Lee, Karen
 Lee, Dr Phillip
 Leslie, Mr Chris
 Letwin, rh Sir Oliver
 Lewis, Clive
 Lewis, Mr Ivan
 Linden, David
 Lloyd, Tony
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 Lucas, Caroline

Lucas, Ian C.
 Lynch, Holly
 MacNeil, Angus Brendan
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Mahmood, Shabana
 Malhotra, Seema
 Marsden, Gordon
 Martin, Sandy
 Maskell, Rachael
 Matheson, Christian
 Mc Nally, John
 McCabe, Steve
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
 McDonald, Stuart C.
 McDonnell, rh John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGinn, Conor
 McGovern, Alison
 McInnes, Liz
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McMorris, Anna
 Mearns, Ian
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Monaghan, Carol
 Moon, Mrs Madeleine
 Moran, Layla
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, Stephen
 Murray, Ian
 Newlands, Gavin
 Norris, Alex
 O'Hara, Brendan
 O'Mara, Jared
 Onwurah, Chi
 Osamor, Kate
 Owen, Albert
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pearce, Teresa
 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
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reeves, Rachel
 Reynolds, Emma
 Reynolds, Jonathan
 Rimmer, Ms Marie
 Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
 Rodda, Matt
 Rowley, Danielle
 Ruane, Chris
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
 Ryan, rh Joan
 Sandbach, Antoinette
 Saville Roberts, Liz
 Shah, Naz
 Sharma, Mr Virendra
 Sheerman, Mr Barry

Sheppard, Tommy
 Sherriff, Paula
 Shuker, Mr Gavin
 Siddiq, Tulip, (*Proxy vote cast by Vicky Foxcroft*)
 Slaughter, Andy
 Smith, Angela
 Smith, Cat
 Smith, Eleanor
 Smith, Jeff
 Smith, Nick
 Smith, Owen
 Smyth, Karin
 Sobel, Alex
 Soubry, rh Anna
 Spellar, rh John
 Starmer, rh Keir
 Stephens, Chris
 Stevens, Jo
 Stone, Jamie
 Streeting, Wes
 Sweeney, Mr Paul
 Swinson, Jo
 Tami, rh Mark
 Thewliss, Alison
 Thomas, Gareth
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick
 Thornberry, rh Emily

Timms, rh Stephen
 Trickett, Jon
 Turley, Anna
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Stephen
 Twist, Liz
 Umunna, Chuka
 Vaz, rh Keith
 Vaz, Valerie
 Walker, Thelma
 Watson, Tom
 West, Catherine
 Western, Matt
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whitfield, Martin
 Whitford, Dr Philippa
 Williams, Hywel
 Williams, Dr Paul
 Williamson, Chris
 Wilson, Phil
 Wishart, Pete
 Wollaston, Dr Sarah
 Woodcock, John
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:
Nic Dakin and
Thangam Debbonaire

NOES

Adams, Nigel
 Afolami, Bim
 Afriyie, Adam
 Aldous, Peter
 Allan, Lucy
 Amess, Sir David
 Andrew, Stuart
 Argar, Edward
 Atkins, Victoria
 Austin, Ian
 Bacon, Mr Richard
 Badenoch, Mrs Kemi
 Baker, Mr Steve
 Baldwin, Harriett
 Barclay, rh Stephen
 Baron, Mr John
 Barron, rh Sir Kevin
 Bellingham, Sir Henry
 Benyon, rh Richard
 Beresford, Sir Paul
 Berry, Jake
 Blackman, Bob
 Blunt, Crispin
 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

Campbell, Mr Ronnie
 Cartledge, James
 Cash, Sir William
 Caulfield, Maria
 Chalk, Alex
 Chishti, Rehman
 Chope, Sir Christopher
 Churchill, Jo
 Clark, Colin
 Clark, rh Greg
 Clarke, Mr Simon
 Cleverly, James
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
 Coffey, Dr Thérèse
 Collins, Damian
 Cooper, Rosie
 Courts, Robert
 Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey
 Crabb, rh Stephen
 Crouch, Tracey
 Davies, Chris
 Davies, David T. C.
 Davies, Glyn
 Davies, Mims
 Davies, Philip
 Davis, rh Mr David
 Dinena, Caroline
 Docherty, Leo
 Dodds, rh Nigel
 Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
 Donelan, Michelle
 Dorries, Ms Nadine
 Double, Steve
 Dowden, Oliver
 Doyle-Price, Jackie
 Drax, Richard
 Duddridge, James
 Duguid, David
 Duncan, rh Sir Alan
 Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
 Dunne, rh Mr Philip

Ellis, Michael
 Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
 Elphicke, Charlie
 Eustice, George
 Evans, Mr Nigel
 Evennett, rh Sir David
 Fabricant, Michael
 Fallon, rh Sir Michael
 Field, rh Frank
 Field, rh Mark
 Fitzpatrick, Jim
 Flint, rh Caroline
 Ford, Vicky
 Foster, Kevin
 Fox, rh Dr Liam
 Francois, rh Mr Mark
 Frazer, Lucy
 Freer, Mike
 Fysh, Mr Marcus
 Gale, rh Sir Roger
 Garnier, Mark
 Gauke, rh Mr David
 Ghani, Ms Nusrat
 Gibb, rh Nick
 Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl
 Girvan, Paul
 Glen, John
 Godsiff, Mr Roger
 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
 Griffiths, Andrew
 Hair, Kirstene
 Halfon, rh Robert
 Hall, Luke
 Hammond, rh Mr Philip
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, rh Matt
 Hands, rh Greg
 Harper, rh Mr Mark
 Harrington, Richard
 Harris, Rebecca
 Harrison, Trudy
 Hart, Simon
 Hayes, rh Sir John
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver
 Heappey, James
 Heaton-Harris, Chris
 Heaton-Jones, Peter
 Henderson, Gordon
 Hepburn, Mr Stephen
 Herbert, rh Nick
 Hermon, Lady
 Hinds, rh Damian
 Hoare, Simon
 Hoey, Kate
 Hollingbery, George
 Hollinrake, Kevin
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holloway, Adam
 Hopkins, Kelvin
 Howell, John
 Huddleston, Nigel
 Hughes, Eddie
 Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
 Hurd, rh Mr Nick
 Jack, Mr Alister
 James, Margot
 Javid, rh Sajid
 Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard
 Jenkyns, Andrea
 Jenrick, Robert
 Johnson, rh Boris
 Johnson, Dr Caroline
 Johnson, Gareth
 Johnson, Joseph
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Jones, Mr Marcus
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Keegan, Gillian
 Kennedy, Seema
 Kerr, Stephen
 Knight, rh Sir Greg
 Knight, Julian
 Kwarteng, Kwasi
 Lamont, John
 Lancaster, rh Mark
 Latham, Mrs Pauline
 Leadsom, rh Andrea
 Leigh, rh Sir Edward
 Lewer, Andrew
 Lewis, rh Brandon
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Lidington, rh Mr David
 Little Pengelly, Emma
 Lopez, Julia
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lord, Mr Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Mackinlay, Craig
 Maclean, Rachel
 Main, Mrs Anne
 Mak, Alan
 Malthouse, Kit
 Mann, John
 Mann, Scott
 Masterton, Paul
 May, rh Mrs Theresa
 Maynard, Paul
 McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick
 McPartland, Stephen
 McVey, rh Ms Esther
 Menzies, Mark
 Mercer, Johnny
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria
 Milling, Amanda
 Mills, Nigel
 Milton, rh Anne
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Moore, Damien
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Mundell, rh David
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll
 Murrison, Dr Andrew
 Neill, Robert
 Newton, Sarah
 Nokes, rh Caroline
 Norman, Jesse

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, rh Julian
 Smith, Laura
 Smith, Royston
 Snell, Gareth
 Soames, rh Sir Nicholas

Spelman, rh Dame Caroline
 Spencer, Mark
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, Bob
 Stewart, Rory
 Streeter, Sir Gary
 Stride, rh Mel
 Stringer, Graham
 Stuart, Graham
 Sturdy, Julian
 Sunak, Rishi
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Swire, rh Sir Hugo
 Symms, Sir Robert
 Thomas, Derek
 Thomson, Ross
 Throup, Maggie
 Tolhurst, Kelly
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Tredinnick, David
 Trevelyan, Anne-Marie
 Truss, rh Elizabeth
 Tugendhat, Tom
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Walker, Mr Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 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
 Wood, Mike
 Wragg, Mr William
 Wright, rh Jeremy
 Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Noes:
Wendy Morton and
Iain Stewart

Question accordingly negated.

Amendment proposed: (i), at end, add

“and rejects the United Kingdom leaving the European Union without a Withdrawal Agreement and a Framework for the Future Relationship.”—(*Dame Caroline Spelman.*)

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The House divided: Ayes 318, Noes 310.

Division No. 312]

[8.11 pm

AYES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
 Abrahams, Debbie
 Ali, Rushanara
 Allen, Heidi
 Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
 Amesbury, Mike
 Antoniazzi, Tonia
 Ashworth, Jonathan

Austin, Ian
 Bailey, Mr Adrian
 Bardell, Hannah
 Barron, rh Sir Kevin
 Bebb, Guto
 Beckett, rh Margaret
 Benn, rh Hilary
 Berger, Luciana

Betts, Mr Clive
 Black, Mhairi
 Blackford, rh Ian
 Blackman, Kirsty
 Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta
 Blomfield, Paul
 Boles, Nick
 Brabin, Tracy
 Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
 Brake, rh Tom
 Brennan, Kevin
 Brock, Deidre
 Brown, Alan
 Brown, Lyn
 Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
 Bryant, Chris
 Buck, Ms Karen
 Burden, Richard
 Burgon, Richard
 Butler, Dawn
 Byrne, rh Liam
 Cable, rh Sir Vince
 Cadbury, Ruth
 Cameron, Dr Lisa
 Campbell, rh Sir Alan
 Carden, Dan
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Champion, Sarah
 Chapman, Douglas
 Chapman, Jenny
 Charalambous, Bambos
 Cherry, Joanna
 Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth
 Clwyd, rh Ann
 Coaker, Vernon
 Coffey, Ann
 Cooper, Julie
 Cooper, Rosie
 Cooper, rh Yvette
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy
 Cowan, Ronnie
 Coyle, Neil
 Crausby, Sir David
 Crawley, Angela
 Creagh, Mary
 Creasy, Stella
 Cruddas, Jon
 Cryer, John
 Cummins, Judith
 Cunningham, Alex
 Cunningham, Mr Jim
 Daby, Janet
 Davey, rh Sir Edward
 David, Wayne
 Davies, Geraint
 Day, Martyn
 De Cordova, Marsha
 De Piero, Gloria
 Dent Coad, Emma
 Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
 Docherty-Hughes, Martin
 Dodds, Anneliese
 Doughty, Stephen
 Dowd, Peter
 Drew, Dr David
 Dromey, Jack
 Duffield, Rosie
 Eagle, Ms Angela
 Eagle, Maria
 Edwards, Jonathan
 Efford, Clive

Elliott, Julie
 Ellman, Dame Louise
 Elmore, Chris
 Esterson, Bill
 Evans, Chris
 Farrelly, Paul
 Farron, Tim
 Fellows, Marion
 Fitzpatrick, Jim
 Fletcher, Colleen
 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
 Godsiff, Mr Roger
 Goodman, Helen
 Grady, Patrick
 Grant, Peter
 Gray, Neil
 Green, Kate
 Greening, rh Justine
 Greenwood, Lilian
 Greenwood, Margaret
 Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
 Griffith, Nia
 Grogan, John
 Gwynne, Andrew
 Gyimah, Mr Sam
 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
 Hermon, Lady
 Hillier, Meg
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 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, Helen
 Jones, rh Mr Kevan
 Jones, Sarah
 Jones, Susan Elan
 Kane, Mike
 Keeley, Barbara
 Kendall, Liz
 Khan, Afzal

Killen, Ged
 Kinnock, Stephen
 Kyle, Peter
 Laird, Lesley
 Lake, Ben
 Lamb, rh Norman
 Lammy, rh Mr David
 Lavery, Ian
 Law, Chris
 Lee, Karen
 Lee, Dr Phillip
 Lefroy, Jeremy
 Leslie, Mr Chris
 Letwin, rh Sir Oliver
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Lewis, Clive
 Lewis, Mr Ivan
 Linden, David
 Lloyd, Stephen
 Lloyd, Tony
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lucas, Ian C.
 Lynch, Holly
 MacNeil, Angus Brendan
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Mahmood, Shabana
 Malhotra, Seema
 Mann, John
 Marsden, Gordon
 Martin, Sandy
 Maskell, Rachael
 Matheson, Christian
 Mc Nally, John
 McCabe, Steve
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
 McDonald, Stuart C.
 McDonnell, rh John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGinn, Conor
 McGovern, Alison
 McInnes, Liz
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McMahan, Jim
 McMorris, Anna
 Mearns, Ian
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Monaghan, Carol
 Moon, Mrs Madeleine
 Moran, Layla
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, Stephen
 Murray, Ian
 Nandy, Lisa
 Newlands, Gavin
 Norris, Alex
 O'Hara, Brendan
 O'Mara, Jared
 Onn, Melanie
 Onwurah, Chi
 Osamor, Kate
 Owen, Albert
 Pawsey, Mark
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pearce, Teresa
 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
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reeves, Rachel
 Reynolds, Emma
 Reynolds, Jonathan
 Rimmer, Ms Marie
 Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
 Rodda, Matt
 Rowley, Danielle
 Ruane, Chris
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
 Ryan, rh Joan
 Sandbach, Antoinette
 Saville Roberts, Liz
 Shah, Naz
 Sharma, Mr Virendra
 Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Sheppard, Tommy
 Sherriff, Paula
 Shuker, Mr Gavin
 Siddiq, Tulip (*Proxy vote cast
by Vicky Foxcroft*)
 Skinner, Mr Dennis
 Slaughter, Andy
 Smeeth, Ruth
 Smith, Angela
 Smith, Cat
 Smith, Eleanor
 Smith, Jeff
 Smith, Laura
 Smith, Nick
 Smith, Owen
 Smyth, Karin
 Snell, Gareth
 Sobel, Alex
 Soubry, rh Anna
 Spellard, rh John
 Spelman, rh Dame Caroline
 Starmer, rh Keir
 Stephens, Chris
 Stevens, Jo
 Stone, Jamie
 Streeter, Wes
 Sweeney, Mr Paul
 Swinson, Jo
 Tami, rh Mark
 Thewliss, Alison
 Thomas, Gareth
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick
 Thornberry, rh Emily
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Trickett, Jon
 Turley, Anna
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Derek
 Twigg, Stephen
 Twist, Liz
 Umunna, Chuka
 Vaizey, rh Mr Edward
 Vaz, rh Keith
 Vaz, Valerie
 Walker, Thelma

Watson, Tom
West, Catherine
Western, Matt
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Whitfield, Martin
Whitford, Dr Philippa
Williams, Hywel
Williams, Dr Paul
Williamson, Chris

Wilson, Phil
Wishart, Pete
Wollaston, Dr Sarah
Woodcock, John
Yasin, Mohammad
Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:
Thangam Debbonaire and
Nic Dakin

NOES

Adams, Nigel
Afolami, Bim
Afriyie, Adam
Aldous, Peter
Allan, Lucy
Amess, Sir David
Andrew, Stuart
Argar, Edward
Atkins, Victoria
Bacon, Mr Richard
Badenoch, Mrs Kemi
Baker, Mr Steve
Baldwin, Harriett
Barclay, rh Stephen
Baron, Mr John
Bellingham, Sir Henry
Benyon, rh Richard
Beresford, Sir Paul
Berry, Jake
Blackman, Bob
Blunt, Crispin
Bone, Mr Peter
Bottomley, Sir Peter
Bowie, Andrew
Bradley, Ben
Bradley, rh Karen
Brady, Sir Graham
Braverman, Suella
Brereton, Jack
Bridgen, Andrew
Brine, Steve
Brokenshire, rh James
Bruce, Fiona
Buckland, Robert
Burghart, Alex
Burns, Conor
Burt, rh Alistair
Cairns, rh Alun
Campbell, Mr Gregory
Cartlidge, James
Cash, Sir William
Caulfield, Maria
Chalk, Alex
Chishti, Rehman
Chope, Sir Christopher
Churchill, Jo
Clark, Colin
Clark, rh Greg
Clarke, Mr Simon
Cleverly, James
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
Coffey, Dr Thérèse
Collins, Damian
Courts, Robert
Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey
Crabb, rh Stephen
Crouch, Tracey
Davies, Chris
Davies, David T. C.
Davies, Glyn

Davies, Mims
Davies, Philip
Davis, rh Mr David
Dinenage, Caroline
Docherty, Leo
Dodds, rh Nigel
Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
Donelan, Michelle
Dorries, Ms Nadine
Double, Steve
Dowden, Oliver
Doyle-Price, Jackie
Drax, Richard
Duddridge, James
Duguid, David
Duncan, rh Sir Alan
Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
Dunne, rh Mr Philip
Ellis, Michael
Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
Elphicke, Charlie
Eustice, George
Evans, Mr Nigel
Evennett, rh Sir David
Fabricant, Michael
Fallon, rh Sir Michael
Field, rh Frank
Field, rh Mark
Ford, Vicky
Foster, Kevin
Fox, rh Dr Liam
Francois, rh Mr Mark
Frazer, Lucy
Freeman, George
Freer, Mike
Fysh, Mr Marcus
Gale, rh Sir Roger
Garnier, Mark
Gauke, rh Mr David
Ghani, Ms Nusrat
Gibb, rh Nick
Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl
Girvan, Paul
Glen, John
Goldsmith, Zac
Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
Gove, rh Michael
Graham, Luke
Graham, Richard
Grant, Bill
Grant, Mrs Helen
Gray, James
Grayling, rh Chris
Green, Chris
Green, rh Damian
Griffiths, Andrew
Hair, Kirstene
Halfon, rh Robert
Hall, Luke
Hammond, rh Mr Philip

Hammond, Stephen
Hancock, rh Matt
Hands, rh Greg
Harper, rh Mr Mark
Harrington, Richard
Harris, Rebecca
Harrison, Trudy
Hart, Simon
Hayes, rh Sir John
Heald, rh Sir Oliver
Heapey, James
Heaton-Harris, Chris
Heaton-Jones, Peter
Henderson, Gordon
Hepburn, Mr Stephen
Herbert, rh Nick
Hinds, rh Damian
Hoare, Simon
Hoey, Kate
Hollingbery, George
Hollinrake, Kevin
Hollobone, Mr Philip
Holloway, Adam
Hopkins, Kelvin
Howell, John
Huddleston, Nigel
Hughes, Eddie
Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
Hurd, rh Mr Nick
Jack, Mr Alister
James, Margot
Javid, rh Sajid
Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
Jenkin, Sir Bernard
Jenkyns, Andrea
Jenrick, Robert
Johnson, rh Boris
Johnson, Dr Caroline
Johnson, Gareth
Johnson, Joseph
Jones, Andrew
Jones, rh Mr David
Jones, Mr Marcus
Kawczynski, Daniel
Keegan, Gillian
Kennedy, Seema
Kerr, Stephen
Knight, rh Sir Greg
Knight, Julian
Kwarteng, Kwasi
Lamont, John
Lancaster, rh Mark
Latham, Mrs Pauline
Leadsom, rh Andrea
Leigh, rh Sir Edward
Lewer, Andrew
Lewis, rh Brandon
Lewis, rh Dr Julian
Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
Lidington, rh Mr David
Little Pengelly, Emma
Lopez, Julia
Lopresti, Jack
Lord, Mr Jonathan
Loughton, Tim
Mackinlay, Craig
Maclean, Rachel
Main, Mrs Anne
Mak, Alan
Malthouse, Kit
Mann, Scott
Masterton, Paul

May, rh Mrs Theresa
Maynard, Paul
McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick
McPartland, Stephen
McVey, rh Ms Esther
Menzies, Mark
Mercer, Johnny
Merriman, Huw
Metcalfe, Stephen
Miller, rh Mrs Maria
Milling, Amanda
Mills, Nigel
Milton, rh Anne
Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
Moore, Damien
Mordaunt, rh Penny
Morris, Anne Marie
Morris, David
Morris, James
Mundell, rh David
Murray, Mrs Sheryll
Murrison, Dr Andrew
Neill, Robert
Newton, Sarah
Nokes, rh Caroline
Norman, Jesse
O'Brien, Neil
Offord, Dr Matthew
Opperman, Guy
Paisley, Ian
Parish, Neil
Patel, rh Priti
Paterson, rh Mr Owen
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, rh Julian
Smith, Royston

Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
Spencer, Mark
Stephenson, Andrew
Stevenson, John
Stewart, Bob
Stewart, Rory
Streeter, Sir Gary
Stride, rh Mel
Stringer, Graham
Stuart, Graham
Sturdy, Julian
Sunak, Rishi
Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
Swire, rh Sir Hugo
Syms, Sir Robert
Thomas, Derek
Thomson, Ross
Throup, Maggie
Tolhurst, Kelly
Tomlinson, Justin
Tomlinson, Michael
Tracey, Craig
Tredinnick, David
Trevelyan, Anne-Marie
Truss, rh Elizabeth

Tugendhat, Tom
Vara, Mr Shailesh
Vickers, Martin
Villiers, rh Theresa
Walker, Mr Charles
Walker, Mr Robin
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
Wood, Mike
Wragg, Mr William
Wright, rh Jeremy
Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Noes:
Wendy Morton and
Iain Stewart

Dodds, rh Nigel
Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
Donelan, Michelle
Dorries, Ms Nadine
Double, Steve
Dowden, Oliver
Doyle-Price, Jackie
Drax, Richard
Duddridge, James
Duguid, David
Duncan, rh Sir Alan
Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
Dunne, rh Mr Philip
Ellis, Michael
Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
Elphicke, Charlie
Eustice, George
Evans, Mr Nigel
Evennett, rh Sir David
Fabricant, Michael
Fallon, rh Sir Michael
Field, rh Frank
Field, rh Mark
Fitzpatrick, Jim
Ford, Vicky
Foster, Kevin
Fox, rh Dr Liam
Francois, rh Mr Mark
Frazer, Lucy
Freeman, George
Freer, Mike
Fysh, Mr Marcus
Gale, rh Sir Roger
Garnier, Mark
Gauke, rh Mr David
Ghani, Ms Nusrat
Gibb, rh Nick
Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl
Girvan, Paul
Glen, John
Godsiff, Mr Roger
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
Griffiths, Andrew
Hair, Kirstene
Halfon, rh Robert
Hall, Luke
Hammond, rh Mr Philip
Hammond, Stephen
Hancock, rh Matt
Hands, rh Greg
Harper, rh Mr Mark
Harrington, Richard
Harris, Rebecca
Harrison, Trudy
Hart, Simon
Hayes, rh Sir John
Heald, rh Sir Oliver
Heappey, James
Heaton-Harris, Chris
Heaton-Jones, Peter
Henderson, Gordon
Herbert, rh Nick

Hinds, rh Damian
Hoare, Simon
Hoey, Kate
Hollingbery, George
Hollinrake, Kevin
Hollobone, Mr Philip
Holloway, Adam
Hopkins, Kelvin
Howell, John
Huddleston, Nigel
Hughes, Eddie
Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
Hurd, rh Mr Nick
Jack, Mr Alister
James, Margot
Javid, rh Sajid
Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
Jenkin, Sir Bernard
Jenkyins, 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
Lefroy, Jeremy
Leigh, rh Sir Edward
Letwin, rh Sir Oliver
Lewer, Andrew
Lewis, rh Brandon
Lewis, rh Dr Julian
Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
Lidington, rh Mr David
Little Pengelly, Emma
Lloyd, Stephen
Lopez, Julia
Lopresti, Jack
Lord, Mr Jonathan
Loughton, Tim
Mackinlay, Craig
Macleay, Rachel
Main, Mrs Anne
Mak, Alan
Malthouse, Kit
Mann, John
Mann, Scott
Masterton, Paul
May, rh Mrs Theresa
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

Question accordingly agreed to.

Amendment proposed: (n), at end, add

“and requires the Northern Ireland backstop to be replaced with alternative arrangements to avoid a hard border; supports leaving the European Union with a deal and would therefore support the Withdrawal Agreement subject to this change.”—
(*Sir Graham Brady.*)

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The House divided: Ayes 317, Noes 301.

Division No. 313

[8.26 pm

AYES

Adams, Nigel
Afolami, Bim
Afriyie, Adam
Aldous, Peter
Allan, Lucy
Amess, Sir David
Andrew, Stuart
Argar, Edward
Atkins, Victoria
Austin, Ian
Bacon, Mr Richard
Badenoch, Mrs Kemi
Baker, Mr Steve
Baldwin, Harriett
Barclay, rh Stephen
Baron, Mr John
Barron, rh Sir Kevin
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
Chishti, Rehman
Churchill, Jo
Clark, Colin
Clark, rh Greg
Clarke, Mr Simon
Cleverly, James
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
Coffey, Dr Thérèse
Collins, Damian
Courts, Robert
Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey
Crouch, Tracey
Davies, Chris
Davies, David T. C.
Davies, Glyn
Davies, Mims
Davies, Philip
Davis, rh Mr David
Dinenage, Caroline
Docherty, Leo

Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Moore, Damien
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morgan, rh Nicky
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Morton, Wendy
 Mundell, rh David
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll
 Murrison, Dr Andrew
 Neill, Robert
 Newton, Sarah
 Nokes, rh Caroline
 Norman, Jesse
 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
 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, rh Julian
 Smith, Royston
 Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
 Spelman, rh Dame Caroline
 Spencer, Mark
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, Bob
 Stewart, Iain
 Stewart, Rory
 Streeter, Sir Gary
 Stride, rh Mel
 Stringer, Graham
 Stuart, Graham
 Sturdy, Julian
 Sunak, Rishi
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Swire, rh Sir Hugo
 Syms, Sir Robert
 Thomas, Derek
 Thomson, Ross
 Throup, Maggie
 Tolhurst, Kelly
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Tredinnick, David
 Trevelyan, Anne-Marie
 Truss, rh Elizabeth
 Tugendhat, Tom
 Vaizey, rh Mr Edward
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Walker, Mr Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben
 Warburton, David
 Warman, Matt
 Watling, Giles
 Whately, Helen
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John
 Wiggin, Bill
 Williamson, rh Gavin
 Wilson, rh Sammy
 Wood, Mike
 Wragg, Mr William
 Wright, rh Jeremy
 Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Craig Whittaker and
Andrew Stephenson

NOES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
 Abrahams, Debbie
 Ali, Rushanara
 Allen, Heidi
 Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
 Amesbury, Mike
 Antoniazzi, Tonia
 Ashworth, Jonathan
 Bailey, Mr Adrian
 Bardell, Hannah
 Bebb, Guto
 Beckett, rh Margaret
 Benn, rh Hilary

Berger, Luciana
 Betts, Mr Clive
 Black, Mhairi
 Blackford, rh Ian
 Blackman, Kirsty
 Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta
 Blomfield, Paul
 Brabin, Tracy
 Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
 Brake, rh Tom
 Brennan, Kevin
 Brock, Deidre
 Brown, Alan

Brown, Lyn
 Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
 Bryant, Chris
 Buck, Ms Karen
 Burden, Richard
 Burgon, Richard
 Butler, Dawn
 Byrne, rh Liam
 Cable, rh Sir Vince
 Cadbury, Ruth
 Cameron, Dr Lisa
 Campbell, rh Sir Alan
 Carden, Dan
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Champion, Sarah
 Chapman, Douglas
 Chapman, Jenny
 Charalambous, Bambos
 Cherry, Joanna
 Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth
 Clwyd, rh Ann
 Coaker, Vernon
 Coffey, Ann
 Cooper, Julie
 Cooper, rh Yvette
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy
 Cowan, Ronnie
 Coyle, Neil
 Crausby, Sir David
 Crawley, Angela
 Creagh, Mary
 Creasy, Stella
 Cruddas, Jon
 Cryer, John
 Cummins, Judith
 Cunningham, Alex
 Cunningham, Mr Jim
 Daby, Janet
 Davey, rh Sir Edward
 David, Wayne
 Davies, Geraint
 Day, Martyn
 De Cordova, Marsha
 De Piero, Gloria
 Dent Coad, Emma
 Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
 Docherty-Hughes, Martin
 Dodds, Anneliese
 Doughty, Stephen
 Dowd, Peter
 Drew, Dr David
 Dromey, Jack
 Duffield, Rosie
 Eagle, Ms Angela
 Eagle, Maria
 Edwards, Jonathan
 Efford, Clive
 Elliott, Julie
 Ellman, Dame Louise
 Elmore, Chris
 Esterson, Bill
 Evans, Chris
 Farrelly, Paul
 Farron, Tim
 Fellows, Marion
 Fletcher, Colleen
 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
 Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
 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
 Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 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, Helen
 Jones, rh Mr Kevan
 Jones, Sarah
 Jones, Susan Elan
 Kane, Mike
 Keeley, Barbara
 Kendall, Liz
 Khan, Afzal
 Killen, Ged
 Kinnock, Stephen
 Kyle, Peter
 Laird, Lesley
 Lake, Ben
 Lamb, rh Norman
 Lammy, rh Mr David
 Lavery, Ian
 Law, Chris
 Lee, Karen
 Lee, Dr Phillip
 Leslie, Mr Chris
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Lewis, Clive
 Linden, David
 Lloyd, Tony
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 Lucas, Caroline

Lucas, Ian C.	Rowley, Danielle
Lynch, Holly	Ruane, Chris
MacNeil, Angus Brendan	Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
Madders, Justin	Ryan, rh Joan
Mahmood, Mr Khalid	Saville Roberts, Liz
Mahmood, Shabana	Shah, Naz
Malhotra, Seema	Sharma, Mr Virendra
Marsden, Gordon	Sheerman, Mr Barry
Martin, Sandy	Sheppard, Tommy
Maskell, Rachael	Sherriff, Paula
Matheson, Christian	Shuker, Mr Gavin
Mc Nally, John	Siddiq, Tulip (<i>Proxy vote cast</i> <i>by Vicky Foxcroft</i>)
McCabe, Steve	Skinner, Mr Dennis
McCarthy, Kerry	Slaughter, Andy
McDonagh, Siobhain	Smith, Angela
McDonald, Andy	Smith, Cat
McDonald, Stewart Malcolm	Smith, Eleanor
McDonald, Stuart C.	Smith, Jeff
McDonnell, rh John	Smith, Laura
McFadden, rh Mr Pat	Smith, Nick
McGinn, Conor	Smith, Owen
McGovern, Alison	Smyth, Karin
McInnes, Liz	Sobel, Alex
McKinnell, Catherine	Soubry, rh Anna
McMahon, Jim	Spellar, rh John
McMorrin, Anna	Starmar, rh Keir
Mearns, Ian	Stephens, Chris
Miliband, rh Edward	Stevens, Jo
Monaghan, Carol	Stone, Jamie
Moon, Mrs Madeleine	Streeting, Wes
Moran, Layla	Sweeney, Mr Paul
Morden, Jessica	Swinson, Jo
Morgan, Stephen	Tami, rh Mark
Morris, Anne Marie	Thewliss, Alison
Morris, Grahame	Thomas, Gareth
Murray, Ian	Thomas-Symonds, Nick
Nandy, Lisa	Thornberry, rh Emily
Newlands, Gavin	Timms, rh Stephen
Norris, Alex	Trickett, Jon
O'Hara, Brendan	Turley, Anna
O'Mara, Jared	Turner, Karl
Onn, Melanie	Twigg, Derek
Onwurah, Chi	Twigg, Stephen
Osamor, Kate	Twist, Liz
Owen, Albert	Umunna, Chuka
Peacock, Stephanie	Vaz, rh Keith
Pearce, Teresa	Vaz, Valerie
Pennycook, Matthew	Walker, Thelma
Perkins, Toby	Watson, Tom
Phillips, Jess	West, Catherine
Phillipson, Bridget	Western, Matt
Pidcock, Laura	Whitehead, Dr Alan
Platt, Jo	Whitfield, Martin
Pollard, Luke	Whitford, Dr Philippa
Pound, Stephen	Williams, Hywel
Powell, Lucy	Williams, Dr Paul
Qureshi, Yasmin	Williamson, Chris
Rashid, Faisal	Wilson, Phil
Rayner, Angela	Wishart, Pete
Reed, Mr Steve	Wollaston, Dr Sarah
Rees, Christina	Woodcock, John
Reeves, Ellie	Yasin, Mohammad
Reeves, Rachel	Zeichner, Daniel
Reynolds, Emma	
Reynolds, Jonathan	
Rimmer, Ms Marie	
Robinson, Mr Geoffrey	
Rodda, Matt	

Tellers for the Noes:
Thangam Debbonaire and
Nic Dakin

Resolved,

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 24 January 2019; and rejects the United Kingdom leaving the European Union without a Withdrawal Agreement and a Framework for the Future Relationship; and requires the Northern Ireland backstop to be replaced with alternative arrangements to avoid a hard border; supports leaving the European Union with a deal and would therefore support the Withdrawal Agreement subject to this change.

The Prime Minister: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. A fortnight ago, this House clearly rejected the proposed withdrawal agreement and political declaration, with just 202 Members voting in favour. Tonight, a majority of hon. Members have said that they would support a deal with changes to the backstop combined with measures to address concerns over Parliament's role in the negotiation of the future relationship and commitments on workers' rights in law where need be. It is now clear that there is a route that can secure a substantial and sustainable majority in this House for leaving the EU with a deal. We will now take this mandate forward and seek to obtain legally binding changes to the withdrawal agreement that deal with concerns on the backstop while guaranteeing no return to a hard border between Northern Ireland and Ireland. My colleagues and I will talk to the EU about how we address the House's views.

As I said this afternoon, there is limited appetite for such a change in the EU and negotiating it will not be easy, but by contrast to a fortnight ago, this House has made it clear what it needs to approve a withdrawal agreement. Many hon. Members have said that the continuing protection of workers' rights after Brexit is something that needs to be strengthened. My right hon. Friend the Business Secretary will intensify our work with hon. Members from across the House and the trade unions this week. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union will do the same on how we engage this House further in our approach to negotiating our future partnership with the EU.

As well as making clear what changes it needs to approve the withdrawal agreement, the House has also reconfirmed its view that it does not want to leave the EU without a withdrawal agreement and future framework. I agree that we should not leave without a deal. However, simply opposing no deal is not enough to stop it. The Government will now redouble their efforts to get a deal that this House can support. To that end, I want to invite my right hon. Friend the Member for Meriden (Dame Caroline Spelman), the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Jack Dromey) and all those who tabled amendments in opposition to no deal to discuss how we can deliver that by securing a deal.

In the light of the defeat of the amendment of the Leader of the Opposition, I again invite him to take up my offer of a meeting to see whether we can find a way forward. If this House can come together, we can deliver the decision that the British people took in June 2016, restore faith in our democracy and get on with building a country that works for everyone. As Prime Minister, I will work with Members across the House to do just that.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Main Question, as amended, put and agreed to.

Jeremy Corbyn: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Since we have had this debate and the House has emphatically voted to reject the no-deal option that the Prime Minister was supporting, may I say that we are prepared to meet her to put forward the Labour party's points of view about the kind of agreement we want with the European Union in order to protect jobs, living standards and rights and conditions in this country? It is exactly the offer that was made last September and exactly the offer that was made two weeks ago. I look forward to meeting the Prime Minister to set out those views to her on behalf of my party.

Ian Blackford: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. This House has spoken—[*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman is the leader of the third party in this place and represents an important body of opinion. As was exhorted earlier, people should treat opinions that differ from their own with respect. The right hon. Gentleman will be heard, however long it takes. That is all there is to it.

Ian Blackford: Thank you, Mr Speaker. The House this evening has given an instruction to the Government that no deal must be taken off the table. I am frankly flabbergasted that the Prime Minister still seems to be in denial. What legislation will she bring forward to ensure that we remove the threat of no deal?

This is a sad day, when the Prime Minister has had to admit that her deal does not have support and that she is now prepared to try to pick away at the backstop. We were told that the backstop was there to protect the peace process, but tonight the Conservative party has effectively ripped apart the Good Friday agreement. This House should be ashamed of itself. The contempt shown by the United Kingdom Government right across these islands is stark.

This Government, Westminster and the Tory party have no respect for the devolved Administrations or the other regions of the United Kingdom. Scotland has been silenced, sidelined and shafted by the Tories. Tonight the Conservative party has ripped apart the Good Friday agreement—an international treaty. This is serious; we are talking about a treaty that has delivered peace to the island of Ireland. The Government have reneged on the backstop and on the Good Friday agreement. Mr Speaker, can you advise what mechanisms are open to this House to protect the democratic rights of the devolved regions and nations, as well as the Good Friday agreement and the peace process that this Government are prepared to disregard?

Mr Speaker: I will take the right hon. Gentleman's question as a rhetorical question, rather than a substantive one. He knows that Parliament is here to debate and to vote, and he is well familiar—[*Interruption.*] Order. I am addressing the right hon. Gentleman; perhaps he would do me the courtesy of listening to me. He has the mechanisms of the House available to him.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Yes, I will take other points of order briefly.

Sir Vince Cable: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Now that the House has given the Prime Minister contradictory instructions—not to have no deal, but to

pursue a course of action that will lead to no deal—will she return to the House tomorrow and give a clearer indication of what these alternative arrangements actually are? They have been rejected at her own summit at Chequers and now appear to be the basis of negotiations.

Mr Speaker: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his point of order, but I would say to him—I know that he will take this in the right spirit—that this is not Prime Minister's questions. Prime Minister's questions will take place tomorrow. If I understand correctly, I think the right hon. Gentleman was more concerned to make his point than to elicit a reply from the Prime Minister, and there is no reason for the Prime Minister to feel any need to reply tonight. The right hon. Gentleman has made his point and there will be ample opportunity for further exchanges, doubtless tomorrow and in many subsequent days.

Nigel Dodds: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. We represent 10 seats in Northern Ireland, the hon. Member for North Down (Lady Hermon) represents one other, and there are others who represent a different point of view but who refuse to take their seats in this House, and it is quite frankly outrageous—I am, I believe, speaking on behalf of both communities in Northern Ireland—to say that this vote tonight drives a coach and horses through the Good Friday agreement. It does nothing of the sort. It is utterly reckless to talk in those terms—utterly reckless. The fact of the matter is that nobody in Northern Ireland—no political party—is advocating any kind of hard border in the island of Ireland, and we certainly do not advocate what others advocate, which is creating borders within the United Kingdom or ripping up the United Kingdom. Let me say in conclusion that this is a significant night because, for the first time, the House, by a majority, has expressed a view on the sort of deal that will get through and will have a majority. We will work with the Prime Minister to deliver the right deal for the United Kingdom.

Mr Speaker: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his point of order.

Liz Saville Roberts: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. When the woman holding the title of Prime Minister is driven solely by the ideal of holding the Tory party together, and the man known as the Leader of the Opposition will neither lead nor oppose, how do you advise that we get the House back to working for the communities we are supposed to represent?

Mr Speaker: Again, if I may very politely say so, I think the hon. Lady's point of order, although it contains what is ostensibly an inquiry, is one in which she is making her point rather than seeking anything from me. The short answer to her is that, as I said a moment ago, there will be further debate. Members must speak and vote as they think fit. All these matters will be thoroughly aired in the days and weeks to come, and I am sure we all look forward to that—the hon. Lady from her vantage point and I from mine.

Angus Brendan MacNeil: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I hope you can advise. The House seems to have found itself in a contradictory position. First, it wants no deal off the table; and secondly, it does not

[Angus Brendan MacNeil]

accept the deal that the European Union is putting forward. Is it not the case that the United Kingdom Parliament is now at the mercy of the European Union, because if we are in a situation where no deal is off the table and we are not accepting the deal the EU is offering, where do we go from here?

Mr Speaker: The hon. Gentleman may wish to offer the views that he has just expressed to the news outlets that operate in Na h-Eileanan an Iar, and I rather suspect that that is what he will want to do. Local newspapers and radio stations will doubtless be very interested in the views that he wishes to express, but they are not matters of which I can treat now. The House has decided what it has decided—[*Interruption.*] The hon. Gentleman is saying that these matters are in contradiction of each other or have to be weighed against each other, but of course it is not a matter for the Chair to offer an exegesis to the House on the way in which it has voted. Members will make their own assessment. We know what statute says and we know what expressions of opinion have been recorded by the House today. The hon. Gentleman, although his brow is furrowed, is a perspicacious fellow, and I am sure he will get his head around these matters in the hours, days and weeks to come. We look forward to that with eager anticipation.

Business without Debate

DELEGATED LEGISLATION

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

EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION (AGRICULTURE)

That the draft Floods and Water (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, which were laid before this House on 5 December 2018, be approved.—(*Jo Churchill.*)

The Speaker's opinion as to the decision of the Question being challenged, the Division was deferred until Wednesday 30 January (Standing Order No. 41A).

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

EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION (ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION)

That the draft Environment (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, which were laid before this House on 5 December 2018, be approved.—(*Jo Churchill.*)

Question agreed to.

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

EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION (CIVIL AVIATION)

That the draft Airports Slot Allocation (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, which were laid before this House on 10 December 2018, be approved.—(*Jo Churchill.*)

Question agreed to.

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

RADIOACTIVE SUBSTANCES

That the draft Carriage of Dangerous Goods (Amendment) Regulations 2019, which were laid before this House on 20 December 2018, be approved.—(*Jo Churchill.*)

The Speaker's opinion as to the decision of the Question being challenged, the Division was deferred until Wednesday 30 January (Standing Order No. 41A).

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

EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION (ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION)

That the draft Storage of Carbon Dioxide (Amendment and Power to Modify) (EU Exit) Regulations 2018, which were laid before this House on 17 December 2018, be approved.—(*Jo Churchill.*)

Question agreed to.

PETITION

Levels of pay in Further Education

8.55 pm

Jenny Chapman (Darlington) (Lab): I rise to present this petition on behalf of more than 500 students and staff from Darlington College in my constituency who are demanding fair funding for further education.

Colleges build communities. They help young people to fulfil their potential, discover new talents and realise their ambitions. Colleges drive social mobility. They are the heart of local economic growth and provide the workforce needed for local businesses to thrive. For many, they are a springboard towards a bright and prosperous future, but a recent calculation by the Institute for Fiscal Studies found that spending on further education has been cut in real terms by more than £3 billion since 2010-11. Because of that, we now see fewer teaching hours, cuts to student support and stagnant wages for teachers and support staff. That harms outcomes for students, reduces opportunities and is bad for my whole community. The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to

“provide fair funding for further education and fair pay for college staff”

in the interests of student performance, educational outcomes and community prosperity.

Following is the full text of the petition:

[The petition of residents of the United Kingdom,

Declares that while participation in full-time education has more than doubled over the past 30 years, it is reported that spending per student in further education is 8% lower than in secondary schools; further that colleges over the last decade have dealt with an average 30% cut to funding as costs continue to increase; further that this has resulted in a drastic drop in learning opportunities available to students, fewer teaching hours and support for young people, and staff pay; further that the situation is not sustainable and ultimately impacts on student performance; further that 547 staff and students from Darlington College have signed a similar petition to the government regarding further education funding.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the government to provide fair funding for further education and fair pay for college staff in the interest for student performance and educational outcomes.

And the petitioners remain, etc.]

[P002311]

Vagrancy Act

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—(Steve Brine.)

8.56 pm

Layla Moran (Oxford West and Abingdon) (LD): I am grateful to the House for allowing me to raise the issue of the Vagrancy Act 1824 on this of all evenings, when others out there might be forgiven for thinking that we do nothing other than talk about Brexit.

I have been campaigning to repeal the Vagrancy Act for well over a year now. In fact, my campaign began in response to a petition by the Oxford University Student Union and Oxford-based homelessness campaign group On Your Doorstep. I want to give them full credit for starting this.

The Vagrancy Act is a cruel and outdated piece of legislation. It was aimed at tackling the rise in homeless veterans after the Napoleonic wars, and even then it was controversial, with the great abolitionist William Wilberforce suggesting that it was too catch-all because it did not consider people's individual circumstances. Nearly 200 years later, it is still used to criminalise people for sleeping rough or begging.

Between 2014 and 2016, more than 3,000 homeless people were dragged before the courts in violation of the Vagrancy Act. That is only the tip of the iceberg, as many more individuals will have been arrested but had their cases dropped, or the Act will have been used as a threat to move them on.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I congratulate the hon. Lady on securing this debate. This issue affects us all. Just last week in my constituency, I had to deal with a homeless person in great need. Does she agree that the use of this law to target people who are sleeping on the streets or begging should be stopped, and instead councils should work with compassion and care to help people who are desperate and find a way to make our social care system work for that individual, as opposed to simply moving them on, as helpless and hopeless as they were before? Compassion and care—that is what we need in society.

Layla Moran: The words “compassion and care” will repeat themselves in what I have to say tonight, and I could not more agree with the hon. Gentleman. The signal that this sends to others about who we are as a society is why I believe this Act needs to be repealed as a matter of urgency.

Tracey Crouch (Chatham and Aylesford) (Con): The hon. Lady is quite right to refer to William Wilberforce. He acknowledged at the time that the Act did nothing to take into account personal situations and the reasons behind homelessness. As she said, his words ring true two centuries later. Does she agree with me, and I think with the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon), that in a modern society it is far more effective and compassionate to use time and resources to help those who desperately need that support, rather than relying on this blunt piece of legislation on the statute book, which, as Wilberforce pointed out, does nothing to help those living on the streets and simply criminalises the vulnerable?

Layla Moran: I could not agree more with every word the hon. Lady said. Indeed, if we want an example of how badly the Vagrancy Act can be used, last year Windsor Council suggested, just before the royal wedding, that local police use the Act to “clean up the streets”. That was a disgraceful display, but, unfortunately, it is not uncommon. The Act is a common tool that is available to the police across the country.

Wera Hobhouse (Bath) (LD): I congratulate my hon. Friend on bringing this very pressing issue to the House. Does she not agree that it is particularly cruel, given that a lot of homeless people are actually ex-military men who have devoted their lives and given their commitment to this country? They are on the streets for various reasons, but we should treat them in a very different way, rather than punishing them when they were originally prepared to give their lives for this country.

Layla Moran: In fact, this comes back to why the Act was controversial 200 years ago, let alone now. The use of the Act is damaging and counterproductive in tackling rough sleeping. Rather than addressing the root causes of homelessness, which we all know are incredibly complex, the Act simply displaces people from one area to another, which is particularly problematic given that the funding of support is still to an extent based on local connection.

Anneliese Dodds (Oxford East) (Lab/Co-op) *rose—*

Layla Moran: I give way to my constituency neighbour.

Anneliese Dodds: The hon. Lady is making an excellent case, and I am very pleased that it is one that my party supports as well. When I have had discussions with rough sleepers—at the new hub, O'Hanlon House, the Porch, the Gatehouse or, indeed, doing a St Mungo's round—in every case those discussions showed that people really need the support she is talking about, rather than to be criminalised, which can of course set them back substantially. Does she agree?

Layla Moran: I completely agree. Indeed, we know very well from our city how much our local constituents care desperately, and care and compassion, as has been mentioned, is actually the driving force behind why people care so deeply about this matter. The legislation acts as a barrier to cultural change. It sends a message that the act of rough sleeping itself is morally wrong, and it treats people who are sleeping rough as a negative problem to solve, rather than individuals in need of positive support.

In 2018, I met the Leader of the House on this matter, and asked if she could help me to repeal the Act. She was sympathetic, but she told me that some homelessness stakeholders wanted to keep the Act in place. This was reaffirmed by the Under-Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, the hon. Member for South Derbyshire (Mrs Wheeler), who is the Minister for homelessness, when we met last year. However, in my second meeting about this with Ministers, I got positive engagement. I am disappointed that the Minister for homelessness is not on the Front Bench today, because I am going to answer some of the questions she raised in the meeting. However, she made the point that the Act was used to encourage rough sleepers to get off the streets and into shelters.

[Layla Moran]

I listened carefully to those arguments, and I continue to disagree with them. The thing is that threatening rough sleepers with the Vagrancy Act to coerce them into shelters is not the way to help them. It is paternalistic and it claims that it is for their own good, but it actually has the opposite effect. In a survey of people sleeping rough carried out by Crisis, 56% said that enforcement measures such as the Vagrancy Act contributed to their feeling ashamed of being homeless, and 25% said that following an enforcement intervention their alcohol consumption increased. What does that say about the effect of the Act on the human level?

Rachael Maskell (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): Does not the hon. Lady agree that many homeless people have nowhere else to go during the day, and they are therefore just moved on time and again? The only solution is to ensure that people have secure housing, and the Government target nine years from now is, quite frankly, far too late.

Layla Moran: The hon. Lady is exactly right. Using the Act just moves the problem on; often, it does not tackle the core issues behind what is happening.

This is my first question—of many, as the Minister will not be surprised to hear. Who are these stakeholders who wish to keep the Act in place? I would be genuinely grateful for a response, because they certainly do not include the homelessness charities with which I have been working, or the outreach managers whom St Mungo's surveyed in 2018; 71% of them believed that the Act should be scrapped. One said:

"The Vagrancy Act takes a moral view on street activity giving no consideration to the complex reasons behind any such activity such as begging and rough sleeping. It is widely agreed that criminalizing addicts and homeless people serves no purpose apart from to further push them to the fringes of society, towards further impoverishment and stigmatization. I agree it should be scrapped".

Surely we should listen to the views of professionals, who see at first hand the Act's damaging impact on rough sleepers.

When we met last year, the Minister for homelessness argued that she does not want to criminalise homeless people—I believe her—but that she supports the use of the Vagrancy Act to combat "aggressive and persistent begging". I went away and did my homework, just as I, like a good teacher, would have told my students to. Legal advice to Crisis concluded that the actions criminalised by the Vagrancy Act are covered by many other provisions in criminal law:

"Much of the language is archaic. The conduct it seeks to criminalise appears to belong to a different era. Legislation other than the Vagrancy Act, if correctly and carefully applied, provides a much better and modern framework than what remains of the Act".

The Public Order Act 1986 and the Fraud Act 2006 are good examples of legislation that could and should combat aggressive begging. Indeed, in a debate in Westminster Hall, the Minister for homelessness acknowledged that

"Local authorities and police are equipped with a wide range of enforcement powers to combat issues arising from begging...Particularly flexible are the powers contained in the

Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014"—[*Official Report*, 17 January 2018; Vol. 634, c. 386WH.]

If there is other legislation in place, why is the Vagrancy Act needed at all?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (Jake Berry): The hon. Lady is doing an excellent job. I ask this so that I can respond to the debate properly. She made the point that criminalising people who are homeless or begging damages the ability to help them. She went on to say that other Acts may also criminalise them and that they should or could be used instead of the Vagrancy Act. Is there a contradiction in that statement? Would she like to clarify that, just to enable me to respond more fully?

Layla Moran: I will come to that later, when I will ask the Minister to extend the review that his Department is carrying out of this legislation to include all that other legislation, but I would point out that the Acts I mentioned are about aggressive begging, which is different, of course, from being genuinely homeless; we need to make sure that the two are not conflated.

In some parts of the country, the Vagrancy Act is not used at all. Chief constables can decide to use the Act at their discretion, and it is used in only 34% of the country. Why does it not have to be used in 66% of the country, and why is it used in 34% of it? Furthermore, use is planned to decrease to 7% of areas. Is the aim to shut this door? However, the Act is still there, though it has been repealed in Northern Ireland and Scotland. If it is barely being used, why not just repeal it?

Hugh Gaffney (Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill) (Lab): The Act was repealed in Scotland in 1982. Every night, when I go from a full House here to my flat, I pass six homeless people while crossing the bridge to St Thomas's Hospital. A young girl—18 years old—arrived there last night. She was sitting on the bridge with a bag. I did not know how to approach her, or what to do. That is happening here, and there have already been two deaths outside this House. We have to look at the Vagrancy Act, and I applaud the hon. Lady for bringing the subject to the House.

Layla Moran: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. His passion is palpable. This measure is receiving wide cross-party support in the House and I would like to take a moment to thank all hon. Members for being here for the debate. It means so much to the community.

I was very pleased to hear that a review is on the cards. I speak to homelessness charities and they are a little frustrated that there has been no announcement on when it will take place. That is important, but I do ask why we need one at all when the situation is blindingly obvious. I encourage the Minister to widen the scope and ambition of the review. There should be a wider assessment of enforcement, for example on the use of public space protection orders and dispersal orders that give the police and local authorities the power to penalise the act of rough sleeping itself. We need a cool-headed assessment of whether that actually helps the people we seek to help. I believe that the Government want to help, but I wonder if the stick approach now needs to be changed.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle (Brighton, Kemptown) (Lab/Co-op): Does the hon. Lady agree that measures such as the Vagrancy Act not only criminalise homeless people, but put into the mind of the public that they are criminals and, as a result, they receive worse treatment? In Brighton, one homeless person was murdered last year and many others are regularly attacked. Removing the Act would show that it is not acceptable to treat people who have ended up in dire circumstances in that way.

Layla Moran: I agree entirely. The principle of no enforcement without support is vital. As funding for local authorities has decreased, there is often not enough money to tackle the root causes and to give the support to those who are at risk of homelessness or who are homeless. Rather than spending money enforcing laws that punish people and move them on, in the long term it would be a far better use of taxpayers' money to invest properly in the very welcome Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, which I have no doubt the Minister will mention, and to ensure support is in place to prevent homelessness from happening in the first place.

We all know that the causes of homelessness are complex. The Government need to do more to support local councils in providing services to combat those root causes. The Homelessness Reduction Act is a welcome start, but it cannot be the end. It is clear that the Vagrancy Act, among other Acts, is the lowest hanging fruit—it just makes problems worse. We need a more compassionate and preventive approach to tackling the national scandal of homelessness.

Repealing the Vagrancy Act would be an easy first step. It would not take any money, just a three-line Bill. The private Member's Bill is waiting there and I am desperate for it to receive support. I think it would receive support from all corners of the House. I am sorry to say—this is the way with private Members' Bills—that it was blocked on First Reading. However, we are seeking another First Reading soon. I am delighted that the Labour party is now supporting the Bill—that is brilliant—as are St Mungo's, Centrepoin and Crisis. There is a real swell in the campaign from across the political spectrum and beyond.

The Vagrancy Act is a symbol: what sort of country do we want to be? Rather than being a cold-hearted mean-spirited country, I believe we should show compassion and care to those who need our help. I ask the Minister to push as hard as he possibly can at the open door to scrap the Vagrancy Act.

9.13 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (Jake Berry): This is the first time I have heard the hon. Lady talk on this subject in the House. I congratulate her on the tone of the debate and on how heartfelt and passionate she is on this very, very important subject. I congratulate her, too, on securing tonight's debate.

I want to live in a country—I think we all do—where no one should ever have to sleep rough. That is why the Government have committed to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and end it by 2027. When I first entered Parliament in 2010, before I did this job as a Minister, I worked for the then Housing Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Grant Shapps). We worked together then, as part of the coalition Government, on

how we could come together across government, and I think also on a cross-party basis, to tackle the scourge of homelessness. That is why I am pleased that the Government published our rough sleeping strategy in August 2018, which set out, as I think has been acknowledged across the sector, an ambitious programme building on three core pillars. Before I answer the hon. Lady's questions, I want to expand on them briefly to help us all understand the context of the debate.

First, we want to prevent rough sleeping before it happens. That is hugely important and is our key target. We then want to intervene at crisis point, again to try to prevent rough sleeping from ever occurring. For people who find themselves rough sleeping, we need flexible support that meets their needs and enables them to leave the streets. That is why we committed £1.2 billion of funding over the spending review period to tackle homelessness. We implemented the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017—the hon. Lady correctly said that I would mention it—to put prevention, which is key, absolutely at the heart of our approach to tackling homelessness.

We must ensure that people get early support to prevent them from ever becoming homeless, and we must provide support on a broader basis than ever before to help people off the streets. We have started to do that through the introduction of pilots such as Housing First, the rapid rehousing pathway and the private rented sector access fund to help people leave the streets and find a sustainable stay in accommodation.

On the hon. Lady's main point, the Government are clear that no one should be criminalised in this country for having nowhere to sleep. That is quite wrong, and we are determined to tackle it. We have made it clear in the guidance that public space protection orders should not be used to target people who are simply sleeping rough or are homeless. Rough sleeping on its own does not have, or is very unlikely to have, an unreasonable detrimental impact on a neighbourhood, and therefore those orders should not be used. On the point that the hon. Member for Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill (Hugh Gaffney) made about the real price of homelessness that we see every night in London, we all understand that we should not target or criminalise people who are simply homeless or sleeping rough.

People are convicted every year under sections 3 and 4 of the 1824 Act, to which the hon. Member for Oxford West and Abingdon referred, but we have seen that they are used to target persistent begging and public order offences in public places. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Lady is shaking her head, but that is what our rough sleeping advisory panel's research shows. She asked who is on the advisory panel. That information is publicly available. It includes Crisis, Shelter, St Mungo's, Homeless Link, the Local Government Association and others.

Layla Moran: For clarification, I asked which stakeholders agree that the Vagrancy Act can be used. At least three of the charities that the Minister mentions have said to me that they do not, so who wants it to be used? As he can see, I am listening, and I want to understand who wants this and why, so that I can get to the bottom of it. Who are they?

Jake Berry: If the hon. Lady would allow me to develop my argument, I will attempt to answer her question.

[*Jake Berry*]

Of course, other legislation is used. The hon. Lady mentioned the Public Order Act 1986 and the Offences Against the Person Act 1861—another very old piece of legislation that makes persistent begging in public places an arrestable offence. She asked why laws other than the Vagrancy Act are not used. It is because they have a higher burden of proof and harsher penalties are often—although not always—attached to them than to the Vagrancy Act.

Tracey Crouch: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his tone. I have known him for nearly nine years, and I know that he cares passionately about homelessness and rough sleeping. On the panel, he mentioned various stakeholders, but one that he did not mention is the police. The hon. Member for Oxford West and Abingdon (Layla Moran) said that many police forces do not use the Vagrancy Act. A police officer who works in the town centres in Medway told me that he has never used it; he always uses community protection notices. What input is the panel getting from those who actually apply the legislation—in other words, the police?

Jake Berry: I am coming to our review of the law, but it is heavily engaging the Home Office and thereby the police and law enforcement more generally.

Wera Hobhouse: Will the Minister give way?

Jake Berry: I do not want to be timed out, so this will be the last time I give way.

Wera Hobhouse: From the list the Minister is reading out, I get the strong feeling that local authorities have also been involved. Could he clarify with the LGA where it stands on this?

Jake Berry: I will happily go away and find out the LGA's position, although, having been involved in such commissions myself, I can say there is often robust debate as they come to their conclusions, but many people with differing views happily come behind one report and one set of recommendations, so the LGA will not necessarily have had the ability to set out its view separately, but will have been bound as part of the panel.

As I have said on the record, the Government do not believe that anyone should be criminalised for simply sleeping rough, but equally we should not rush to a wholesale repeal of the 1824 Act without proper consideration of the consequences. The hon. Member for Oxford West and Abingdon said—I wrote it down—that we needed a cool-headed assessment of the law before acting. I agree, and I rather hope she accepts that that is the Government's approach.

We developed our rough sleeping strategy in collaboration with many national charities, many of which I have named, and they form part of the rough sleeping advisory panel. Enforcement can form part of moving some people away from the streets, but it should come with an offer of meaningful support. Some charities working with rough sleepers are clear that the ability to secure income through begging can make it harder, not easier, for vulnerable people to leave their damaging lifestyles behind. The 1824 Act is sometimes the only option to get someone off the street when they have become dependent on begging income to support their drug or alcohol dependency and to find ways of moving towards the support they need.

The rough sleeping strategy made a commitment—partially based, I am sure, on the hon. Lady's sterling work—to extend our review of the Homelessness Reduction Act to include a review of other relevant homelessness and rough-sleeping legislation, including, of course, the 1824 Act. She acknowledged that homelessness and rough sleeping was a complex issue, and we know from engagement with stakeholders that there are conflicting views about the necessity and importance of the 1824 Act, which is why the Government believe that a review, rather than immediate action, which I know she would prefer, is the appropriate course of action.

We recognise that there is a wide variety of views about the Act among stakeholders. We have engaged with homelessness charities, such as those referenced by the hon. Lady, and the panel held wide-ranging views, although many panel members thought the Act necessary. My Department will continue to work with the Home Office, the Ministry of Justice and the homelessness sector to understand why the Act is used as part of this wider review, and one thing we want to get to the bottom of is why it is used to varying extents in different areas. Before we rush to repeal it, we must understand why that is the case. We will report the review findings by March 2020.

There is obviously considerable interest in this debate, and I would like to make an open offer to all interested hon. Members. I know the hon. Lady met my hon. Friend the homelessness Minister, and she is more than welcome to do so again. As part of this review of the law, we want to seek as many views as possible in order to get it right, so the door to my Department remains open, and I know that my hon. Friend, too, will happily meet colleagues from across the House to make sure we get this right, because it is very, very important. We must act to help the most vulnerable in society.

Question put and agreed to.

9.24 pm

House adjourned.

Westminster Hall

Tuesday 29 January 2019

[MS NADINE DORRIES *in the Chair*]

Children with Life-limiting Conditions

9.30 am

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I beg to move,

That this House has considered support for children with life-limiting and life-threatening conditions and their families.

I am conscious that other people want to speak, so I will limit my time and give them a chance to contribute, Ms Dorries. I am pleased to see the Minister in her place. I spoke to her last week and before today's debate. I thank the Backbench Business Committee for selecting this important debate and the Minister for her attendance. I also thank everyone who is here to speak on behalf of their constituents. This matter is not for my constituency alone; it needs to be addressed UK-wide in a co-ordinated manner. As for the magnitude of the issue, 49,000 babies, children and young people live in the UK with health conditions that are life-limiting or life-threatening, and the number is rising. There are 40,000 in England alone.

I have three wonderful children and three perfect grandchildren. They are the best in the world, but every grandparent probably thinks that about their grandchildren. Hearing the news that one's child has a life-limiting condition and is likely to die young is devastating. My heart always goes out to those who hear such dreadful news. The children have complex and unpredictable conditions and often need round-the-clock care seven days a week. Families have to cope with the knowledge that their child will die before them, and daily life for the whole family can become extremely challenging.

Nick Thomas-Symonds (Torfaen) (Lab): I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way and congratulate him on securing this debate. Will he join me in praising the children's hospice movement, including Tŷ Hafan, which serves my constituency in south Wales, for their excellent work in providing care not only for the children but for the families who need support?

Jim Shannon: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. He is absolutely right. By the way, several of today's speakers applied for this debate along with me and I thank them also. Hospice care is important and I thank the hon. Gentleman for his contribution. Every one of us knows the role that hospices play in the lives of those who need help at a very difficult time. Although there are many excellent services, many families still have difficulty accessing the care and support that they need, which is why hospices are important.

Children with life-threatening conditions need palliative care from when their condition is diagnosed or recognised until the end of their lives. Families also need care and support throughout the trajectory of their child's illness, including bereavement care after they have passed away. Palliative care for children includes, but is not limited to end-of-life care, and the two terms should not be used interchangeably.

Mark Tami (Alyn and Deeside) (Lab): Does the hon. Gentleman recognise, as highlighted by CLIC Sargent, the financial cost? It might be the last thing that people think about when everything else is going on, but there is a huge financial cost. The costs associated with cancer treatment are estimated to be around £600 a month extra, and the travel costs are on average £180 per family. For some people that is a huge amount of money.

Jim Shannon: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his intervention and reiterate the point he has made. The financial implications, restrictions and pressures are important. I know CLIC Sargent well. It does massive fundraising in my constituency and elsewhere. I appreciate its work immensely.

Children's palliative care providers offer a range of services, including supporting families to manage their children's pain and distressing symptoms; providing children and their families with lifeline short breaks; and offering bereavement support both before and after the child has passed away. Families want to be able to choose where they receive the lifeline children's palliative care services that they rely on when they need and want them. They also want to choose who cares for their child and which treatments they receive.

Along with others, I am a vice-chair of the all-party group for children who need palliative care. We seek to educate, inform and motivate parliamentarians to take action to help transform the lives of children and young people with life-limiting and life-threatening conditions across the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. We are supported to do so by our secretariat, Together for Short Lives, the UK's leading charity for the 49,000 children living with life-limiting conditions and their families. In November 2017, the all-party group began a Select Committee-style inquiry into the extent to which the Government are meeting their choice in end-of-life care commitment for babies, children and young people. The Government are clear that that commitment applies to people of all ages who need palliative care. The commitment explicitly states:

"To support high quality personalised care for children and young people, commissioners and providers of services must prioritise children's palliative care in their strategic planning".

Prioritising children's palliative care in strategic planning is so important.

In a report last October, the all-party group published what we found and what action we recommend as a result of our inquiry. Despite the end-of-life care commitment, the APPG has heard evidence from young people, families, services and professionals that the quality of palliative care that children and families can access is patchy—the reason for today's debate—and depends on what part of England they live in. MPs and peers have stated that that is unfair and represents a wholly unjustified health inequality.

The APPG highlighted five areas of particular concern where many children and their families have limited access. The first is children's palliative care out of hours and at weekends. They also need short breaks and respite. As MPs we know these things, but the respite that is needed is so important to give parents a break. Age-appropriate palliative care and smooth transitions to adult services must be smoother, simpler and less stressful. Specialist children's palliative care teams led

[Jim Shannon]

by level 4 consultants are needed, and we need advance care planning. Those five barriers explain why the Government's choice commitment is at serious risk of not being met, which is why we are having this debate.

I am very pleased to see the Minister and the shadow Minister in their places. I know they both understand the issues. That certainly came out in my discussions with the Minister last week. Today we hope to hear the responses that we need to satisfy our concerns.

The first area of concern is leadership and accountability. Almost half—46%—of clinical commissioning groups are failing to implement the Government's choice in end-of-life care commitment and have no plans to do so, which is disappointing, but there are reasons for it. Only a third of CCGs responded that they are implementing the guidance, and a further 19% stated that their plans to do so are in development. Consequently, will the Government and NHS England consider appropriate mechanisms to bridge the children's palliative care accountability gap? Furthermore, will the Government develop a system to monitor how sustainability and transformation partnerships, integrated care systems, CCGs and local authorities are supporting children's palliative care in accordance with their legal duties? That is very important. Will the Government develop outcome indicators that measure the extent to which children with life-limiting conditions and their families can make choices about the palliative care that they receive? If so, will they reflect the outcomes set out in the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence quality standard for end-of-life care for infants, children and young people?

The second area concerns clarity. Will the Minister work with her colleagues at the Department for Education and NHS England to write to STPs, ICSs, CCGs and local authorities to clarify which parts of the health and care system in England are responsible for commissioning palliative care for children and young people aged 0 to 25? We always go on about data, but data is important to get a strategy that works. It is vital to make it clear who is responsible for commissioning short breaks and specialised children's palliative care, as described by NHS England.

The third area is funding. Unfortunately, there has been a downward spiral in the trajectory of funding: 22% in 2016-17 and 2015-16 compared with 23% in 2014-15 and 27% in 2013-14. That downward trend worries us greatly. There was a wide range in the state's contributions to voluntary care sector children's palliative care providers' charitable costs in 2015-16. The maximum contribution received by a charity in 2015-16 was more than half and the lowest was 2%. Like other members of the APPG, I was therefore pleased to welcome NHS England's recent decision to commit to funding children's palliative care in the long-term plan. However, I want to highlight the mismatch in the two announcements that NHS England made.

On 27 December, NHS England announced that up to £18 million would be available to children's hospices through the long-term plan, of which £7 million would depend upon CCGs contributing another £7 million through match funding, which is fair enough, taking the total to £25 million. Yet in paragraph 3.41 of the plan, published on 7 January, NHS England said that the

£25 million would be for local children's palliative and end-of-life care services, including children's hospices. Does the Minister recognise that the two NHS England announcements were confusing, and can she clarify whether the £25 million will be for children's hospices only, or a wider group of services? We need answers to those points. I gave the Minister advance notice of all my questions. It was almost the highest number of questions I have ever asked a Minister at one time, even though I ask a lot of questions.

Can the Minister guarantee that the £11 million children's hospice grant will be protected and increased as a result of the long-term plan, to reflect the growing demand and the complexity of care provided by those lifeline services, and will she guarantee that total NHS funding for children's palliative care will not fall as a result of the long-term plan? Will she also monitor the amount of money that NHS England, clinical commissioning groups and local authorities are contributing to children and adult hospice and palliative care charities? If so, will she ensure that they bring about parity in the state's percentage contribution to their charitable costs?

I often refer to the Scottish Government—in the best of terms, as well. I note that they have committed to bringing about parity and funding 50% of the agreed charitable costs of children's hospices across Scotland. They often set the bar, and set an example for the rest of us to try to achieve. I know that my hon. Friends from the Scottish National party will speak to that, and I look forward to their contributions.

The funding challenges are being exacerbated by the Government's decision not to provide voluntary sector providers that do not apply "Agenda for Change" pay and conditions with financial support in order to mitigate the recent pay rise for non-clinical NHS staff. Will the Minister provide financial support to help voluntary sector children's palliative care providers, including children's hospices that do not apply "Agenda for Change" pay and conditions, to mitigate that recent pay rise?

We have to mention the Government's proposal to increase the proportion that employers need to contribute to the NHS pension scheme from 14.9% to 20.9%. That will also lead to children's hospices incurring significant costs. I say very gently that there is an imbalance in what is happening. Although the cost of the increases for NHS organisations will be met by the Government through additional funding, the potential additional costs for charitable hospices will not be.

Children's hospices are faced with the puzzling situation where NHS England is giving them more money with one hand while, through the pension scheme changes, the Government are taking it away with the other. We all have concerns about that. Will the Minister meet the significant costs that children's hospices will incur as a result of the Government's proposal to increase the employers' contribution to the NHS pension scheme?

The APPG believes that the Government and NHS England should go further to ensure that children's palliative care provided by the statutory sector, in hospitals and in the community, is funded equitably and sustainably in England. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence calculates that by investing £12.7 million in implementing its guideline on children's palliative care, non-cash savings worth £34.7 million would be released back into the NHS. Mathematics is not one of my stronger points, but it seems logical to do that. Will the

Minister undertake a review of the palliative care available to children with life-limiting conditions in England as a matter of urgency, and will she develop a funded, cross-departmental children's palliative care strategy for achieving better outcomes for children and families across the statutory and voluntary sectors?

There are too few professionals with the skills, knowledge and experience to provide children's palliative care in hospitals, children's hospices and the community. Those who are skilled, and have the ability and opportunity, do wonderful work. Will the Minister set out the steps that she is taking to develop and advance care plans with families? Shortages in children's nurses, and generally in children's palliative care, are particularly acute.

The final area is integration. Single, joined-up education, health and care assessments, plans and personal budgets for children and young people up to the age of 25 are available only to those who have a special educational need. The APPG is also unclear on how the Government's approach to personalising palliative care for children and young people, which is underpinned by joint plans and budgets, correlates with the special educational needs and disabilities system. That is tremendously important to us all. I should be grateful if the Minister would tell us whether she plans to ensure that all 40,000 babies, children and young people in England with life-limiting or life-threatening conditions have the right to an integrated assessment, plan and personal budget.

Will the Minister commission a review of health and social care law, to strengthen and clarify rights and entitlements for disabled children and their families, including children with life-limiting conditions? That would help to bring about more integrated assessments and plans. Will she invest in supporting work to develop children's palliative care managed clinical networks across England?

Mark Tami: The hon. Gentleman makes an important point. Does he agree that the Government need to speed up, and that they cannot apply the general criteria that they apply to everyone else? Those parents, those families, and those children need support straightaway, not after waiting for weeks—sometimes months.

Jim Shannon: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his intervention and his wise words. I absolutely agree that we need to implement right away the response that families need. He is right: one size does not fit all. Every person's case and circumstances are unique, so we need to respond with something that fits, quickly.

If not quickly met by the Government, those challenges will threaten Ministers' ability to meet their end-of-life care choice commitment for children by 2020. We have to work to that timescale. We need that response to do away with the patchiness; there are parts where the Government are doing well and families get help, and other parts where they do not. I know that the Minister is committed to that, and hopefully her response will be helpful to all of us who are asking these questions.

We urge the Government to work with the APPG, and interested bodies and charitable groups, to implement the APPG's recommendations. There has already been progress in the past few weeks. That is good news, and we are pleased about that. NHS England has decided to recognise children's palliative care as an important priority in the NHS long-term plan.

I commend the Government, I commend the Minister for her commitment to the strategy, and I commend Health Ministers for the Department's commitment to addressing health, and spending money on it. That is good news. Nobody in this House would not welcome that. I very much welcome it. Will the Minister assess the extent to which the NHS treats children's palliative care as a priority, as it commits to in the long-term plan, and if so, how? Will she tell us a wee bit about how that long-term strategy and plan will work?

I think it is the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Kate Hoey) who says, "Jim Shannon gets more words into a minute than any other MP." I am not sure that I have given my four-minute speech in one minute, but I have tried to compress what I wanted to say, and I gave the Minister my questions beforehand. There are hon. Members present who have a real knowledge of the subject matter. It is so important that we hear all their opinions as well.

I ask the Minister to update us on the progress that the Government are making in responding to all the APPG's recommendations. I very much look forward to hearing her response. These children need help. The report is clear, and now we need to be clear on how the Government can and will make changes to ensure that these short lives, and the lives of loved family members, can be better. Sometimes we see only the child; we also have to see the families. I think the right hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mark Tami) referred to that in his intervention. It is so important that we reach out and help. Our job as MPs is to do just that. We look to the Minister for the response that we all want.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Ms Nadine Dorries (in the Chair): I will impose an informal five-minute limit on speeches. Obviously, if Members go over the informal limit, I will have to impose a formal four or three-minute limit, so if everybody would realise that and be courteous, that would be great.

9.48 am

Antoinette Sandbach (Eddisbury) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Dorries. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) for securing the debate and for his continuing interest in the matter.

It is exceptionally difficult to care for a child with a life-limiting condition. The Government have made progress on making things slightly easier in areas such as bereavement care, but I recognise that more needs to be done to support families who are going through the process, especially in terms of palliative care. The issue affects not just the 49,000 children in the UK who live with life-limiting or life-threatening health conditions, but their families and those who care for them. Those who are suffering from such conditions need the best medical care possible, but the families require care too, whether that is in the form of respite breaks or financial support for adjusting their homes and lives.

I sympathise somewhat with the Minister: she has to respond on behalf of her Department, but it is not just her Department that acts in this space. Local authorities, the voluntary sector and other Departments all have a role to play, and it will be possible to tackle the challenges faced by families only by taking an integrated approach that encompasses all of those groups.

John Howell (Henley) (Con): My hon. Friend mentions the adjustments that need to be made in people's homes. To what extent does she think local councils are living up to expectations in that respect?

Antoinette Sandbach: I will come on to that point, but I know that in my area the situation is certainly not as good as it might be.

I hope that the Minister will commit to ensuring that children have a right to an integrated assessment, a plan and a personal budget to address their individual needs. Likewise, I hope that she will agree to review health and social care law, not only to strengthen the rights and entitlements for disabled children and their families, but to clarify them. That clarification would be hugely welcome, because uncertainty leads to some local authorities failing to meet their obligations. For instance, Together for Short Lives reports that 21% of local authorities are failing to meet their legal duty to commission short breaks for disabled children. That postcode lottery is deeply unsatisfactory and requires the Minister's attention.

I was concerned to discover from December 2017 data that only one of the four Cheshire clinical commissioning groups was developing a strategy or care pathway for children with life-limiting conditions. The same data shows that although some of my area's CCGs offer out-of-hours paediatric palliative care consultants, community children's nurses and psychological support, others do not. Given that families have 24/7 responsibility, should not the NHS? My area is lucky to have specialist paediatric care close at hand, thanks to Alder Hey Children's Hospital, but it is clear that even in Cheshire more must be done, which probably means that more funding must be put in place.

The all-party parliamentary group on baby loss wrote to the Chancellor at the end of last year to ask for a guarantee of the future of the NHS England children's hospice grant beyond March 2019; for an increase in its value to £25 million per year; for parity of funding between children's and adult hospice and palliative care charities in England; and for a funded, cross-departmental children's palliative strategy for England. I was pleased to see that the issue received attention in the NHS long-term plan, but I am concerned by the mismatch between NHS England's 27 December announcement about children's hospice funding under the plan, and what was published in the plan itself on 7 January: the announcement said that the money was for hospice funding, but the plan said that it would be for palliative services, including hospices. Will the Minister clarify whether that £25 million will be for children's hospices only, or for a wider group of children's palliative care services?

Likewise, will the Minister guarantee that the £11 million children's hospice grant will be protected and increased as a result of the long-term plan? It is vital that we resolve that, because in 2006-07 the children's hospice grant contributed 14% towards the cost of providing clinical care in children's hospices across England, but by 2015-16, when the grant had risen to £11 million, it contributed an average of just 8%.

I hope that the Minister will offer the reassurance that so many families deserve, not just about the finances but about integration and ending the postcode lottery. I am sure all hon. Members agree that these families

need support, but now we must build on that agreement and implement a sustainable, compassionate plan to support them.

9.54 am

Carolyn Harris (Swansea East) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Dorries. I congratulate the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) on securing this important debate and on his speech. We have campaigned together on many issues and I am happy to participate in his debate today.

Many hon. Members will be aware of my campaigning work to support families who have lost a child. I am very proud to have brought about the introduction of the children's funeral fund to support grieving parents with the costs of their child's funeral. My campaign came after my own experience of losing my son Martin and having to take out a loan to cover his funeral.

I lost Martin very suddenly in a car accident. From the perspective of a parent, I have no idea whether it is worse to lose your child suddenly, like blowing out a candle, or to watch them pass away slowly from a life-threatening or life-limiting condition; all I know is that, whatever happens, it is the end of the world. It feels as if it is a bank holiday and the world is still going on around you—you cannot comprehend why people are still putting the kettle on, taking the milk in and having the post delivered. It is such a painful experience: nothing can prepare you for it, and realistically it is not something that you will ever recover from. Nothing will ever be the same again. You think that you will never worry again about anything like how much the telephone or electricity bill is, because nothing will ever matter again, but in reality it is more painful: you worry more and you keep waiting for that moment when something really bad will happen again. I think that stays with you for the rest of your life.

Tragically, the parents of 5,000 babies, children and young people have to face that dreadful pain every year. It is a pain that nobody can help them with, but one thing that we can do for those families at such a difficult time is try to lessen or ease their financial worries. There are very many additional costs when you lose a child, apart from the funeral. At the time, it seems as if all the other things do not really matter, but they do. Someone whose child has a life-threatening illness has to think about parking at the hospital, childcare for their other children, making sure they have clean pyjamas, pants and vests, and maybe having to give up work to look after them.

When a child passes away as a result of a long-term disability, the family may well have been receiving a benefit because of the child's health, such as carer's allowance, disability living allowance or child benefit. As well as the personal loss, they will face a huge and immediate financial loss. I will never, ever forget losing Martin on a Monday—I had cashed his family allowance that morning—and getting a letter the following week asking me to repay it because I had sent in the death certificate to say that Martin was not with me anymore. As a parent, you cannot imagine how painful it is even to get that letter, let alone to try to find the money to pay back. It may be small, but for a parent it is the end of the world.

That is not the only financial hardship that parents face when they lose a child; as I said, there is also the cost of the funeral. Royal London has found that the average cost of a funeral in 2018 was £3,757. For someone who is not anticipating losing a child, or who is on a low income, that is an insurmountable amount. Some people have actually asked me why I did not have insurance. Why would you insure a child? Why would you consider insuring against a child's passing?

As hon. Members may be aware, health in Wales is a devolved matter. I am very proud that the Welsh Government led by example and introduced a children's funeral fund in 2017. I will say only that I had a letter from the Prime Minister on Easter Sunday last year, yet we still do not have a children's fund throughout the United Kingdom. Scotland has introduced it and, in the absence of Stormont, Northern Ireland has done it on a local level, so it is only parents in England who are not getting support with their child's funeral. The Welsh Government, who were the first to introduce such a fund, have announced an additional £1 million investment to support the work of the end-of-life care implementation board. That funding will go towards a variety of areas, including training for staff on having difficult end-of-life care conversations with parents.

I give personal thanks for the work of the wonderful charities Tŷ Hafan, Hope House and Tŷ Gobaith, which provide care to children and families in my constituency and across Wales. After I lost Martin, I spent a lot of time trying to do what I could to help other families. I provided pastoral care for mentally and physically handicapped children, and I went to work for a children's cancer charity. I felt like my personal experience would help those parents. Today I still talk to parents who have lost a child and try to reason with them by saying, "The thoughts that you are thinking, the worries that you are having, the fears and the fright that you will experience day in, day out for the rest of your life—they're real but they're not abnormal, and you need to share." As a country, we should support these people financially and give them that little bit of comfort, so that it is only the emotion—something nobody can ever help you with. I urge the Minister to do whatever she can to ensure that families in such a position never have to worry about the incidentals of life and can grieve with dignity and peace of mind.

10 am

Fiona Bruce (Congleton) (Con): It is humbling to follow the hon. Member for Swansea East (Carolyn Harris). I want to put on record my respect for her campaigning on this and other issues, and for my constituency neighbour and hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury (Antoinette Sandbach).

I commend the work of the Donna Louise Children's Hospice in Stoke-on-Trent, which provides children's and young people's hospice services across Staffordshire and south-east Cheshire. It has written to me this week—given that time is short, I will pass the Minister a copy of the letter after the debate. It talks about the quality of palliative care as patchy:

"The way in which NHS CCGs and local authorities plan, fund and monitor children's palliative care in hospitals, children's hospices and the community represents"—
as we have heard—

"a postcode lottery. Staffordshire has no coherent plan and this is reflected in the poor financial support the Hospice receives from local commissioners. Donna Louise receives 8.9% of its income from the NHS".

The hospice calls on the Government and NHS England "to consider appropriate mechanisms to bridge the children's palliative care accountability gap."

I want to spend most of my speech talking about an issue that I know is uncomfortable for some people to hear about. For that reason, I am delighted that you are in the Chair, Ms Dorries, because you have spoken about this issue on a number of occasions. Many families face a difficult decision when a child in the womb is diagnosed with a life-limiting or life-threatening condition. This is not a small issue: in 2017 there were a total of 3,314 ground E abortions on the grounds that the child was diagnosed with a substantial risk that, if born, they would suffer from physical or mental abnormalities, such as being seriously handicapped. Parents have to make really agonising decisions.

A few years ago, I held an inquiry in this place on the difficult situations that parents face when their child is diagnosed in this way and they have to consider an abortion. We took evidence from dozens of witnesses. Some had come under huge pressure to have an abortion, and the support they were given to consider keeping their baby was very limited. Many told us that they were steered towards an abortion, and they felt like the medical profession was irritated by them. Many felt like they were given no information on the support they might get; often the best information they got was through contacting charities, which could put them in touch with parents who were bringing up children—often very successfully. Those children brought great joy to their families, but the medical professionals did not give the families the information they needed to make a decision that was right for them. Some told us that all they received was a leaflet telling them how to have an abortion. The mothers who had kept their children, even if it was for a very short time, felt like they could grieve and care for their children in a way they had not been able to do otherwise. One mother had to have an abortion with her first baby and then decided she would keep the second, even though she knew the condition was life-limiting. She felt like there was a much better outcome for her and her family's going through the grieving process.

The inquiry made a series of recommendations—I will pass a copy to the Minister because time is very short. I hope she will consider them and respond to me. Many people generally find this issue a very difficult one to address, as do—I am sorry to say—Ministers. Many of the recommendations in that report, which was published a few years ago, are still valid today. We recommended that guidelines for the medical profession should include training for obstetricians, foetal medicine specialists and midwives on the practical realities of the lives of children who have such conditions, so that they can better advise parents and give them better information when they make this difficult decision. One parent summarised what many others reported:

"Guidelines and standards need to be set in place"

so that all hospitals can meet a certain standard. Can the Minister assure me that she will look at our report and perhaps produce guidance to ensure that all mothers feel like they can make a genuinely informed decision

[Fiona Bruce]

when they are carrying a baby with a life-limiting condition? Does she agree that we ought to provide much better information, so that parents in such circumstances can make an informed choice?

Ms Nadine Dorries (in the Chair): I am afraid that I will now have to put a formal time limit of four minutes on Back-Bench speeches.

10.6 am

Stephen Lloyd (Eastbourne) (Ind): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Dorries. I congratulate the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) on securing this important debate. Given that we are reduced to four minutes each, I will ensure that I keep to that.

Like other hon. Members, I want to bring attention to two outstanding children's hospices that serve my constituency: Chestnut Tree House and Demelza. They are not based in Eastbourne, but they do a considerable amount for many of my constituents and their children. Both are hospices and also deliver outreach services to very poorly children at home. I want to put that on record, as they do outstanding work.

I know the Minister is getting a long shopping list, so I will keep my requests fairly simple. I want to focus on two areas, both of which I am confident the Department can respond to fairly swiftly. First, NHS England states that its end-of-life care programme for children and young adults is managed through a cross-system governance board. That makes sense. It includes a lot of the key providers, such as the Department of Health and Social Care, clinical commissioning groups, NHS England and others. However, I discovered that there is no representation on that cross-system governance board of the children's palliative care sector—the charities and groups that represent families and children and really know their stuff. I urge the Minister to look at that again.

The other serious issue—I am sure the Minister is aware of it, and I would welcome information from her on what is being done to respond—is that, according to the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, there are only 14 children's palliative care consultants across the UK. I am sure the Minister would agree that that is completely inadequate. Perhaps the Minister can let me know—either at the end of this debate or in a letter—what plans NHS England and the Department of Health and Social Care have to work with the Royal College to increase that number. Fourteen is clearly inadequate.

Let me end with a constituent's issue that brings home the issue of long-term conditions and the end of children's lives. This subject is incredibly important—we are talking about 45,000 youngsters—and I want to bring it down to earth and make it real. I am working with a constituent couple, Mr and Mrs Spence, and their teenage daughter Connie, who I have known for well over 10 years. She is now 16 or 17 and still has—obviously—a progressive, life-threatening condition. She is an amazing girl. Her parents have done fantastic work in looking after Connie and working with Demelza, giving her a good life.

Recently, Mr and Mrs Spence's CCG told them that they would be allowed only three nappies a day. Without going into too much detail, we all understand that a

very disabled 17-year-old girl—or any of us in her situation—would usually use six or seven nappies a day. They have been told that she can have only three. That is completely unacceptable, highly inappropriate and just wrong. The CCG pleads costs, as does the local trust. I will be writing to the Minister with details and hope that she will support me by making representations to the CCG to stop that completely inappropriate cut.

10.10 am

David Linden (Glasgow East) (SNP): It is a pleasure to see you in the Chair, Ms Dorries. I commend my friend, the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon), for securing the debate. As one might expect, I wish to offer a few examples from Scotland, where I believe that we have a good story to tell, although we still have so much more to do. In the context of Scotland, it is important to make the distinction that funding for children's palliative care is given parity of esteem with adult care. That is a point that I have made before to the Minister down south.

I know from my good relationship with Children's Hospices Across Scotland, known as CHAS, that it is one of Scotland's most well-known and best-loved charities. That is why it was right that in 2016, the SNP Scottish Government announced that they were committing £30 million in funding to CHAS, commencing in the financial year of 2017-18. That funding provides half of the agreed funding costs of running CHAS; that is very important. Not long after I was elected, my hon. Friend the Member for Airdrie and Shotts (Neil Gray) and I had the honour of visiting Robin House in Balloch, where I saw at first hand the absolutely amazing work done by CHAS to provide compassionate care for children with a life-shortening condition.

At this juncture, I pay tribute to my good friend and colleague, Alex Neil MSP, a former Health Secretary in the Scottish Government, who drove that vital funding boost for the sector. His backing for research, in particular, was immeasurable. We know from experience that engaging comprehensively with the issue through research is an absolute necessity to determine the needs of those with life-limiting and life-shortening conditions.

I am conscious that other hon. Members wish to contribute to the debate and, in particular, raise issues through the prism of English funding, so I will make a couple of brief points before I conclude. First, it felt as though we were making a lot of progress on the baby benefit bar but I am not sure how far we have got. I would therefore welcome an update on that from the Minister.

Secondly, on the issue of workforce, having spent last night participating in debate on Second Reading of the Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill, I am concerned that there are far too few professionals with the skills, knowledge and experience required to provide children's palliative care in hospitals and children's hospices. Can the Minister outline what strategies the Government are pursuing to meet workforce challenges in future? That is a major issue.

Thirdly, on the difficult issue of when a child finally passes away, I am glad that my own Government, in Scotland, announced last year that they were taking action to ensure that all burial fees for children are abolished. When I was first elected to Parliament, the

32 local authorities in Scotland had different policies and charges for burial fees—it was very much a postcode lottery, so I welcome that change. I am concerned, however, that we need to do more to support families when their child eventually passes away. I absolutely welcome the Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Act 2018, which was piloted through this place by the hon. Member for Thirsk and Malton (Kevin Hollinrake), but I remain disappointed that the scope of the Bill was so narrowly defined. I hope that we will have the opportunity to go back and widen it in the future.

In summary, there is plenty of work for us to do and get on with to support children with life-limiting conditions, as well as their families. We look to the Minister to take forward the consensual and strong cross-party support we have heard about today and deliver a better standard of research, funding and care for vulnerable children and their families. Again, I thank my friend, the hon. Member for Strangford, for securing this important debate. I hope that we can make progress going forward.

10.14 am

Ellie Reeves (Lewisham West and Penge) (Lab): It is a pleasure to speak in the debate and I thank the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) for securing it.

Over 40,000 children and young people in England have a life-limiting or life-threatening condition, so we must not underestimate or undervalue the support that both the NHS and charity care sectors provide to both patients and their families. I am proud to represent the seat where the purpose-built hospice movement has some of its origins, with the foundation of St Christopher's Hospice by the late Dame Cicely Saunders. South London is also home to the renowned Demelza specialist children's hospice. Demelza was started more than 20 years ago and, in that time, it has grown to include two hospices and a community scheme in East Sussex, to which the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Stephen Lloyd) referred.

Demelza's hospice in Eltham, which opened in 2009, serves the boroughs of Bexley, Bromley, Croydon, Greenwich, Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark. It is a specially designed hospice that provides first-rate care to the children who use it, while also supporting their families. I recently met the chief executive of Demelza children's hospices, and I appreciate the lengths that he and his colleagues in the voluntary sector go to to make sure that the whole family is cared for. Their service is about a lot more than just the child and the medical and palliative side of care. Not only do charities like Demelza ease pressure on the NHS, but by providing support, advice and respite for the whole family, the assistance that they provide is invaluable. Having a child with a life-limiting condition can cause unimaginable strain on a family, and the smallest gestures have a big impact during those difficult times.

I follow the work of the all-party parliamentary group for children who need palliative care and I pay tribute to it. The APPG, alongside Together for Short Lives, recently published a report into end-of-life care for children. Worryingly, the report concluded that children who need palliative care are often subject to a postcode lottery of patchy service. The recent NHS long-term plan acknowledges that for far too long, funding for children's palliative and end-of-life care through the children's hospice grant has not kept pace with growth

in clinical care costs or inflation. I welcome the plan's pledge to boost funding for children's hospices by up to £25 million a year by 2023-24, but the sector still has many funding requirements that need to be addressed if the hospices are to continue delivering such world-class care.

In October, I spoke in the Westminster Hall debate on hospice funding and the NHS pay award, and I mentioned that without additional Government support, local children's hospices could face difficult choices about reducing services. The additional estimated cost to staffing budgets of matching the pay award for the NHS, which hospice staff rightly deserve, would be £200,000 every year. I hope that the additional funding will go some way to allay the fears of local hospices, but we cannot assume that the funding pledged will still be adequate in five years' time.

We have much to be proud of in our care sectors, but there is still a great deal more to do. The funding commitments are welcome but are not a one-fix solution to the many issues faced by children with life-limiting conditions and their families. I hope that the continued hard work of the hospice workers who run Demelza and other hospices across the country can continue to bring care and compassion to families at the most difficult times, and that they will have the funds and resources to do so.

10.18 am

Catherine McKinnell (Newcastle upon Tyne North) (Lab): I am delighted that the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) secured this debate on an issue that is so important for so many children and families across the country. It goes to the very heart of the work done by the APPG for children who need palliative care, of which I am vice-chair, alongside the chair, the hon. Member for Sleaford and North Hykeham (Dr Johnson).

Babies, children and young people with life-limiting and life-threatening conditions rely on a range of social care services provided by a variety of statutory and voluntary organisations such as short breaks, practical assistance at home, home adaptations and support to access travel and leisure activities. A good example of one such provider, which celebrated its 15th birthday this year, is St Oswald's Hospice in Newcastle. It provides residential short breaks and care to babies, children and young adults. Up to six children and young adults can stay at St Oswald's at any one time, in a beautiful, relaxed, home-from-home environment. Indeed, one mother said about the hospice:

"Having respite at St Oswald's for a couple of nights a month helped to give me a break. While I was doing all the medical care for my son, I couldn't be a mum. Being at St Oswald's gave me time to step back and just enjoy playing with him and having fun."

Seriously ill children and their families across the country need short breaks and the respite provided by skilled, highly trusted people who can meet the child's often complex health needs. It might only be for a few hours, or overnight for a few days at a time, but those short breaks are vital to help parents and siblings manage the immense stress and 24/7 pressure that a child with a life-limiting condition can bring. The evidence suggests that such respite care helps to support children and their family's physical and mental health, and mitigates the risk of parental relationships breaking down.

[Catherine McKinnell]

Local authorities of course have a legal duty to provide short breaks for disabled children and their families, to be planned and funded jointly by local councils and the NHS. A Government-commissioned review of funding arrangements for palliative care made it clear in 2011 that that duty must include respite care for the carers and families of children requiring palliative care. Despite that, however, the charity Together for Short Lives found that too many CCGs and local authorities in England fail to plan and fund short breaks. More than one in five local authorities do not commission short breaks for children with life-limiting and life-threatening conditions, despite having a legal duty to do so, although 84% of CCGs reported that they commission short breaks for children who need palliative care.

Furthermore, the Disabled Children's Partnership, of which Together for Short Lives is a member, has gathered increasing evidence of cuts to services for disabled children. Is it any wonder that that is taking place? The Local Government Association estimated that children's services face a £3.1 billion funding gap by 2025, just to maintain existing levels of service. Given such findings, I shall be grateful if the Minister confirms in her response how she holds sustainability and transformation partnerships, integrated care systems, CCGs and local authorities to account for the way in which they plan and fund short breaks.

I am also keen to highlight the importance of the provision of short breaks to all families who receive them, not only those families with children who need palliative care, but those with disabled children whose conditions can be life-limiting as well. I was able to witness that on Friday, when I visited the excellent Alan Shearer Centre in Lemington in my constituency. It provides specialist respite services in a specially adapted environment. One of the key concerns expressed to me at the centre was about how the level of respite care support that disabled children and their families receive can be halved when a person's condition has not changed at all—the only thing that has changed is their age. Many families described that as feeling as if the rug has been pulled from under their feet.

I also want to highlight the work of the Rainbow Trust, which provides vital support at home for so many families, including in Newcastle. Will it be possible for the recently announced funding of £25 million for palliative and end-of-life care to be used to provide that emotional and life-affirming support for such families? Children with life-limiting and life-threatening conditions face enough challenges without the added stress of not having the support they need.

10.23 am

Lyn Brown (West Ham) (Lab): I am grateful to you, Ms Dorries, for calling me to speak, and to the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) for giving me the opportunity to raise an urgent case.

My constituent, Shakil Malji, has a daughter, Maryam, who is five months old and a beautiful, engaging child. Recently, Maryam was diagnosed with a terrible condition called spinal muscular atrophy, type 1. The effects of SMA1 if left untreated are horrific. The disease causes

muscles to waste away even before they can properly develop. It reduces and then takes away the ability to do basic things unassisted, including walking, crawling, sitting, eating, drinking and breathing.

Maryam's family are devastated—of course they are. However, an effective treatment developed by international drug company Biogen—remember that name—does exist: a new drug called Spinraza. Clinical trials, which ended more than two years ago in 2016, showed that Spinraza is effective and can provide a lifeline—a longer life and less suffering; what else is medicine about? Spinraza is available on the NHS in Scotland and in 23 other European countries. It is licensed for use in the UK, but it is not available to Maryam because Biogen and NICE have not yet reached an agreement, and because last November Biogen's extended access programme was closed; I have been told repeatedly that it will not reopen. To date, 220,000 people have signed a petition about ensuring that all children with SMA get access to Spinraza through the NHS. I have written to the Secretary of State to encourage him to intervene. The NICE approval process is taking far too long.

I am here to talk about Maryam, however, and to argue that Biogen has a special and moral responsibility to ensure that she receives the care she needs. SMA is genetic and Abdullah, Shakil's son, was also diagnosed when he was very young. Shakil was offered access to Spinraza for Abdullah as part of the clinical trial. That trial was successful and led to Biogen being able to sell the drug. Abdullah, unfortunately, was still very weak from his condition, and he died in 2015. But Maryam could have that drug now, soon after diagnosis, which would bring the family hope again.

Shakil feels that his family have been used. His son helped to test the drug but it is now being denied to Abdullah's sister. Biogen offers to work with NICE towards what it calls a "bridging solution", if and when NICE commits to a permanent agreement to pay for SMA patients to access Spinraza. Shakil and I have been encouraged by Biogen to campaign for that, even as the weeks pass and as Maryam inevitably gets weaker.

I call those tactics heartless. In effect, Biogen's approach is to hold a baby's life in its hands and to ask a still grieving family to use their child to get the deal that the company wants with NICE. Shakil and his family have suffered so much, and Maryam needs Spinraza as soon as possible. I will not let the Government or NICE off the hook on this one, and I would like to meet the Department. Biogen, however, needs to step up now to offer a way forward for Maryam—she cannot wait. Biogen, do the decent thing!

10.26 am

Mary Glendon (North Tyneside) (Lab): It is an honour to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Dorries.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) on securing the debate. He and I are both members of the all-party group for muscular dystrophy, so I know that his commitment to the issues being discussed this morning is genuine.

Following on from my hon. Friend the Member for West Ham (Lyn Brown), I will talk about Spinraza, because nothing is more fundamental for anyone with a life-limiting or life-threatening condition, or their families,

than to have access to treatment that will give the chance of a better quality of life and, possibly, some chance of longevity.

As my hon. Friend said, one of the rare conditions that until the last few years has had no proven treatment is SMA. There are four types, and the most severe is type 1. Infants diagnosed with that have a life expectancy of no more than two years. The condition affects the lower motor neurones in the spinal cord, leading to loss of mobility and eventually of the ability to breathe and swallow.

The drug Spinraza, which was developed and marketed by the pharmaceutical company Biogen, is the only treatment that has proved successful for children with SMA. Spinraza was granted a marketing authorisation by the European Medicines Agency more than 18 months ago. It is available in 24 European countries including Scotland, as has been said, but not in other parts of the UK.

The APPG, which I chair, has supported the work of our excellent secretariat organisation, Muscular Dystrophy UK, and other groups to press for Spinraza to be approved by NICE. Many MPs across the House with constituents who suffer from SMA feel the frustration of families waiting for Spinraza to be approved. So far, however, progress has been slow. That is largely due to the fact that Spinraza has been assessed by NICE under the single technology appraisal, or STA, route, which is not appropriate for such a rare condition. That route is normally used for more common conditions, and it is now a year since the assessment began. Also, in August, when NICE published its initial decision on access to the drug, it did not recommend Spinraza for use on the NHS. That was a bitter blow for all the families, including the family of young Sam McKie from North Tyneside, who has the condition.

Biogen opened an expanded access programme globally in 2016, as an interim solution for patients with infantile-onset SMA. In the UK, the programme was extended to support continued access for those patients until NICE completed its appraisal. To date, more than 80 eligible children in the UK have received the drug free of charge. Under the timeframes provided by NICE, the final appraisal document was scheduled for last November; therefore, disappointingly, Biogen closed its access to the EAP for new patients.

Since August, the APPG has been active in pressing NICE, NHS England and Ministers to be flexible in finding a way forward, and I raised the issue at Prime Minister's questions in September. There is an impasse, because NICE continues to require that Spinraza should be cost-effective through the STA route, but Biogen has pointed out that, given the smaller patient population in rare diseases, it is inappropriate to expect treatments to achieve the same cost-effectiveness thresholds as medicines in disease areas that have much larger patient populations.

10.30 am

Dr Lisa Cameron (East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow) (SNP): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Dorries. I thank everyone who has taken part in this extremely important debate. It is an absolute pleasure to follow the hon. Member for North Tyneside (Mary Glendon), who raised the issue

of Spinraza, and the hon. Member for West Ham (Lyn Brown), who spoke about her constituent Maryam and about why this issue must be taken forward by the UK Government. I hope the Minister will agree with her.

I thank the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) for securing this important debate and for speaking so passionately. Week in, week out in the House of Commons he champions the most vulnerable in our society. He gave a poignant speech to support children with life-threatening conditions. By securing this debate, he has let us all speak about the important issues raised by those conditions and the charities that do such excellent work, including Together for Short Lives, the Rainbow Trust, the Children's Hospices Across Scotland at Robin House and CLIC Sargent, to name just a few. I also thank the Backbench Business Committee; I was extremely pleased to be part of the cross-party group that requested the debate. I have chaired the all-party parliamentary group for disability since 2015; we are working extremely hard on these issues, and I thank everyone involved in it.

I should like to mention my constituent Gary Butterworth of Westwood Golf Club, who, as well as playing lots of golf, has taken the time to raise more than £20,000 for Children's Hospices Across Scotland. Every year I support the efforts of the club and Gary to fundraise; we will visit Robin House together later this year.

I also thank my constituent Lisa Quarrell, who has worked so hard over the past year not only to look after her six-year-old son Cole, who has experienced repeated epileptic seizures and whose health has deteriorated dramatically, but to try to access medicinal cannabis since the Home Secretary took up that issue. I hope the Minister will look at those issues very carefully, because the care pathways for families are not adequate. Lisa has battled day in, day out just to access the Home Secretary's recommendations. Those families do not have the energy, in addition to caring for their children, to battle the system.

A number of issues have been raised in the debate. I want to stress the care and emotional and practical support that needs to be put in place for siblings. When a young child has a life-threatening or life-limiting condition, siblings often feel, not ignored, but not the focal point of the family's daily life. There should be support for the whole family unit, and particularly for siblings. We heard about the need for family-friendly working policies and psychological support. I refer to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests, having worked as a psychologist.

Some remarkable speeches were made; I thank the hon. Member for Eddisbury (Antoinette Sandbach), who does such fantastic work in the all-party parliamentary group on baby loss, for raising the important issue of personal budget plans. Families should not have to think about finances at such a grave time in their lives. If I was wearing a hat, I would take it off to the hon. Member for Congleton (Fiona Bruce) for her excellent work in Parliament to strengthen families, provide support and raise issues that many find extremely difficult to broach. I hope the Minister looks very carefully at the hon. Lady's recommendations.

My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow East (David Linden) outlined the Scottish Government's developments and funding for CHAS; I thank him for his work on

[Dr Lisa Cameron]

those issues. The hon. Member for Swansea East (Carolyn Harris) spoke so poignantly that I was almost in tears while listening to her talk about the end of the world for individuals and their families. We must take that on board. I am sure the Minister heard those words clearly.

The hon. Member for Eastbourne (Stephen Lloyd) paid tribute to all his local hospices and spoke about the important issue of the number of consultants available. The Minister should look at that issue closely and meet the hon. Gentleman to discuss it. The hon. Member for Lewisham West and Penge (Ellie Reeves) spoke about the fantastic work of the specialist hospices in her constituency, and the need for funding to preserve and enhance that work. I thank the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne North (Catherine McKinnell) for speaking about the importance of respite, which too often is forgotten about. Respite is not a dirty word; it is not about respite from your child but with your child, to enjoy them, to play with them and to do the natural things that families do.

I have a couple of questions for the Minister. Can she confirm that total NHS funding for children's palliative care will not fall as a result of the long-term plan, and that children's hospices will not receive less funding? Will she clarify whether the increase in funding from £11 million to £25 million is intended to be open to providers of emotional and practical support, alongside the hospices? If not, what will be provided to ensure that we have that emotional and practical support? What steps will the Minister take to encourage clinical commissioning groups and local authorities to increase commissioning for the sibling support that I mentioned?

10.37 am

Julie Cooper (Burnley) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Dorries. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) for securing a debate on this very important subject. I pay tribute to all the dedicated people in hospices, in the community and in hospitals who support families with a seriously ill child. I also thank organisations such as Together for Short Lives, CLIC Sargent and the Rainbow Trust, which do excellent work to provide support.

Hon. Members across the House have made powerful speeches on a very emotional subject. I am grateful to them all. I can think of few things in life worse than for a parent to hear that their child is so seriously ill that they cannot expect to live a full life, or to live with the knowledge that their child will never grow into adulthood, and will die before them. That must be absolutely devastating and is against the natural order of things. The pain is almost unimaginable. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Swansea East (Carolyn Harris) for sharing her moving story and for the work she does to support other parents to get through very difficult times.

In the United Kingdom, 49,000 babies, children and young people, and their families, are coping with life-threatening and life-limiting conditions. In recent years, the Government have made various commitments to deliver support for appropriate end-of-life care that recognises the difference between the end-of-life care needs of children and those of adults. The needs of children and young people in that situation are invariably

more complex and can be longer term. The children's charity CLIC Sargent reports that four out of five children survive cancer for five years or more. In fact, many children with life-limiting conditions live into adulthood. It is clear that although they may not need end of life care, they and their families usually need access to expert support and palliative care in a children's hospice, at home or in a community setting.

As children with life-threatening and life-limiting conditions increasingly live into adulthood, it is more important than ever that they are able to express their care preferences and that the continuity and co-ordination of their care is assured. In 2016, the Government committed to offering children and their parents the right to be involved in choosing and accessing the most appropriate care. NICE guidelines published in December 2016 stated that local commissioners and providers should prioritise advance care planning and agree in partnership, in a responsive and flexible fashion, the place and delivery of that care.

However, the reality is a postcode lottery. We heard many good examples of that. My hon. Friend the Member for West Ham (Lyn Brown) spoke movingly about the plight of Maryam and the fact that children in England still do not have access to what is effectively a life-saving and life-enabling drug. I hope the Minister listened very carefully to that. My hon. Friend the Member for North Tyneside (Mary Glendon) raised similar concerns about what children and their families suffer.

Shockingly, 46% of CCGs are failing to implement the Government's end of life care commitments. I note that when Ministers are questioned on the provision of health and social care services for disabled children, their answer invariably includes the words, "The commissioning of health and social care services is the responsibility of clinical commissioning groups and local authorities respectively." That is all very well, but agreed standards are not being implemented.

I know the Minister cares about this issue, but there is a worrying lack of accountability. Will she outline what steps the Government will take to bridge the accountability gap? Will she clarify who is responsible for commissioning palliative care and who is responsible for commissioning respite breaks for families? Respite breaks provide essential relief for the parents and siblings of children with severe life-threatening and life-limiting conditions; they are often the difference between coping and not coping. Does she agree there is a desperate need for a review of all commissioning of palliative care and support services, and that the Government need to develop an overarching strategy to bring an end to the postcode lottery that leaves so many families struggling to access vital services?

An important part of the support available is provided by children's hospices. We have heard many examples of those; the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Stephen Lloyd), my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham West and Penge (Ellie Reeves) and others talked about excellent hospice care. In the main, hospices are charitable organisations that rely for the majority of their funding on donations and fundraising in the local community. The current economic climate makes it more difficult for hospices to raise the requisite funding; at the same time, the proportion of funding provided by the NHS is falling. Again, there is no consistency or strategic oversight of the amounts that CCGs and local authorities contribute.

Liz Twist (Blaydon) (Lab): My hon. Friend mentions the fundraising that is done by some excellent organisations and lots of individuals, some of whom we have heard about. Does she agree that the Government should undertake to fund increased pension contributions for staff working in hospitals, instead of giving with one hand and taking with the other?

Julie Cooper: I totally agree, and I will come to that point in a moment.

The average NHS contribution to children's hospices is only 9%. Recent additional costs relating to the implementation of the NHS staff pay award and extra pension costs have pushed many hospices into a dire financial position, with closure a real possibility. Where hospices are forced to close, the NHS is left to fund the entire cost of health and social care for those children and young people.

In that context, the announcement by NHS England in December of £25 million of extra funding for children's hospices was extremely welcome. However, children's hospices do not know how to access that extra funding. Derian House Children's Hospice in Chorley, which currently supports 12 families from my constituency, told me this week that there is no clarity about how that newly committed funding can be accessed. As many Members mentioned, since the publication of the NHS 10-year plan there has been confusion about what exactly has been promised.

The Minister will be aware that the 10-year plan promises that, over the next five years,

"NHS England will increase its contribution by match-funding clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) who commit to increase their investment in local children's palliative and end of life care services including children's hospices."

Does she agree that that is confusing, and will she clarify the following points? Will the £25 million promised in December be only for children's hospices or for a wider group of children's palliative care services? Can she guarantee that, as a result of the long-term plan, the £11 million children's hospice grant will be protected and increased to reflect the growing demand and complexity of care provided by those lifeline services? The total spend on children's palliative care in hospices, hospitals and the community currently exceeds £25 million, so the promised funding could be viewed—I am sure this is unintentional—as a cap on NHS spending on children's palliative care. In the light of that, can she reassure me that the NHS will indeed provide additional funding for children's hospices?

I turn briefly to the financial pressures that parents of children with seriously ill children often experience. The 2018 "Counting the cost" survey of families who provide long-term care for a disabled child found that many experienced huge financial difficulties. A third of all families surveyed said they had additional costs of more than £300 each month. Some 46% of families had been threatened with court action for non-payment of bills. That is hardly surprising given that 87% of the families surveyed were unable to work because of their caring commitments.

CLIC Sargent has highlighted that children suffering with cancer often have to travel longer distances than adult patients for regular treatments, placing a significant additional financial burden on parents already coping with so much. Will the Minister commit to introducing

a package of financial support that includes a children and young people's cancer travel fund for parents who care for children with life-threatening diseases? Will she also spare a thought for bereaved parents and accelerate the introduction of the children's funeral fund that so many Members have requested?

In conclusion, I ask that the Minister answers the specific points that I and other hon. Members have raised, and commits to implementing a comprehensive strategy that provides a consistent standard of joined-up, adequately funded children's palliative care that has full parity with adult care.

Ms Nadine Dorries (in the Chair): Minister, will you leave one minute at the end for Mr Shannon to wind up?

10.46 am

The Minister for Care (Caroline Dinenage): Of course, Ms Dorries. It is a great pleasure to serve under your chairmanship. I congratulate the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) on securing the debate and on his enduring and passionate commitment to this incredibly important cause.

We heard incredibly powerful speeches from both sides of the Chamber, with lots of great examples of amazing practice in different regions. Some worrying issues were mentioned; I thank the hon. Members for West Ham (Lyn Brown) and for North Tyneside (Mary Glindon) for raising the issue of the life-saving drug that they are keen to get hold of for their constituents. I will of course commit to looking at that with the Secretary of State, but I share the concern of the hon. Member for West Ham that children should never be used as pawns in communications between drug companies and Government organisations.

Lyn Brown: May I just press the Minister to agree to the urgent meeting I requested?

Caroline Dinenage: Absolutely. The meeting probably would not be with me, because the issue does not fall under my portfolio, but it is really important that the hon. Lady meets the relevant Minister.

The debate has been very broad, and a lot of questions were asked. I will attempt to answer as many as I can, but I commit to writing to hon. Members with all the answers they asked for if I miss any out. Whenever we discuss this issue, we must keep at the back of our minds the powerful point made by the hon. Member for East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow (Dr Cameron), despite her throat issues, that at a time of their lives when they are dealing with unimaginable stress and grief, parents should not have to fight for what they need to best care for their children.

The hon. Member for Swansea East (Carolyn Harris) painted a picture of how the world ends when you lose a child. I cannot even begin to imagine that, but it must feel the same to be told that your child may die at a young age. That must, quite simply, be devastating. As the hon. Member for Strangford said, almost 40,000 children and young people aged 19 or under in England live with a life-limiting condition and may need palliative care. Of those, around 1,000 die every year.

As outlined in the NHS long-term plan, we know that children's palliative and end of life care have not kept pace with the growth in clinical care costs or with inflation. NHS England's hospice grant programme

[*Caroline Dinenage*]

provides £11 million a year for children's hospices, which are incredibly valuable. I have spoken before—probably in this room—about my great passion for children's hospices. That comes from my mum who helped raise money to build Naomi House children's hospice just outside Winchester, and throughout my twenties she made the whole family partake in a range of humiliating fundraising exercises to raise money for that. I went to visit Naomi House again last year, many years later, and I saw at first hand the incredible, valuable services that it offers, not just for end of life care, but because of its respite and outreach work, which is a lifeline for so many families.

Hon. Members will know the invaluable services offered by children's hospices, and I was pleased that in the long-term plan additional funding has been made available each year for children's palliative and end of life care services. I understand the confusion about the different amounts that have been mentioned and issues around that, and Department officials are currently working with NHS England to clarify those numbers and what they mean. I am clear that funding for children's hospices is vital. We must ensure they get the money they need, and that money must increase from its current levels.

As the hon. Member for Strangford pointed out, there is regional variation in how palliative care is delivered. I know that such care is exceptional in some parts of the country, and many staff up and down the country go above and beyond to ensure that experiences for children with life-limiting conditions, and those at the end of their life, are as good as they can be. We know, however, that there are areas where we need to do considerably more, and NHS England is firmly focused on providing support and challenge to achieve that. Choice at the end of life is a centrepiece of the Government's drive to improve end of life care, and for choice to be meaningful it needs to be personalised and matched by healthcare services that respond in an effective way that places patients, families and carers at the heart of decision making. We know when we achieve that that we have got it right, but also that we have a long way to go. I pay tribute to the all-party group for children who need palliative care, and charities such as Together for Short Lives, and the work they are doing to take that crusade forward.

Catherine McKinnell: I appreciate the commitment made by the Minister that her officials will clarify those figures. Will she also commit to ensuring that children's hospices do not receive less money as a result of the long-term plan? Can she make that reassuring commitment to everybody watching the debate today?

Caroline Dinenage: I know that we are planning to meet next month to discuss this issue in more detail, but my understanding from the announcement in the long-term plan is that there will be an increase in funding for children's hospices. I would not support a move towards anything other than that, so we are certainly in agreement about the value that children's hospices offer up and down our country.

In July 2016, "Our commitment to you for end of life care" set out what everyone should expect from care at the end of life, and the actions being taken to make

high-quality personalised care a reality for all. NHS England is responsible for delivering that commitment in partnership with key stakeholders through its national end of life care programme board. The hon. Member for Strangford mentioned ensuring that sustainability and transformation partnerships and integrated care systems deliver care in a way that supports their local population. NHS England is already working with Public Health England and the Care Quality Commission to provide bespoke end of life care data and support packs to STP and ICS areas, to help plan for and improve end of life services.

NHS England is developing a new indicator for clinical commissioning groups to measure deaths in hospital after three or more emergency admissions in the final 90 days of life. That sounds like a technical piece of data to collect, but such vital information will help us to understand exactly what care is being delivered, and ensure that we spread best practice and identify areas for improvement.

The hon. Gentleman rightly highlighted the crucial role that leadership and accountability play in commissioning those vital services, and NHS England has and is seeking to improve support for commissioners when funding and delivering children's end of life care. In April 2017 it made available a new specialist palliative care currency—one for adults and one for children—to support local areas in planning and delivering services, including hospice services. The currency can help local services better understand complexity of care and the investment needed to deliver it. It can be difficult for some commissioners to develop suitable models to meet children's needs, given that in some geographical areas relatively small numbers are involved. That is why NHS England has established an expert group, which includes Together for Short Lives, to bring together knowledge and expertise in children's end of life care, consider developing models that are suitable for that incredibly vulnerable group of patients, and set up pilot models of care that will be implemented later this year.

A number of hon. Members mentioned short break services, and access to respite and short breaks is fundamental for many families and carers. Local authorities have a legal duty to commission short breaks, and although the NHS's role is not statutory but a matter for local commissioners, it may also provide clinical support. Having the reassurance of clinical oversight can often mean the difference between carers taking those much-needed breaks and feeling unable to do so, and it is important that such work is collaborative. A recent report from Together for Short Lives found that 84% of clinical commissioning groups said that they commission short breaks for children who need palliative care—an increase from 77% in 2018. We want to ensure that 100% of clinical commissioning groups make such a contribution so that carers have access to the breaks they need. NHS England provides bespoke data and commissioning support to STP and ICS areas to enable them to plan and deliver effective services, such as short breaks, for children and young people.

Access to and quality of palliative and end of life care goes beyond funding for hospices, and through the long-term plan we are accelerating the roll-out of personal health budgets to give people greater control and choice. We want 200,000 people to benefit from a personal health budget by 2023-24, and that will include things

such as provision of bespoke wheelchairs and community-based packages for personal and domestic support. NHS England is expanding the offer of mental health services to people receiving social care support and those receiving specialist or end of life care.

Julie Cooper: Does the Minister agree that the 49,000 babies, children and young people who have been diagnosed with life-threatening or life-limiting conditions would all benefit from a personal finance plan?

Caroline Dinanage: That is right. The system has to be rolled out carefully because we must get it 100% right. It is a jointly funded and collaborative system, but at the end of 2018 it covered 32,000 people, and by 2023-24 it will cover 200,000 people. That shows enormous progress and commitment, and it will give those who want it more choice and control over what kind of care and support they need to meet their needs.

NHS England is developing a refreshed end of life care core skills education and training framework to standardise training, and the NHS now employs more staff than at any other time in its history. The data does not identify nursing specialities, such as palliative care, but the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Stephen Lloyd) may be interested to know that 648 full-time equivalent doctors are working in palliative medicine, which is 202 more than in May 2010—an increase of 45.2%. NHS England's long-term plan sets out how it will work with patients, families, local authorities and voluntary sector partners to personalise and improve end of life care.

I will write to the hon. Member for Strangford about NHS pensions and hospices. I was going to mention "Agenda for Change", but I do not have much time and I wish to leave him time to conclude the debate. I thank all hon. Members who have taken part in this debate. We know there is more to be done to meet our ambition to reduce variation at the end of life and ensure proper support for children with life-limiting conditions and their families.

10.59 am

Jim Shannon: I thank you, Ms Dorries, for enabling all Members to speak today, and I thank the 17 right hon. and hon. Members who have spoken for their personal and incredible contributions, which came from every region of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Their constituents should be proud of their elected representatives who made such significant contributions to the debate. I thank the Minister for her compassionate and understanding response, and for her obvious interest in and commitment to improving the situation. The meetings that she will hold will be an indication of how that goes. Today this House shone a light on an issue that has united us. Is it too much to hope that before the day is out, we may unite on other things as well?

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House has considered support for children with life-limiting and life-threatening conditions and their families.

Short Prison Sentences

11 am

Chris Evans (Islwyn) (Lab/Co-op): I beg to move,

That this House has considered the effectiveness of short prison sentences.

It is always a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Dorries. I refer the House to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests. I am the chair of the all-party parliamentary group on boxing and a steward of the British Boxing Board of Control.

I have called this debate because I was heartened by the Minister's recent statement that he is seriously considering abolishing short-term prison sentences. Considering the many reports in the news about the apparent decline of prisons across the country—perhaps most notably HM Prison Bedford—this debate could not have come at a better time. It is my hope that the debate will serve as the beginning of a conversation with the Government, wider society, charities and other organisations that inspires confidence in our criminal justice system and brings about effective, fair punishment in the future.

According to Dr Robert Jones at the Wales Governance Centre, Wales has the highest imprisonment rate in western Europe. As of last Friday, there were more than 82,400 people serving sentences in prisons across England and Wales, 95% of them male. The current prison capacity of England and Wales is estimated to be around 85,000, which means many prisons are suffering from severe overcrowding and a massive strain on resources. This overcrowding leads to increased risk of inmate violence, and leaves resources and staff thinly stretched across the prison, which can heavily impact on the success of rehabilitating inmates.

It is clear that things have to change. I believe that there are alternatives available to the Government. If we were to see more investment in community services and rehabilitative treatment programmes, which can address an offender's criminogenic needs, we would see a reduction in the prison population and rates of reoffending. I am aware that the Minister expressed an interest in abolishing sentences of only three months, but I believe that there is a case to extend this to sentences of up to six months. All of the evidence stacks up to show that shorter sentences do not work.

John Howell (Henley) (Con): The hon. Gentleman is making some good points about overcrowding and the state of the prison estate. When looking at short sentences, the key issue for me is whether they achieve the rehabilitation of prisoners; my judgment is that they do not. Would he agree?

Chris Evans: The hon. Gentleman makes a pertinent point, which I will elaborate on later. There are numerous examples of people in the system with substance abuse issues, who cannot get into substance abuse rehabilitation or overcome their problem, who then find themselves outside, and get back into the system. I will develop this argument more as I go on and I will be happy to take another intervention, if the hon. Gentleman so wishes.

[Chris Evans]

To me, short sentences do not help to reduce reoffending and they can cause unnecessary disruption to the lives of those who could have been dealt with in ways that have seen better results.

Ellie Reeves (Lewisham West and Penge) (Lab): My hon. Friend talks about the impact on people's lives. A recent report published by the Prison Reform Trust showed that 17,000 children in England and Wales are affected by maternal imprisonment each year. One in four women are sentenced to less than one month. Does my hon. Friend agree that that is completely unsustainable for women and their children?

Chris Evans: In the case of non-violent crimes, especially those committed by women, there is a real argument to make about that. I cannot quote the figures off the top of my head, but I understand that a large number of women who are locked up have been victims of domestic violence. The courts need to accept that and think about it when they are sentencing women in the future. As I said, 95% of the prison population is male. How many of the 5% who are women have been convicted of non-violent crimes and sentenced to less than one month? Many women are in nurturing and caring roles, with children and also with elderly parents, and that would cause severe disruption as well.

Alex Chalk (Cheltenham) (Con): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is critical to develop a robust and credible system of community sentences, so that my constituents can feel satisfied that when people are punished by the court they truly receive something that is inconvenient, rehabilitative and credible?

Chris Evans: The hon. Gentleman hits the nail on the head. This is all about building confidence in community rehabilitation sentencing. Somebody said to me earlier in the week that if somebody's house gets burgled, they want to feel that people have been punished. However, community sentencing is seen as the soft option. As this debate goes on over the next few months, we have to be talking about building confidence in those sentences—the hon. Gentleman is absolutely right.

The Revolving Doors Agency's campaign, which is called #shortsighted, backs the sentiment that ending short sentences can reduce cost and be resource effective. It is calling on the Government to bring an end to short sentences and opt for community-based sentences instead.

In England and Wales we are too quick to send people to prison for petty and often persistent crimes. I understand that Governments of all shades are often influenced by the media, which likes the idea of "lock them up". The fact that many people who have received a short sentence often reoffend and commit similar crimes shows that short-term sentences are ineffective in reducing recidivism. Government statistics from 2018 show that 63% of those who had sentences of less than 12 months went on to reoffend within a year. It is clear that short prison sentences do not provide an apt amount of time to stage an intervention and address the needs of an offender, particularly if that offender is also experiencing ongoing problems with drug and alcohol use or other mental health issues.

On the other side of the coin, those who have committed crimes of animal cruelty face a maximum of six months' imprisonment in Wales. I understand that the Government in England have committed to increase that to five years, an extension which I believe should be applied to all parts of the UK. Six months hardly provides enough time for an intervention in such criminal behaviour, and animal cruelty should not be treated in the same manner as petty crimes. I support the continued campaign by Battersea Dogs & Cats Home to increase these sentences.

Last year, the Revolving Doors Agency carried out research among voters of all parties in England and Wales, bearing in mind what I said about the media and "lock them up". It found that an overwhelming 80% believe that those convicted of petty crimes, such as theft of daily essentials, should not be sent to prison. They also found that voters strongly back reducing the prison population and investing money in activities such as drug treatment programmes instead, with 74% thinking that offenders who have committed a petty crime and who have drug or alcohol addictions belong in treatment programmes, instead of prison. What is more, the majority of voters said that they would be more likely to vote for an MP who supported reducing prison populations and investing the savings into treatment programmes, with only 16% saying that they would be unlikely to do so.

Alex Chalk: Does the hon. Gentleman agree with me that we need to slay the myth that this country is somehow soft on locking people up? Across the United Kingdom over 90,000 people are locked up, whereas in France the figure is closer to 60,000 people. It is important that we set the record straight, and do so loud and clear.

Chris Evans: I absolutely agree. From the contributions that we have had so far, the tone of the debate makes me think that we are going to produce something that will inspire confidence. I welcome all the interventions we have had so far; it has been good. The hon. Gentleman is right. Coming from a small country like Wales, I find it amazing that we have the highest prison population in western Europe.

I have always been supportive of the UK's prison system taking a rehabilitative approach with offenders, rather than a punitive one. Rehabilitation is proven in successfully reducing reoffending rates, far more than a punitive system does. All we need to do is to look to prison systems in countries such as Norway and Finland to see that rehabilitating and educating offenders massively reduces rates of crime, and to the US and Russia to see that punishment does not.

People being imprisoned in England and Wales are mostly being convicted of non-violent, petty crimes. Many of these offenders have other issues, such as alcohol, drugs or their mental health. Sending those people to prison for a few months will not help them, and nor will it help wider society. The Ministry of Justice has published research in the past which confirms the fact that offenders given short-term prison sentences were associated with significantly higher proven reoffending than those given a community order or suspended sentence.

To reduce reoffending by those with substance abuse or mental health issues, treatment programmes would be far more beneficial than imprisonment. For younger

offenders engaging in petty crime, perhaps educational workshops would be better. As the chair of the all-party parliamentary group on boxing I have been researching and learning about the benefits of sport and boxing in reducing and deterring criminal behaviour and keeping young people on the straight and narrow. It is definitely an avenue that the Government should consider exploring. However, despite a review from Rosie Meek about the benefits of sports, boxing and martial arts in prisons, the Government have yet to act on the recommendations. I want to ask the Minister whether I and a delegation from the all-party group could come to discuss her report with him.

Conor McGinn (St Helens North) (Lab): My hon. Friend is making a considered speech, and I wholeheartedly agree with it. We both represent working-class communities that believe in being tough on crime and its causes. Does he agree that the Government could do much more to support projects such as the Wildcard boxing academy in my community, which keeps young people in places such as St Helens out of the criminal justice system in the first place?

Chris Evans: When it comes to boxing there is evidence. I could cite a huge number of champions, from both sides of the Atlantic—some famous examples—who found themselves in trouble and used boxing to turn themselves around, because of the discipline that the sport taught them. The Government need to take those ideas on board, and provide support for boxing clubs, which tend to be at the bottom of the pile when money is handed out in community grants.

John Howell: Does the hon. Gentleman think there is a great contradiction in the health service engaging in social prescription, by encouraging people to engage in sports activities, while the Prison Service does not?

Chris Evans: Yes. The trend in the past 20 years has been that prevention is better than cure. The NHS is getting success in encouraging people suffering from obesity to go on to fitness and diet programmes. There is some success from that approach, and it could be transferred to the Prison Service. If people with energy have time on their hands, sport can fill it.

In research published last year by the Ministry of Justice it was found that reductions in reoffending were associated with the use of court orders such as community sentences rather than short custodial sentences. The effect was greater for people with a larger number of prior offences, younger offenders, and people with severe mental health problems. For those with prior offences who have already served a number of short stints in prison, imprisonment is clearly not a deterrent but more of an occupational hazard. It is interesting, therefore, that those offenders are less likely to reoffend when given community sentences.

Community sentences can be a win-win for all. Taxpayers' money is saved, local communities and projects benefit and offenders learn skills and the value of giving back to society instead of taking from it. Not only do short sentences do nothing to rehabilitate an offender or reduce their risk of reoffending; sending people to prison for a few months unnecessarily adds to the

overcrowding in prisons throughout the country. As I mentioned, England and Wales are reaching peak prison capacity and many prisons are heavily overcrowded. The overcrowding means even more strain on already pressured prison staff and resources; there are not enough of them as it is. That in turn has an impact on the success of inmate rehabilitation, levels of violence in prisons and access to illegal drugs, not to mention the wellbeing of prison staff.

That overcrowding could be prevented if courts did not instantly resort to sentencing offenders to short prison terms for non-violent petty crimes. In the year ending June 2018 almost 29,000 people entered prison to serve sentences of six months or less. That was 47% of all sentenced offenders entering prison during that time. According to Ministry of Justice prison performance statistics for 2017-18, in England and Wales the cost of keeping one person in prison for a year stood at £37,543. That works out at about £3,125 per month for one prisoner. The annual figure is more than Brits earn on average each year, and is almost as much as the cost of a place at an elite public school. Think of the amount of money we could save and invest elsewhere, if we did not imprison people on short sentences. It would also save money in the long run, as those who serve a community sentence or enter a rehabilitation programme are less likely to reoffend and to be imprisoned again in the future.

The money saved could be invested into the programmes and used to create more jobs and train more staff in the skills required to work in rehabilitation and treatment services, as well as being spent on other public services. With the looming threat of a no-deal Brexit and a shrinking economy, we need to be more efficient and effective with money and resources, and invest in and utilise more efficient and effective options.

It is not just the placement in prison for a few months that is costly. Short-term sentences can be hugely disruptive to people's lives and lead them to be more reliant on public and social services than they were before entering prison. Resettling a previously imprisoned offender back into the community uses up a lot of time, money and resources. Short sentences can disrupt employment and housing situations, which can lead to more people applying for and relying on universal credit. There is a risk of people being left homeless, particularly if they are released on a Friday, as happened to more than 25,000 people in 2017-18. The public services that people rely on upon release, such as access to benefits, medication, housing or other assistance, are closed over the weekend. That means there is a risk that they will not get their basic needs supplied and that they will sleep rough for at least three nights. Therefore they will be at increased risk of reoffending. From there the offender can fall into the cycle of offending and imprisonment, which racks up the costs in the long run.

I know that the Minister is committed to prison reform and reducing the levels of inmate violence and access to drugs, and that he recognises the virtue of rehabilitating and educating inmates. I commend him for that. I hope he would agree therefore that, if we truly want to protect the public and remove people from a life of crime, so that they become proactive citizens who make positive contributions to society, we must take heed of the research and the multitude of statistics showing that short prison sentences do not work. I

[Chris Evans]

mentioned earlier the Revolving Doors Agency's #shortsighted campaign, and I urge the Minister to take on board its recommendations. It calls on the Government to introduce a presumption against short custodial sentences of less than six months, much as the Scottish Government have done. That would allow for such sentences to be given only when no other appropriate option was available. In cases where short prison sentences were imposed for non-violent petty crimes, the courts would have to give a reason why they had opted for a custodial sentence over a community one. What is more, that approach would not remove the court's discretion, and would allow courts to deal with more serious and violent offences appropriately. What is proposed is a presumption, not a ban on short prison sentences.

The fact that an offender does not go to prison does not mean that they are escaping justice or retribution. Such offenders will serve their time in another way, whether through curfews and tags or community service that benefits the wider community. Many of them face pressing personal issues, including substance abuse, homelessness or mental illness. I believe that they should be given the opportunity to escape the vicious cycle of criminal behaviour. They should have help alongside serving their community sentence, so that they can be rehabilitated and learn skills that can benefit their local economy and wider society.

We have to ask: do we truly want our streets to be safe, or do we want offenders to be punished and thrown into an expensive cycle of petty criminal behaviour and short-term imprisonment? If the answer is the former, the only way forward is to focus on how we can help those people change their lives for the better, rather than throwing them in prison and forgetting about them for several months. By allowing the latter to happen we will only contribute to the rising level of crime on the streets, and to overstretched prison services. I hope that the Minister can agree with me on that, and that he will pursue alternatives to short-term prison sentences.

As I said at the beginning of the debate, I look forward to engaging in a constructive and robust conversation. I do not expect to get all the answers today. However, I want a real opportunity to engage, over the next few months, in bringing about a justice system that brings benefits and, above all, inspires the confidence of the whole community.

Alex Chalk *rose—*

Ms Nadine Dorries (in the Chair): You can only intervene in a 30-minute debate; I am afraid you cannot make a speech.

11.19 am

The Minister of State, Ministry of Justice (Rory Stewart): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Dorries. I pay particular tribute to the hon. Member for Islwyn (Chris Evans) for his fantastic speech, which has really framed the problem we are dealing with today. I am happy to encourage interventions from any hon. Member; I am sorry to hear that we will not be hearing from my hon. Friend the Member for Cheltenham (Alex Chalk), who has an enormous amount to contribute to this debate.

Ms Nadine Dorries (in the Chair): He can always intervene on you.

Rory Stewart: He can always intervene on me. I will first touch briefly on the issue of public protection, secondly try to take a concrete example from Bedford Prison about how short-term prison sentences actually work in reality, thirdly touch on the alternatives to prison and, finally, talk about the prison regime.

I begin with public protection. It is not a subject that can be approached with anything other than the greatest, profoundest degree of seriousness. In the end, almost the most fundamental duty of our Government is to protect the public, and in particular to protect the public against crime. Whatever we are talking about today, all parties across the House begin with a fundamental understanding that crime is wrong and that it can inflict unspeakable misery on a victim. We have only to think of recent events—victims of knife crime, innocent people smashed up in the streets, victims of burglary, victims of sexual offences—to see why we must begin with absolute horror at and abhorrence of crime.

In addressing it, we must combine our desire to punish people, quite rightly, for committing crimes, our desire to deter more people from committing crimes in the future, our desire to rehabilitate people and change their behaviour, our desire to protect the public, and our desire to pass on a strong message that we will not tolerate this misery being inflicted on the public. When we talk about this, it is important to stress that nobody, on either side of the House, is in any way questioning the horror that crime imposes on victims.

However, it is also important to look at the reality of what is happening in our prisons. On Thursday last week, I was in Bedford Prison, talking to a man. I asked, "How long have you been in for?" He said, "Three weeks." I asked if it was his first time in Bedford Prison and he said, "No, I was here eight times last year." I said, "How could you possibly have been in Bedford Prison eight times last year?" He showed me his arm; he was not wearing his shirt and he had tracks from his heroin addiction right the way up his arm. He said, "What happens is, I'm a heroin addict. I leave Bedford Prison after a few weeks, I don't really know what to do with myself, I shoplift and I get put back in Bedford Prison again." The question is, what purpose is being served by moving this man in and out of Bedford Prison eight times in a year?

Alex Chalk: To stop him shoplifting.

Rory Stewart: By all means, we can come back to that suggestion, but first I will go through some of the purposes that might be put forward. It was quite clear from my conversation with him that this was a man who had serious mental health issues, serious learning difficulties and a serious drug addiction. The first suggestion, made by the sotto voce intervention from my hon. Friend, is that perhaps the reason we have put him in prison is that when he is in prison he is not shoplifting. That is true, but we must remember that he is only in prison for three weeks. It is not a great protection of the public from his shoplifting if he is removed for three weeks and then popped back on to the streets again.

The second reason that people would suggest for his being put in prison is to deter him from committing an offence in the future. That is clearly not working: he

leaves, he reoffends. The third reason he might be put in prison is to rehabilitate him—to change him so that he does not reoffend. That is clearly not working, because he is obviously reoffending. The final view that is sometimes put forward by judges or magistrates is that there is no alternative; they have tried everything else with this person, so what else can they do other than put him in prison? But it is not working. The idea that there is no alternative to putting this person in and bringing him out again cannot possibly make sense.

That brings us to the nub of the issue: prison, for somebody such as that, does not seem to be working. A better way of dealing with them would be a community sentence that addressed the fundamental problem, which is that this man is a heroin addict. The right kind of treatment programme is not about being soft on the individual, but about protecting the public. If we can turn his life around so that he is not coming out and reoffending seven more times in a year, that shop is protected and the public are protected from the misery of crime.

It is also worth bearing in mind the prison itself. Our prisons are currently facing a rising tide of violence, a rising tide of drugs and a rising tide of assaults on prison officers and prisoners. An enormous amount of that is driven by short-term prisoners. The way that drugs get into prison is frequently through prisoners bringing them in, often inside their bodies. The people who are coming in and out of those prisons most frequently are, of course, prisoners with short-term prison sentences—people such as the man I met, who are coming in and out eight times in a year. By definition, if someone has been put in prison for 20 years, they only have one opportunity to bring drugs into prison. Someone who is going in and out on short sentences is really contributing to that flow.

Furthermore, someone who is not imprisoned for 20 years does not have the same incentives to engage with the regime. Somebody who is in for 20 years will often settle down and focus on work and education; they need to make a life in prison. Somebody who is in for a few weeks simply does not have the same attitude toward prison. Therefore, from the point of view of a prison governor or prison officer, the prisoners on whom they are spending an enormous amount of time are those on short-term prison sentences.

That relates also to self-harm and suicide: people are at their most vulnerable in prison on their first night there. It is very destabilising to go into a prison. That is when much of the self-harm and suicide happens, so a lot of the prison officers' focus is on those people who are coming in and out for a few weeks, but it is difficult to do them much good. In Durham Prison, the average length of stay at the moment is 10 days. Ten days cannot possibly be long enough to get someone into an education programme, a work programme or a drug treatment programme.

Prison is and should be a very serious thing. It is very expensive. In certain cases, it costs more than sending someone to Eton. It is incredibly complex to manage. We are dealing potentially with people who could be terrorists, murderers or sex offenders and with a complicated regime, moving people in and out of cells, keeping them safe in prison and dealing with self-harm. That requires an enormous amount of professionalism. Having a safe, stable, decent prison, which would be helped by not

having prisoners on short-term sentences, would help us to focus on the more serious prisoners and to do the professional work to turn their lives around.

We must get the right kind of community sentence in place, ensure that those people are not destabilised by being dragged in and out of prison all the time and recognise that the wrong type of short sentence is long enough to harm them but not long enough to change them. It is long enough to harm them because they lose their house, their partner and, if they have one, a job; they come into prison, and—bang!—a few weeks later they are back out on the streets again, with none of the support networks that might keep them stable, they commit crime again and they are back inside prison.

If we can find a way of working with them in the community, we can prove what is absolutely clear from all the research we have done: they are less likely to reoffend after a community sentence than after a short prison sentence. If I take that man in Bedford Prison as an illustration, that individual, given a community sentence, is less likely to go on to commit that ninth shoplifting offence than if he is put in prison for the eighth time. If he is put in prison for the eighth time, he will almost certainly go on to reoffend; in fact, in two thirds of cases, short-term prison sentence prisoners do so. That is endangering the public, not protecting the public.

What I have talked about today is an expansion on what the hon. Member for Islwyn said, referring to the problem that we face. The solution is much more difficult. We will have to bring parties together in Parliament, we will have to discuss it with judges and magistrates, and above all we will have to discuss it with the public. Our primary obligation is to protect the public from crime, to show our moral abhorrence at crime and our sympathy of its victims, and also to explain that in order to protect the public, we need to be practical and focused. One way of being practical and focused is to be honest about the problems of short-sentence prisoners. I will allow the hon. Gentleman some time for closing remarks.

Ms Nadine Dorries (in the Chair): Minister, that does not happen in a 30-minute debate. If you would like to continue, you can.

Rory Stewart: I am so sorry; I would be delighted to continue. Many apologies. Perhaps an intervention from the hon. Member for Islwyn?

Ms Nadine Dorries (in the Chair): Yes; I was just going to say that.

Chris Evans: I find myself in the happy position of agreeing with everything the Minister has said. His critique of what is going on with short sentences is spot on. I know there are hon. Members on the Opposition side who would be interested to meet with him and talk about a way forward, and I hope we can get those meetings in place. I only regret that the debate was only half an hour; I think we could have spoken all day about this subject.

Rory Stewart: I thank the hon. Gentleman very much. To conclude, we must focus on what outcome we want—not the process, which is the prison, but the outcome. The outcome must be to find the right way of protecting the

[Rory Stewart]

public, and whether we are talking about punishment, deterrence, incapacitation or rehabilitation, there are serious problems with short-term sentences.

Motion lapsed (Standing Order No. 10(6)).

11.30 am

Sitting suspended.

Human Rights: Xinjiang

[PHIL WILSON *in the Chair*]

2.30 pm

Mr Alistair Carmichael (Orkney and Shetland) (LD):
I beg to move,

That this House has considered human rights in Xinjiang.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Wilson. I am delighted to have the opportunity to discuss this issue. I am also pleased to see a good number of other MPs in the Chamber, given the importance of business elsewhere in the Palace. I am grateful for their support. I place on the record my appreciation of the work in this area of various non-governmental organisations, including Amnesty International, Christian Solidarity Worldwide—CSW—Human Rights Watch and the World Uyghur Congress.

I also add the BBC to that list. It was a remarkable 10-minute report by John Sweeney on “Newsnight” in August 2018 that first brought this issue to my attention; I am ashamed to say that I knew nothing about it until that point. In that 10 minutes he described very graphically the scale of what is happening in Xinjiang province and well illustrated the human cost. Even if the BBC does nothing else worth watching over the next 12 months—I do not completely discount that possibility—that 10 minutes alone justifies the licence fee.

The concerns that I and, I hope, others will raise are all supported by evidence, although there are other concerns that are not so well evidenced. However, even on those concerns for which evidence exists it is impossible to be entirely accurate, as we shall see when looking at the numbers affected. That is principally a consequence of the secrecy and surveillance of the government of the Xinjiang province, which is said to extend not only within the province but outside it as well. Uyghur Muslims living in this country feel very much under the same pressure as those who live in Xinjiang. Parenthetically, I hear anecdotal reports that the Chinese secret service has been recruiting Chinese students at British universities to spy on other Chinese students, thus continuing and worsening the climate of secrecy and fear.

However, thanks to the evidence of “Newsnight” and the efforts of Amnesty, CSW and Human Rights Watch, we have an emerging picture on an epic scale. What is being done in Xinjiang is also happening in Tibet, where mass detention camps have been a feature of the landscape since 2014. The so-called re-education camps, officially known as centres for transformation through education, are principally, but not exclusively, targeted at the Muslim community.

CSW lists reasons for detention in the camps including, among other things: someone having WhatsApp on their phone; having relatives who live abroad; accessing religious materials online; having visited certain “sensitive” countries; participation in communal religious activities; and behaviour indicating “wrong thinking” or “religious extremism”. Indeed, sometimes no reason is given at all.

Amnesty gives some useful context, stating:

“China’s Constitution, laws and ethnic policies all stress ethnic unity and prohibit discrimination against ethnic groups...But China’s expressed determination to eradicate the ‘forces of terrorism, separatism and extremism’ leads officials to pursue discriminatory

policies that target members of ethnic groups merely for exercising their rights to freedom of religion and belief, thought, peaceful assembly, association, movement, opinion, expression and access to information.”

Quite incredibly, the Chinese Government continue to deny the existence of these camps. However, eyewitness accounts, documentation relating to the construction and procurement of the camps, and satellite imagery all contradict that denial. The number of detainees is said to be between several hundred thousand and just over 1 million, with CSW saying that it may be as high as 3 million. We can be certain that that number is rising.

What goes on within these detention facilities has been described as Orwellian, which I think, because of what we know, does some injustice to George Orwell. If George Orwell was commissioned to write in the style of Franz Kafka, that might come close. Inmates are required to chant Communist party slogans, recite party thought and take part in self-incrimination sessions.

Andrew Griffiths (Burton) (Con): I congratulate the right hon. Gentleman on securing the debate. I thank the Minister for his help in answering several of my questions on this issue. Does the right hon. Gentleman share the concern of many in my constituency, most importantly Mohammed Haroun, representing the Uxbridge Street mosque, who wrote to me to say that the scale of Muslim persecution in China makes what is happening in Myanmar pale into insignificance, and that we must act?

Mr Carmichael: I always think it invidious to try to compare persecution in one country with that in another. However, the hon. Gentleman’s point is a good one. I suspect that we do not hear more about this issue because of the difficulty in getting reliable information out of the province. I will return to that point.

To give a bit more of a human flavour of what goes on in the camps, I will share with the House, and place on the record, a couple of the testimonies from that “Newsnight” report in August. The first is from Azat, whose family are detained in the camp. He describes having been allowed to visit his family, saying:

“It was dinner time. There were at least 1,200 people holding empty plastic bowls in their hands. They had to sing pro-Chinese songs to get food. I never dreamt the place was so huge. The cell windows were barred. From the lights, I knew there were many more people inside as well. I estimate that there were at least 3,500 people in there.”

He describes them, saying:

“They were like robots. They seemed to have lost their souls. I knew many of them well—we used to sit and eat together—but now they didn’t look normal to me. They behaved as if they weren’t aware of what they were doing. They were like someone who’d lost their memory after a car crash.”

There was a further interview with a re-education centre survivor called Omir, who said:

“They have a chair called the tiger. My ankles were shackled, my hands locked into the chair, I couldn’t move. They wouldn’t let me sleep. They also hung me up for hours and they beat me. They had thick wooden and rubber batons, whips made from twisted wire, needles to pierce the skin, pliers for pulling out your nails. All these tools were displayed on the table in front of me, ready for use at any time. You could hear other people screaming as well.

You have no freedom at all. You must do everything according to the rules set by the Communist party: recite what they say, sing red songs, thank the party, think like a robot. You do whatever you are told.”

Lilian Greenwood (Nottingham South) (Lab): It is hard to listen to some of those descriptions of the situation in the camps and the psychological pressures placed on people. Has the right hon. Gentleman heard evidence, as I have, that DNA samples and biometric data are also being obtained from Uyghurs in the camps, perhaps for the possibility of organ harvesting? That issue has been raised in relation to China before.

Mr Carmichael: I have heard that suggested. The evidence around the purpose of the use of DNA harvesting—I think, clearly the fact that it is suggested demands proper investigation. I think it is something that we as a country could do, and that we should lead on exerting pressure for such an investigation; but whether or not that is actually happening, I do not honestly know and I am careful not to overstate the case. What we know, and what is evidenced already, is certainly bad enough.

The human rights report produced by the Minister’s own Department, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, in June 2018 said of Xinjiang that

“the authorities introduced intrusive security and surveillance measures and cultural restrictions targeted at the Uyghur Muslim population. Thousands of Uyghurs were held in re-education camps after returning from abroad.”

I would suggest, on the basis of what we know now—what has come to light since then—that if anything, that is something of an understatement. I will look with interest to see how that statement is revised in this year’s human rights report.

I am conscious of the shortage of time and am grateful for the support of colleagues who have turned up for the debate. I could say a lot more, but I will focus now on why this matter should concern us and what my asks are of the Minister. First, it should concern us because the United Kingdom is a party to several declarations of human rights, including the universal declaration. The defining characteristic of human rights is surely their universality. An abuse or denial of human rights anywhere is a denial that affects us all.

The issue affects a number of Uyghur Muslims living in this country. “Newsnight” spoke of one case in which a family member had lost contact with up to 20 members of her family, who had possibly been taken into detention. What we know about the threats to the Muslim population in Xinjiang province raises serious questions for our own asylum policy. We know that there are some 10 Uyghur Muslims with active asylum claims at the moment. I know that this is not directly within the Minister’s responsibilities, but the Government should consider following the example of Sweden and Germany and introducing a moratorium on returns to China of Muslims from the Uyghur province.

Afzal Khan (Manchester, Gorton) (Lab): I thank the right hon. Gentleman for bringing this matter to the Chamber for us to debate. The issue is not only the need for pressure in relation to asylum applications and so on. Other authoritarian states are copying that example and piling in and persecuting citizens in a similar way.

Mr Carmichael: That is absolutely the case. It is the contagion of the abuse of human rights. We have seen it times without number in different parts of the world down the decades.

What consideration have the Government given to the use of section 13 of the Criminal Finances Act 2017 in response to gross human rights abuses? This could be a good first test of that section. Most importantly of all, what will the Government in this country do to see that an independent investigation is carried out into what is happening in Xinjiang province? The Chinese Government have said that they would be prepared to co-operate with a UN-led investigation. As a permanent member of the Security Council and as an advocate and strong promoter and defender of human rights, our country could take an important lead in making that sort of investigation happen. We should not be relying on groups such as Amnesty, Christian Solidarity Worldwide and Human Rights Watch to find out what is going on.

Human rights are to be defended wherever they are challenged. The right to religious belief should be defended, and everyone has a right to due process. None of these things features in the way in which Uyghur Muslims and others in Xinjiang province are treated. We have a direct interest at play also. It is obvious that the treatment of Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang is now acting as a recruiting sergeant for Daesh, for IS. As that happens, yes, of course its primary focus will be in relation to China, but we know from our own experience that Daesh, IS, does not confine its activities to any single country, so Britain has a very direct interest in ensuring that the rights of Muslims and others of religious faith in Xinjiang province are protected, and that the abuses are brought into the public domain so that their human rights and those of others can be protected.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Phil Wilson (in the Chair): Order. Several people want to speak, and I want the Back-Bench speeches to finish at 28 minutes past 3 so that we can give the three Front Benchers 10 minutes each and then allow two minutes for the right hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr Carmichael), who moved the motion, to conclude his remarks, so I ask people to keep their speeches to about five minutes. I do not want to impose a time limit. If we play it that way, we should get everybody in.

2.45 pm

Fiona Bruce (Congleton) (Con): It is a privilege to speak in this debate, and I thank the right hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr Carmichael) for securing it and for his speech, with which I very much concur.

Last week, as chair of the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission, I was able to meet a Uyghur Muslim who is now living in Washington DC and part of the NGO the Uyghur Entrepreneurs Network. He said that, about two years ago, Uyghurs who use Washington as a base—there are now about 3,000 of them—started reporting that relatives in China were disappearing. He says that, now, every Uyghur he meets there has a relative who has disappeared. Indeed, all of his own relatives have disappeared. The last one was his father, who sent a message to him saying, “Son, they have come for me.”

As we have heard, reports suggest that there are huge numbers—quite possibly more than 1 million—in the camps. People are often there for no reason at all. I am told that the difficulties experienced by Uyghur girls are such that they are even selected for Communist party officials to have relationships with them and used for bartering in exchange for their family’s freedom.

The religious dimension to the detentions is self-evident. Detainees are predominantly, although not exclusively, Muslim; they include people of Uyghur, Kazakh and Kyrgyz ethnicity. In this climate of fear, Uyghur Muslims have stopped public and communal religious observance. We have been told about the treatment of people once they are in the camps. Detainees have been not only forced to renounce their religion but forced, we understand, to eat pork or drink alcohol, in violation of their right to freedom of religion or belief. Conditions in the camps are extremely difficult, as we have heard.

The awful treatment extends even to children in the camps. Children as young as three can be detained, although sadly the children of those detained are often left to fend for themselves. We were told last week of one child who was found frozen—they had died when their parents were taken away. Children are often mistreated or sent to retraining centres. We have heard of children as young as six months old being locked up like farm animals in a shed.

Let me also draw the Minister’s attention to the concerns about DNA testing of Uyghurs, about which we have heard, and the potential that that might be being used for forced organ harvesting. I know that that is currently being investigated by the independent China tribunal, chaired by Sir Geoffrey Nice, QC. It would be interesting to hear the Minister’s comments on that.

Bob Fu, of China Aid, told us last week that the human rights violations in terms of religious persecution are at their worst for some 40 years in China. I am grateful to the UK, during the universal periodic review, for calling on China to implement the recommendations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and to allow the UN to monitor the implementation. But the UK needs to do as much as it can to ensure international accountability for the human rights violations, so can the Minister say whether he will support the calls for the UK to work with others in the international community to establish an independent, impartial and comprehensive UN-led investigation and to work towards the establishment of a mechanism for accountability on this issue?

Let me also draw colleagues’ attention to concerns in America. In relation to what is said to be happening in China, the *Washington Post* says:

“It’s hard to read that as anything other than a declaration of genocidal intent.”

This month, members of Congress and the Senate introduced the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act, which calls for the President to condemn the abuses, for the Secretary of State to co-ordinate closely with the traditional allies on targeted sanctions and restrictions, and for the appointment of a US special co-ordinator for the Uyghur autonomous region. It also calls on the private sector to conduct due diligence in dealings with China, and asks the FBI to track and take steps to hold accountable officials from China who harass, threaten or intimidate US citizens and legal permanent residents. I hope the

Minister will join me in welcoming this action from the US and that he will co-ordinate with his counterparts there on this situation.

2.50 pm

Yasmin Qureshi (Bolton South East) (Lab): It is a pleasure to speak in this debate. I want to thank the right hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr Carmichael) for securing this important debate on a topic that is overlooked.

We have all been made aware of the plight of the Uyghurs in the last year or so by the media coverage, the satellite images, and those who have family and friends in the region, who talk about the abuses taking place. Last week I met with several human rights groups to discuss the reports of widespread abuse in the Xinjiang region. The experts I spoke to emphasised that while tensions between the Communist party and the Chinese citizens of non-Han identity have been present for some time, the last two years have seen violent escalation in the state policy. Uyghurs, Kazakhs and other Muslim minorities are now facing unprecedented levels of repression.

Since 2017, a network of enormous holding camps has been built, with as many as 1 million Uyghurs said to be currently detained in them. As evidence of these camps has become indisputable, thanks largely to investigative journalism, we have seen a shift in the rhetoric of the Chinese state. Colleagues will be aware that for a long time the Chinese Government denied the reports that the camps existed and that people were falsely detained in them. Now, of course, they say, "Oh yes, there are camps, but they are vocational training centres and educational centres." I am not the only one who is very sceptical of this. The United Nations and our Government have publicly expressed deep concerns about those sites.

Given that individuals are forcibly placed within them, we must recognise that they are camps. There has also been evidence of physical abuse and torture of the people there, as eloquently set out by the right hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland. We know that the Chinese Government have argued that the measures are justified by the growing threat of religious extremism and separatist activism in the region. However, it should go without saying that whatever the perceived threats, the measures have lost all sense of proportion. Uyghurs outside the camps are now also subject to some of the most pervasive and intrusive surveillance systems in the world, including being on a register of DNA samples and blood types, and constant tracking by facial recognition cameras. Thousands of police stations have sprung up across the region and correspondence with family members outside of China is either banned or closely monitored.

We have heard of various religious and psychological violations. In a secularised society such as Britain, choices of food, drink or dress may not seem so fundamental, but for those of faith, who are brought up in cultural environments where certain foods are prohibited and alcohol is not drunk, forcing people to abandon those articles of faith is deeply dehumanising. Not only are they prevented from practising their religion, but they are forcibly fed with meat that they do not normally consume and forced to drink alcohol, which they do not normally do. That is surely traumatising. They are prevented from fasting in the month of Ramadan, their

dress is cut to make their clothing more in line with everyone else, they are asked to remove their headscarves, and they are asked to quote the Communist manifesto and learn about China. Forcing them to do these things takes away their identity.

When the state begins to isolate and discriminate against a minority group, it has overstepped the mark of acceptability. When the state sends citizens into camps without legal representation or international oversight, the door is left open to something truly terrible. We have to condemn such actions in the strongest terms. History has shown us that such actions can lead to even worse atrocities. If the world stands by and does nothing, in light of what is happening, what is to say that it will not continue and escalate to another level?

China has said that it welcomes an inspection, as long as the UN restrains itself from interfering in domestic matters. What does that mean? Will the Chinese Government give the investigators the right to visit these prison camps? Will they give the investigators the freedom to speak to the people there? Will they allow the investigators to investigate things properly? If they are saying that those things are not happening, they should allow for it to be openly investigated, so we can all know whether they are happening or not. The Chinese Government should realise—as should Governments worldwide—that when they start suppressing their own people, they do not solve any problems. If anything, they make the problems worse.

I ask the Minister, what specific representations have been made to the Chinese Government about these concerns? Have these issues been raised with the embassies of those countries with large Uyghur diasporas, including Kazakhstan and Turkey? What steps are we taking, to ensure that our position on the Human Rights Council is used to place real pressure on the Chinese Government to reverse those measures? What efforts are being taken to gather evidence on the ground and apply diplomatic pressure on the Chinese Government? Does the Minister agree that the UK border authorities should make every effort to ensure that the Turkic and Uyghur Muslims residing in the UK are not deported back to Xinjiang, because of what they would face?

2.57 pm

Wera Hobhouse (Bath) (LD): There are more than 10 million Uyghurs living in Xinjiang. They speak a Turkic language. They are Muslim. In many ways, they are culturally and geographically closer to central Asia than central China. Over the past decade, due to outbreaks of protest and violence, and the subsequent harsh crackdowns from the Chinese authorities, hundreds of lives have been lost in Xinjiang.

A BBC investigation said:

"Over the past four years, Xinjiang has been the target of some of the most restrictive and comprehensive security measures ever deployed by a state against its own people."

That includes the large-scale use of technology and penalties to curtail Islamic identity, stopping them practising their religion. Uyghurs face severe travel restrictions and are subject to ethnic profiling at thousands of checkpoints. Most alarmingly, as we have heard already, the Chinese authorities are building and operating high-security camps on a huge and growing scale. Testimonies from Uyghurs living abroad confirm that they are detention

[Wera Hobhouse]

camps, where inmates are often beaten, terrorised and brainwashed. This is the brutal subjugation of an ethnic minority aimed at crushing their identity.

The detention camps in Xinjiang are the most recent Chinese human rights abuses to draw the world's attention, but we must not forget that human rights abuses in China are the norm, not the exception, especially for China's ethnic minorities. Of the roughly 1.4 billion people living in China, over 1.2 billion are Han Chinese. Ethnic minorities with distinct cultures and identities, such as the Uyghurs—and the Tibetans, who are better known—live mostly in the outer regions of China and tend to be seen as threats by China's one-party state.

Within China a small number of people dare to speak up for human rights, but their voices are invariably silenced. Those of us who have the freedom to do so, therefore, have an even greater moral responsibility to speak up. The Chinese authorities tend to take the line that what happens inside China is not the concern of foreigners, but China is a member of the United Nations, and the belief that human rights are universal is at the core of the UN's vision.

Of course, there is an argument that our criticism makes no difference, but that is untrue. China's leaders care a great deal about its reputation and invest huge resources in its global image. The problem in recent years has been that our Government, alongside most other western Governments, have been cowardly about speaking out. Many western countries see China as an indispensable trade partner, and China's rulers have used its economic power to withhold access to its own huge market from countries that have spoken out on human rights issues. Consequently, almost every country in the world has stopped speaking up on human rights abuses in China.

How can we break the silence? Three things need to happen. First, there must be a domestic political cost for any British Government who do not speak up on Chinese human rights abuses; parliamentarians, the media and the public need to demand action.

Secondly, we must all wake up to the importance of international human rights, because China's actions pose a threat not only to its own people. The Chinese Government are no longer trying just to crush dissent internally, but to become a global superpower with influence over the wider world. The Chinese Government's view of the world is not democratic, inclusive or based on the rule of law; they are trying to undermine many aspects of the international order that has existed for the last 70 years. We need to develop a clear awareness that China is a more serious threat than familiar rivals such as Russia, because of its growing economic and military power. The unflinching defence of human rights issues is key to the battle about values that will certainly play out over the next decades.

Thirdly, countries that believe in human rights need to stand together because, apart from the US, no individual country has enough power to stand up to China's bullying. Collectively, however, we would have that clout.

A practical way forward could be to create policies of reciprocal access. The principle of reciprocity exists in economic trade deals and it could be applied to other areas too. Chinese journalists and officials are free to go anywhere in most western foreign countries, but foreign

journalists and diplomats do not have anywhere near the same freedom to travel in China. Last year, the US passed a law that bans officials who are involved in restricting access to Tibet from coming to America. The EU considered similar measures at the end of last year.

Human rights abuses flourish in the dark, so it would make a big difference if journalists and diplomats were free to travel everywhere in China. I encourage the Government to examine reciprocal access policies, alongside their European and global allies. Human right abuses will stop only if we dare to call them out. We must be prepared to defend human rights as the pillar on which our democratic societies and the whole international order are built.

Several hon. Members rose—

Phil Wilson (in the Chair): I call Lyn Brown. If you stick to four minutes, we will get everybody in.

3.2 pm

Lyn Brown (West Ham) (Lab): I will do my best, Mr Wilson. I have filleted my speech as I have been sitting here.

Last October, a senior editor from *Foreign Policy*, James Palmer, was interviewed about his work and about human rights in Xinjiang. It was a heart-wrenching watch. He said:

"All of my Uyghur sources are gone",

and then apologised as he broke down in tears. He continued:

"I can't talk to people because they're gone. I cannot reach them."

Even his Han Chinese sources had been arrested for talking about what is happening to the Uyghur people. They are disappearing from the streets and being put into camps. The Government appear to be trying to erase the memory that they even existed. Mr Palmer made it clear that he is no longer trying to contact Uyghur people because his attempts could put them in danger.

In October, in response to a question from me, the Minister stated that according to credible reports an estimated 1 million people—at least—were being held, including Uyghurs and other minority ethnic Chinese. As has been said, Chinese officials describe the camps as,

"vocational education and employment training centres"

for

"criminals involved in minor offenses",

but Human Rights Watch has gathered evidence that points chillingly to something else.

Basically, there are reports of beatings, solitary confinement, psychological abuse and even inmates being forcibly given psychotic drugs in the camps. We are told that people with serious mental and physical health conditions receive no special treatment; nor do heavily pregnant women. There are reports of deaths inside the camps. Survivors have described to Human Rights Watch how they were chained to a bed or to an iron chair for days, or even hung from the ceiling, as they were interrogated. They eventually confessed to whatever they were charged with, whether that was owning a religious book or having a friend who had been abroad.

Apparently, that is what the Chinese Communist party is calling its “Strike Hard Campaign against Violent Terrorism”. Under that regime, as we have heard, Turkic Muslims are identified as belonging to one of three categories: trustworthy, average or untrustworthy. Muslim citizens have to not only keep out of trouble, but actively display their loyalty. From a place such as this, it is hard to imagine what it must feel like to live with such suspicion and in constant fear of saying the wrong thing, being with the wrong person or simply being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

The Chinese artist and defender of human rights, Ai Weiwei, spent 16 years of his childhood in exile in Xinjiang province because his father, a poet, had fallen out of favour with the authorities. His international fame as a dissident artist is evidence that that kind of repression is eventually ineffective as well as cruel. He has said about the current situation that we have to think about human rights and human dignity as one, and that if anyone’s rights are violated—whatever minority, whatever religion they are—we have to think of it as our rights being violated. I could not agree more.

The Government have been asked several times about the steps we can take to improve the human rights situation through our trade with China. Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon said:

“China is an important strategic partner, and it is because of the strength of our partnership that we are consistently able to raise these issues”.

Although I agree that raising issues bilaterally is important, the level of abuse documented calls for something stronger. Given what is going on in the Chamber at the moment, I worry that human rights might be viewed as an inconvenience or a threat to our trading relationship.

I hope that the Minister will commit to concrete steps today. Statements of concern are simply not enough. We need economic sanctions against those responsible and we need to follow Germany and Sweden in offering expedited asylum processes for Turkic minorities from the province.

3.7 pm

Richard Graham (Gloucester) (Con): My apologies for hearing only the end of the speech by the right hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr Carmichael), whom I congratulate on securing this debate to discuss the important issue of human rights in Xinjiang.

I declare three interests. First, I am chair of the all-party parliamentary China group. Secondly, for eight years, I was the director of the Great Britain-China Centre. Thirdly, in 1993, I was a member of the first-ever successful crossing of Taklamakan desert in Xinjiang, as part of an Anglo-Chinese and Uyghur crossing by foot. That led me to spend more time in Xinjiang than probably anyone else in the House of Commons, and has left me with a strong affection for that enormous, harsh and beautiful land of different minorities and peoples.

It is worth highlighting the all-party group’s expedition to Xinjiang some two and a half years ago to look into some of the issues raised by the right hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland and other hon. Members, and other issues as well. During that expedition, we were accompanied by the Minister’s enterprising now private secretary, who was then with the embassy in Beijing. More recently, the all-party group has had updated briefings in Beijing and London.

I have arrived at five thoughts to share with hon. Members. First, Xinjiang, which means “new land” in Mandarin, was known as East Turkestan for a long time. Although the name has changed, the essential cultural differences of that huge province remain fundamental to the way of life of its residents.

Secondly, the UK, which reopened formal relations with China in 1972—56 years ago—is now an important strategic partner of China and the depth of that relationship allows for respectful differences of view. Although we acknowledge and hugely recognise the vast progress that China has made in the living standards of its enormous population, and its contribution to the world’s economic growth—a consistent 30% for the last three decades—we can also express real concern about specific human rights issues in China and work with her on reforms to the rule of law, including on the death penalty, which has been one of the achievements of the Great Britain-China Centre.

Thirdly, on Xinjiang today, there can be no doubt that relations between the peoples of Xinjiang, by whom I mean predominantly the Uyghur community, but also other ethnic minorities—Kazakhs and people who would normally be found in Kyrgyzstan, the Kyrgyz—have deteriorated considerably. They have worsened recently after a clampdown on the freedoms of expression, gathering and religion, and other freedoms that have been mentioned. Much of the evidence is anecdotal because it is very difficult to access information at first hand either by visiting the province or through journalists and others who have been there.

Wera Hobhouse: Is it not the case that we need to ask for a reciprocal access policy? If we can have the same access as Chinese people have when they come to our country, that would be the first step. Ultimately, that would be exactly what we could negotiate.

Richard Graham: I understand the hon. Lady’s point. It would not be impossible for her or others to go to Xinjiang. The question is what they would see and how genuine it might be. The point I want to highlight is that in recent times there has been much greater use of artificial intelligence and sophisticated control mechanisms to clamp down strongly on what we would regard as the fundamental freedoms of the people living there. The Minister might want to comment on this, but the opportunity is for the UK to try to help China recognise that some of the evidence coming out will not necessarily act in China’s own interests.

Of course, China has considerable security interests. For example, the bombing of the railway station in Yunnan a few years ago by Uyghurs was absolutely unacceptable, just as terrorism in this country is unacceptable. It is important that there are training and skills opportunities available to Uyghurs as there are in other parts of the country. But a large-scale detention policy of large numbers of people, or other repressions of freedoms such as Islamic boys under the age of 18 not being able to go and pray in a mosque, are not justified. Such issues will affect China’s belt and road initiative across central Asia, which is predominantly Muslim in religion, and there are issues that will damage China’s reputation internationally and affect the world’s acceptance of the increasing leadership role that China is taking on a range of global issues.

[Richard Graham]

It is worth highlighting China's report to the United Nations General Assembly on China's human rights. In the report submitted in August last year—some 25 pages long—only one paragraph in the entire report is on Xinjiang, as I am sure the Minister knows. The report refers to the year of building people's livelihood initiative, the disposable incomes of urban and rural residents and free education programmes, all of which are no doubt worthy in their own right, but they do not address the issues that the right hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland and others have raised today.

Although China would regard our interest in such matters as fundamentally interfering in her own domestic situation, the truth is that in this House we debate issues across the world for the benefit of all mankind. Today's debate therefore shines a torch on the fact that we need to work closely with China on how the situation in Xinjiang will develop and on what changes might be made that will benefit the people of Xinjiang, particularly the Uyghur community, and China's own standing in the world. Our role should be to work closely with her on some of those difficult issues.

3.14 pm

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): It is a pleasure to speak in this debate, Mr Wilson, and I thank you for calling me. I also thank the Minister, who, we know, has a deep interest in human rights and I am sure we will get a positive response from him when he replies. Finally, I thank the right hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr Carmichael) for securing this important and timely debate just a week after Orkney was named the happiest place in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland—we already know that, as it is epitomised by the right hon. Gentleman. However, we are gathered here to discuss a serious issue.

The debate is timely because it takes place in the week of Holocaust Memorial Day, when we remember how millions of people were rounded up and placed in camps and harassed, tortured and killed simply because of their religion. It is deeply saddening that some 70 years later we are having a debate to discuss the fact that potentially millions of innocent Chinese citizens are being rounded up and placed in camps because of their religion. It seems we have yet to learn the lessons of the past—oh, that we had looked back at the past and learned the lessons.

It is important to note that just yesterday evening, right here in Parliament, where today we are discussing persecution by the Chinese Government on an unimaginable scale, the Chinese ambassador to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Foreign Secretary were guests of honour at a celebratory reception for the Chinese new year. It is a coincidence: we are discussing very serious issues within 24 hours of a celebration. Although I am a firm believer in friendly and open dialogue, I am not sure what message that sends to the world and to the millions currently in detention camps in China about the UK's commitment to human rights and defending those who are persecuted for their religion.

Hon. Members know that I chair the all-party group for freedom of religion or belief. Our group stands up for those of Christian faith, other faiths and no faith.

Hon. Members have rightly raised the plight of the Uyghurs, but I want to make sure we do not forget the plight of some of the other religious or belief minorities suffering at the hands of the Chinese Government: for example, practitioners of Falun Gong and Chinese Christians. Twice a year the hon. Member for Congleton (Fiona Bruce) and I co-sponsor events in this House for Falun Gong. I want to put on the record our thanks to Becky James, who works so hard to make it happen.

In 2018, Cristian Solidarity Worldwide recorded extremely concerning violations against Catholic and Protestant churches in Henan province, where authorities have demolished crosses and churches and destroyed religious materials. From March to June, dozens of independent house churches also reported cases of harassment, fines, confiscation of property and forced closure of churches. Many Christians have also been arrested or disappeared. For example, Lu Yongfeng, a member of the Church of Almighty God, was arrested with her husband in June 2018. The following month she died in police custody, reportedly as a result of torture. I look to the Minister to ask him this: can we make inquiries about what happened to that lady? She died in custody because she is a Christian. That was the reason for her death.

Similarly, thousands of practitioners of Falun Gong have been arbitrarily imprisoned by the Chinese Government. There are credible reports that China is using prisoners of conscience to supply organs for its vast, lucrative transplant industry. In response to such accusations, the UK Government have said that the World Health Organisation believes that China is implementing an ethical, voluntary organ transplant system. However, many who argue that China is involved in forced organ harvesting often point to the fact that the average time to get a kidney transplant in the UK or the United States is two to three years, whereas in China it is two to three weeks. It is fairly obvious; you do not have to be a mathematician or Einstein to work out that something is wrong there. It is almost like a conveyor belt of organ transplant in China, and that needs an answer.

Has the Minister asked either the World Health Organisation or the Chinese Government how they can explain such a remarkable difference? Also, does the Minister know whether the World Health Organisation has assessed the wealth of evidence compiled by former Canadian Cabinet Minister David Kilgour on this issue? It is a phenomenal evidential base. If not, will he suggest it does do so? Might he also suggest that it assesses the evidence being presented to the ongoing independent people's tribunal being led by Sir Geoffrey Nice, QC?

The tribunal recently released an interim judgment that reads:

"We, the tribunal members, are all certain, unanimously, beyond reasonable doubt, that in China forced organ harvesting from prisoners of conscience has been practised for a substantial period of time, involving a very substantial number of victims"—innocent victims—

"by state organised or approved organisations or individuals."

The horrifying nature of the charges makes them difficult to believe and we must rightly assess the evidence before jumping to any conclusions. However, we also must make every effort to gather and assess evidence honestly, and not just turn our backs on the issue because what

we may find out might not be palatable. We must speak out when we see the evidence, not only because it is the right thing to do, but because how can we ever hope for a peaceful and secure world when a permanent member of the UN Security Council is rounding up and abusing millions of its own citizens?

Such crimes against humanity—affronts to human dignity and to the very concept of justice and morality—cannot be allowed to pass by with muted and occasional condemnation. There is a time for quiet diplomacy, discreet dialogue and private conversations. This is not it. This is a time to stand up for what is right. This is a time to let every oppressor and would-be tyrant know that the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland—and the rest of the world—will not tacitly accept the systematic, sinister destruction of entire communities. This is a time for the world to rally together and proudly declare, in one unified, powerful voice, that enough is enough. That should be our message today.

Phil Wilson (in the Chair): We now have a little extra time, so I shall bring in the Front Benchers at 15.32. There are four minutes each.

3.20 pm

Karen Lee (Lincoln) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Wilson. I congratulate the right hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr Carmichael) on securing this important debate.

I shall not speak for long. I just want to say a little about Hikvision, one of the world's biggest CCTV companies. It provides equipment for the massive prison camps in Xinjiang and has been used in Tibet to develop an extremely intrusive police and security apparatus. Hikvision uses facial recognition technology that can distinguish entire ethnic populations from the Chinese. It puts Tibetans and Uyghurs at serious risk. While the company is now subject to bans by the US and Australian Governments, Hikvision was revealed to be Britain's biggest supplier of CCTV equipment in 2016.

Fiona Bruce: Does the hon. Lady share my concern that Christians are also being targeted? Pastors are being required to put facial recognition cameras on the front of pulpits, to make it possible to assess who is in the congregation.

Karen Lee: Absolutely. The point is well made and I share the hon. Lady's concerns.

The Government of this country must speak up. They must make it clear that we will not accept the abuse of human rights, and the Chinese Government must and will be called out. The abuse of the Uyghurs is abhorrent, but abuse has been going on in Tibet for much longer.

Is the Minister aware whether any UK Government agencies purchase surveillance equipment from Hikvision? Are questions being raised about the security implications of its unfettered access to the UK? Does he share my concerns, and if he does not have answers to my questions, will he follow those matters up?

3.21 pm

Afzal Khan (Manchester, Gorton) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Wilson. I congratulate the right hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr Carmichael) on securing the debate.

I, like many other hon. Members, was not aware of the difficulties that many people are suffering in China until a number of my constituents brought the matter to my attention. When I looked into it further, the work of many NGOs and a BBC documentary brought home to me the extent of the abuse taking place. A recent report by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination suggested that there was widespread detention of the native Muslim minorities in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. About 1 million adults are detained, most of whom are Uyghur. Alleged forms of torture include forcing detainees to denounce Islam and forcing them to abandon their native language, religious beliefs and cultural practices.

Sadly, the world's response has not matched the gravity of the situation. The Chinese Government's claim that the camps are vocational training schools is not credible. There is now significant discussion among US and European leaders of economic sanctions to be directed at key Chinese leaders and security companies. I understand that the Foreign Secretary raised the situation of Uyghur Muslims with his counterpart, Foreign Minister Wang Yi, during the official visit to China in July 2018. However, continued human rights abuses suggest that clearly more needs to be done.

Will the Minister provide urgent assurances that the British Government will step up their efforts to hold the Chinese Government to account for those blatant human rights violations and urge the Chinese authorities to stop the practice of mass internment and close the camps? Will he give an update on the current situation and tell us what representations the Government have made to the Chinese authorities?

3.24 pm

Catherine West (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Wilson.

I am pleased that the debate has such a good turnout, and that the right hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr Carmichael) was able to secure it. I think even more Members would have come if it had not been on such an important day for votes to do with the European Union. It is great to see so many participants from across the House. I am vice-chair of the all-party parliamentary group on China, and it is encouraging that many Members are joining, to discuss not just trade opportunities but the important human rights element of our dialogue with China. I was pleased that at last night's reception the chair of the all-party group, the hon. Member for Gloucester (Richard Graham), mentioned in his keynote address that the group has that concern.

I am also pleased that, following a parliamentary question to the Minister, the issue emerged in the FCO reporting cycle. That is not recent; for several months it has been taken seriously by FCO officers. However, I should like an update from the Minister today, and a sense of the ultimate direction of travel. What can be done, if the reports are indeed true—as we believe they are, given the evidence coming before us? What is the endgame, in terms of what the Government will do?

[Catherine West]

The hon. Member for Congleton (Fiona Bruce) spoke about the position of children. China is a signatory of the UN convention on the rights of the child. It is worrying that the children of individuals detained in camps have been sent to state-run orphanages, training centres or welfare facilities, and that it is reported that children as young as six months old have been locked up like farm animals in a shed. The reports come from Human Rights Watch, Radio Free Asia and ChinaAid, which I believe to be independent and to be reporting from a place where reporting is difficult. As the hon. Member for Gloucester said, it is not easy just to go there and see what is happening.

I want to mention the good things that have happened in China as a result of the convention on the rights of the child, to show that issues can be tackled. A lot of work has been done in China on human trafficking, and good results have come from that. Action to tackle climate change and air quality, and the effects on children in polluted cities, has also borne some fruit. I do not want to give a counsel of complete despair. With challenge and dialogue, we can move forward.

I want briefly to consider our response in the UK. First, could the Minister please tell us exactly how independent our own FCO investigations might be? Who are our international partners, and what kind of resources are we using? Secondly, is there a forum in which to challenge tech or other companies that could wittingly or unwittingly be supporting the crushing of dissent, and compromising on the Uyghur people's human rights? Thirdly, what is the Minister's plan for reporting back regularly to interested Members in the House?

We have had an excellent debate, very measured but also very concerned, expressing great worry about what is happening to the Uyghur people in China, but focused on seeking a more action-based response from the Minister.

3.28 pm

Carol Monaghan (Glasgow North West) (SNP): I thank the right hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr Carmichael) not just for bringing the debate to the House, but for his work to increase awareness of the issue in Xinjiang province. As he said, we are relying a lot on reports. The evidence is difficult to gather, and that is one of the big issues for us. However, we know that the state in China is not just promoting its values and principles, but using its position to commit cultural genocide and scapegoat an entire culture. History has taught us the danger of such intolerance.

It was interesting to hear the hon. Member for Gloucester (Richard Graham) talking about his experiences in Xinjiang province, but I want to correct him on one thing. He said that the UK and China had had diplomatic relations since 1972, and that that was 56 years ago. Having been born in 1972, I must tell him that it was 46 years ago.

The right hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland and the hon. Member for West Ham (Lyn Brown) gave descriptions of the horrific torture and conditions in the detention camps, and several Members made comparisons with other horrific situations. The hon.

Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) said that this debate was timely as it was being held in the week in which we remember the holocaust, and many of the conditions that have been described this afternoon are very similar to those found in the horrific concentration camps during the second world war. The hon. Gentleman also drew our attention to the plight of the Falun Gong community, and of ethnic Christians in China, who are also subjected to human rights abuses. The hon. Member for Bolton South East (Yasmin Qureshi) spoke about religious abuse and Muslim people being forced to eat particular meats, or drink alcohol or wear inappropriate clothing—all things that we recognise would impact on someone's freedom to practise their religion.

Reports from former detainees claim that women have been forced to take unidentified medication, which in some cases has stopped menstruation, and in other cases has resulted in severe bleeding. The use of female detainees as sex slaves was highlighted by the hon. Member for Congleton (Fiona Bruce) who, together with the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Catherine West), raised serious concerns about the plight of children in detention centres, as well as those kept in separate locations. To hear reports of children as young as six months old being locked up without care or parents is disturbing and shameful for us all.

Dangerous propaganda is being peddled against the Uyghurs. It has been reported that the Han Chinese people who live in the region have been put through state-mandated self-defence drills; that as part of China's suppression campaign, education portrays the Uyghurs as potentially dangerous extremists; and that a steady stream of Government news paints the Uyghurs as unsophisticated and uneducated.

Interestingly, China has said that it would welcome UN officials to Xinjiang if they follow China's procedures and restrictions, but that is not how it works. There must be open access without any restrictions. If such a UN investigation concludes that Chinese activity in the region constitutes a violation of human rights, there must be decisive diplomatic condemnation and consequences for China. Human rights violations cannot go unchecked, particularly if sanctioned by the state on a massive scale.

The hon. Members for Bath (Wera Hobhouse) and for Manchester, Gorton (Afzal Khan) mentioned a worrying trend developing in Chinese domestic and foreign policy, and respect to human rights abuses more generally. That trend includes sinister practices such as the collection of biometric data, including DNA and voice samples, and the use of biometrics for automated surveillance purposes should be causing us concern—the hon. Member for Lincoln (Karen Lee) also raised that point. China holds more data on its citizens than any other country in the world, and we must wonder why it needs that data and what it is doing with it. None of us would object to our data being collected if we knew the purpose for it—data on health is fine, traffic data is okay, but we need to know the purpose and the ways it is being used. In China, however, those systems are being deployed without effective privacy protections in law, and people are unaware that their data is being gathered in that way.

Concerns about human rights records in China extend beyond what it does to its own citizens, and it is now trying to prevent meaningful international scrutiny,

including at the UN. Human Rights Watch recently reported that Chinese officials are working to weaken key human rights reviews at the UN. China remains a designated human rights priority country for the UK, but with trade and investment becoming more important for the UK in a post-Brexit Britain, there is a concern that the UK's performance regarding human rights in China is far weaker than it should be. The Scottish First Minister met Chinese officials in April 2018, and she specifically raised human rights in China. Has the Minister done the same, and if not, does he intend to?

Karen Lee: Over the past few days we have had debates on subjects involving human rights in different countries. Does the hon. Lady agree that it is utterly wrong to be selective about where we see human rights abuses, and that we should call them out wherever they are, most importantly in China?

Carol Monaghan: Absolutely, although not “most importantly in China”—we must call out human rights abuses everywhere. Look at Saudi Arabia and what it is doing in Yemen, yet we are still selling arms there. We must think carefully about our trading partnerships.

The right hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland raised the issue of Chinese students, which is slightly controversial, and we must think about policy decisions that we take here and how they impact. A few years ago the post-study work visa was removed, and the diversity of our international students was greatly reduced. Far more Chinese students were happy to come for one or two years and go back, as opposed to in the past when students wanted to stay and work here. Because of that, the situation is ripe for exploitation, because different students can monitor the activity of other Chinese students. We need to be aware of what we are doing, and I call on the Minister to discuss the reinstatement of the post-study work visa. There are unintended consequences to such decisions.

Finally, will the Minister take every opportunity in public and private to condemn China's use of these camps and all forms of non-legal detention? Will he speak up for the rights of children and use all possible levers to cease the practice of forcibly removing children from their homes and families? Will he call out human rights abuses, including violations of the right of freedom of religious belief, and will he seriously consider sanctions against policy makers responsible for human rights abuses in China? Finally, given the high risk to those returning to Xinjiang and other parts of China from overseas, will he hold discussions with his Home Office colleagues to ensure that those who are under threat are not forcibly removed from the UK and sent back to a harmful and dangerous situation in China?

3.38 pm

Helen Goodman (Bishop Auckland) (Lab): It is nice to see you in the Chair, Mr Wilson, and I congratulate the right hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr Carmichael) on securing this important debate. We are extremely grateful to him, because it gives us an opportunity to send a united message from this House to the Chinese Government about the unacceptability of what is happening in Xinjiang at the moment, and of our shared desire to see the detention camps closed.

I will begin my speech where the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) began his, because on Sunday afternoon I went to a holocaust memorial service in

Bishop Auckland in my constituency. Everybody said, “Never again”, and “How did it happen?” It is all too clear how these things happen: they happen when it is too unpleasant or too inconvenient to think about them and people have a desire to look away. On Sunday, we pledged

“to proclaim release to the captives,
to let the oppressed go free”.

We should make a reality of that commitment in the work that we do with respect to the Uyghur community in Xinjiang.

The right hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland set out the fundamental problems with the detention camps that have been set up, which we now believe are imprisoning about a million people, perhaps more. The hon. Member for Congleton (Fiona Bruce) made a fearless speech; she is becoming well known for being fearless on human rights issues. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolton South East (Yasmin Qureshi) described the denial of people's religious rights. She gave a clear insight into how that might feel for this minority. The hon. Member for Bath (Wera Hobhouse) said that we should look for more reciprocity with the Chinese Government. My hon. Friend the Member for West Ham (Lyn Brown) gave powerful testimony and pointed to the important work undertaken by the voluntary sector.

The hon. Member for Gloucester (Richard Graham), who has been to Xinjiang several times, said that it was difficult because Xinjiang is in a very closed part of China, but that none the less we need to shine a light on the situation. The hon. Member for Strangford spoke about Christians being persecuted. My hon. Friend the Member for Lincoln (Karen Lee) raised important concerns about the use of modern technologies to oppress people. My hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Afzal Khan) asked how the Government would keep reporting back to us. My hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Catherine West) spoke about the impact on children; I am particularly grateful to her for organising a meeting last summer at which we heard from academics who had looked at satellite images, from refugees and from relatives of people who are suffering.

It is absolutely clear that the situation in Xinjiang has deteriorated over the past four years. It is beginning to emerge and become clear to the rest of the world that what was suggested to be an attempt to prevent extremism and terrorism has morphed horrendously into the systematic oppression of a whole ethnic minority, who are being physically abused and psychologically indoctrinated. I am glad that the Minister has answered a number of parliamentary questions that I have tabled about Xinjiang; we know that Ministers have raised the matter and British diplomats have been in Xinjiang and gathered mounting evidence about the problem, but we can do more than tell the Chinese that we do not like the situation.

What can be done? Clearly it is important that we maintain public condemnation of the treatment of the Uyghur Muslims, and that we echo the call of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination for the Chinese authorities to shut down the re-education camps and facilitate the immediate release of all detainees. It is clear that there has been a lot of focus on work at the UN level; I do not know whether the Minister has

[Helen Goodman]

also discussed the matter with European colleagues, but I urge him to do so. The Government have the opportunity to continue to challenge the Chinese Government through intergovernmental forums. We would also like them to initiate calls for UN access to Xinjiang, including access by the UN Human Rights Council.

Many of my colleagues have spoken about the problems that asylum seekers face in this country. I know that that is a Home Office responsibility; none the less, it is all very well to talk about human rights abuses—we need to treat refugees well. I hope that the Minister will talk to the Home Office about that.

One possibility that the Government did not have a year ago is to use Magnitsky powers for personal sanctions. An obvious candidate for such sanctions is the Xinjiang state secretary, because it is since his arrival in that part of China that the oppression has screwed down in a particularly nasty way. Well, we have a lever now—let us use it. As well as looking at the activities of particular companies, I would like the Government to consider using export controls on surveillance technology that is used by the Chinese Government to monitor and oppress Uyghur Muslims. They should also review the operation of companies in Xinjiang. The simple message is that we are horrified by this state of affairs and we must always prioritise human rights over trading relations with the Chinese.

3.46 pm

The Minister for Asia and the Pacific (Mark Field): I commend the right hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr Carmichael) for securing this important debate. Mischievously, perhaps, the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) put it to us that Orkney and Shetland may be the happiest constituency in the country; on a day like today that may have something to do with its proximity to Norway, but I will not make too much of that point. There used to be a quiz question asked about the right hon. Gentleman and me because my constituency is the nearest to Westminster, while his is the furthest away.

As a last bit of levity in this important, serious and high-profile debate, may I say that it is great to hear from the hon. Member for Bath (Wera Hobhouse)? She knows that I have a German mother; we used to tease my mother about her malapropisms. If the hon. Lady's only problem is that she has difficulty in saying the word "reciprocity", I am sure that very few of us could answer that we know much about Gegenseitigkeit. I thank the hon. Lady and all hon. Members present for the high quality of their contributions today; this is a serious debate and I do not wish to use any more levity.

If I may, I will update the House on the current situation in Xinjiang and the action that the Government propose. I do not have anything like the depth of knowledge of my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester (Richard Graham), but I have visited the region, not as a Minister, but on my very visit to China some 16 years ago. I was struck even then by the atmosphere of tension. There was clearly a very large Muslim population in many of the towns and cities of the autonomous region close to the Mongolian border, but there was also a sense—this was only a couple of years after

9/11—that human rights issues were beginning to crowd in. We have seen that happen with much more serious effect in recent years.

The ethnic and religious minorities in Xinjiang have faced a variety of restrictions on their freedom of religion and belief, freedom of speech and freedom of association over several years—indeed, for decades past. Xinjiang's energy reserves and geopolitical significance are likely to be key factors in the Chinese Government's close involvement in the region: Xinjiang is home to China's largest gas fields, half of its coal deposits and an estimated 20% of its oil reserves.

The Strike Hard campaign was initiated following an outbreak of violence, including bombings and knife attacks, in 2009. As many hon. Members have said, it has developed into the intensive crackdown that we are seeing today. The situation has deteriorated rapidly over the past two or three years, particularly—as the hon. Member for Bishop Auckland (Helen Goodman) rightly pointed out—since the appointment of a new regional party secretary, Chen Quanguo. He had previously held the same position in Tibet, where he obviously earned his spurs as far as the Chinese authorities were concerned.

Mr Chen has introduced many of the techniques that he used in Tibet to monitor residents in Xinjiang. In fact, he has developed them further and fused them with a system of "political re-education camps". However, we should also be clear that although Mr Chen has been a leading architect of the crackdown on the Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities, culpability for the worsening situation does not lie with him alone. His actions have been supported at the highest levels by the Chinese leadership.

Many hon. Members have already said that there are credible and important reports by non-governmental organisations describing the restrictive and oppressive measures being employed by the Chinese authorities, and quoted those reports. Our own diplomats visited Xinjiang as recently as December last year and their report painted a similarly bleak picture of the oppression being suffered by over a million Uyghurs and other minorities.

Let me speak for a moment about the specific measures that the authorities are using in Xinjiang. Among other things, traditional and unexceptional expressions of religious observance are now banned, from giving children religious names to having an "abnormal" beard or wearing a veil; I think the hon. Member for Bolton South East (Yasmin Qureshi) went into some detail about some of the oppressive practices that are being imposed on the local community.

As part of an apparent attempt to redefine Islam and to sinicise the Uyghur culture, extensive cultural restrictions have also been introduced, including the restriction on the use of the traditional Uyghur language. Contravention of the rules is likely to lead to detention and other punishments.

Uyghurs and members of other minorities with overseas connections, whether they have family members living abroad or a history of travel themselves, are deemed to be particularly suspicious and are highly likely to be detained. Families are monitored closely, including by Han Chinese officials, who they are obliged to host in their homes for several days at a time. Outside the

home, Uyghurs and other minorities are reportedly watched closely through extensive use of sophisticated technologies, as has been pointed out already, which is supported by a heavy police presence. However, as has also been mentioned during the debate, what most concerns many of us is that over 1 million Uyghur Muslims—more than 10% of the Uyghur population—and other ethnic minorities have at one time or another been held in extra-judicial camps, as my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Fiona Bruce) pointed out.

It is not known just how long each individual is detained, what chance they have of being released or what the mechanism for release might be, or whether they can appeal their detention. However, what is clear is that these detentions have split up families, left many children effectively orphaned, as the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Catherine West) pointed out, and created an overbearing culture of fear.

Much of this activity was considered by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in its report last August. It issued very detailed recommendations, including that China should

“Halt the practice of detaining individuals who have not been lawfully charged, tried and convicted for a criminal offence in any extra-legal detention facilities”.

In addition to the extra-judicial camps, and according to Chinese Government data, criminal arrests in Xinjiang accounted for an alarming 21% of the total number of arrests in China in 2017, when the population in Xinjiang makes up only 1.5% of China's total population.

As a number of Members have pointed out, China's response to the increasing expressions of international concern was initially simply to deny the existence of these camps. Later, it sought to brand them as education and training facilities, and it justified them on the basis of counter-terrorism. As I think all of us know, there have been incidents in the past, but this is a wholly unprecedented and unwarranted over-reaction to that matter.

China claims that the camps are a necessary part of the policy to prevent extremism and that other countries have no right to interfere in its internal affairs. The Chinese authorities naturally have the right to address genuine security concerns in Xinjiang. However, all the evidence to hand suggests that their action is disproportionate and indiscriminate, and it is a response that, as a number of Members have pointed out, will be counterproductive in the long term, because it will exacerbate a whole range of ethnic tensions.

In this way, I believe that China is causing untold suffering to millions of its own citizens. It is also contravening its own constitutional provisions on freedom of religion and indeed its obligations under the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The UK is, of course, deeply concerned about the situation in Xinjiang. We believe strongly that everyone everywhere should enjoy equal rights and protections under the law. That is why we are promoting and defending human rights, including the right to freedom of religion or belief, as a fundamental part of our own foreign policy.

It was right that the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green pointed out that in areas such as climate change, anti-money laundering and increasingly in combating modern-day slavery, we are making some progress alongside the Chinese authorities. Despite that co-operation, and notwithstanding our deep and strong

relationship with China, we must and will have no hesitation about raising these issues of concern. Realistically, doing that at the UN Security Council will not have a great impact. Therefore, doing it in Geneva and through the European Union, as the hon. Member for Bishop Auckland rightly pointed out, is the more productive way forward.

The situation in Xinjiang is one of the most serious areas of human rights concerns in relation to our relationship with China.

Fiona Bruce: Will the Minister give way?

Mark Field: Forgive me; I will not give way because I am running out of time and I want to touch on all the issues.

Our lobbying of China takes place both bilaterally and in multilateral forums. I myself raised the issue of Xinjiang during my visit to five cities in China last July, as did my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary during his visit to Beijing later that month.

In the UK's “item 4” statement at the UN Human Rights Council in September, we raised several of our concerns about Xinjiang. And during China's universal periodic review at the UN on 6 November, we pressed China on when it would implement the recommendations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. In our formal statement during the review itself, we urged China to

“Immediately implement the Committee's recommendations on Xinjiang and allow the UN to monitor their implementation.”

Additionally, we have applied such pressure both in private and in public, working strategically with likeminded international partners, in particular, of course, with EU member states and others, to raise awareness of our concerns.

I will touch on one or two of the specific concerns that were expressed in the debate. The right hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland asked about the moratorium on returns of failed asylum seekers. As has been pointed out, that is a Home Office competency and responsibility. However, I understand that the Home Office has recently updated its guidance notes for asylum caseworkers, which I think reflects the latest situation in Xinjiang, and those guidance notes will be kept under constant review.

The hon. Member for Bolton South East called for an independent inquiry. The UN's High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, has said that her office is seeking access to Xinjiang as a matter of urgency, to verify what she regards as very worrying reports about the “re-education camps”. We support her call for access and we continue to urge the Chinese Government to grant unrestricted access to the UN, so that it can take care of this matter.

The hon. Member for Lincoln (Karen Lee) talked about Hikvision CCTV, which is a very specific case. We are obviously aware of the reports of Hikvision's specific role in providing facial recognition cameras for use in Xinjiang. I will be happy to write to the hon. Lady with more details about that, and indeed I will be happy to write to other Members to deal with the one or two other matters that came up during the debate that I am not able to discuss now.

[Mark Field]

To conclude, the Government watch with very deep concern the Chinese authorities' crackdown on Uyghurs and other minorities in Xinjiang, and in particular the huge numbers of people in detention, apparently without recourse to due process of law. In the interests of the people of Xinjiang and for the long-term stability of that region, and indeed in the interests of China's own international reputation, it is vital that China implements the recommendations of the UN Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and honours its own human rights commitments. We shall continue to urge the Chinese Government to change their course and to meet those commitments.

Phil Wilson (in the Chair): I call Mr Carmichael to wind up the debate.

3.58 pm

Mr Carmichael: Thank you very much, Mr Wilson, for calling me to speak again.

I thank the Minister for that response. We should not fool ourselves that we will probably be the main focus of the world's attention in Parliament today. However, in many ways that is unfortunate, because the debate we have had here today illustrates what is possible in this place when we manage to put aside differences, and find areas of common concern and work together.

In that regard, I hope that today is not just an event itself but the start of a process by which we might take forward our concerns on an ongoing basis, because a very clear message has been sent out from here today, which I hope will be heard not only in this country but in China itself. It is that we know what is going on in Xinjiang and we are not just going to sit back and be bystanders, watching it happen.

I had hoped that today I would be in my constituency, which was confirmed this weekend—in the latest in a long line of similar reports—as the happiest and best place to live in the country, as today is Up Helly Aa day in Shetland, when we celebrate our Viking heritage through a fire festival and burning a boat. Unfortunately, I have to be here, not just for this debate but for other business. So, I thank you, Mr Wilson, for chairing the debate and I thank everybody else who has taken part in it. I wish you all a very happy Up Helly Aa day.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House has considered human rights in Xinjiang.

4 pm

Sitting suspended.

Venezuela

[MR PHILIP HOLLOBONE *in the Chair*]

4.30 pm

Mr Philip Hollobone (in the Chair): We now come to an important debate about the political situation in Venezuela. The debate can last one hour, and lots of people are seeking to contribute. I encourage those who wish to make a speech not to intervene, because that would be having two bites of the cherry. I want to ensure that everybody can make a contribution. I call Graham Jones.

Graham P. Jones (Hyndburn) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House has considered the political situation in Venezuela.

I thank the House staff, you, Mr Hollobone, for chairing the debate, and all colleagues who have come to speak about a country that many have followed and taken an interest in for a considerable time.

Since the last debate on Venezuela was held in Parliament two years ago, much has happened. As chair of the all-party parliamentary group on Venezuela I have chaired many debates and discussions in this place with good attendance and participation by the diaspora, with speakers from Venezuela and Canning House, and other academics. Unfortunately, there has been little positive news from the country. For those who care about others, it has been depressing to see such enormous distress in Venezuela. The authoritarian Government have only strengthened their power via the usurper and illegitimate President Nicolás Maduro, and the usurper legislature, with the establishment of a rival and illegitimate Parliament, the Constituent Assembly, created to delegitimise and dismantle the democratically legitimate Parliament, the National Assembly.

The economy, living standards and overall security have significantly deteriorated. In recent days, inflation has run at more than 1,000,000%, rubber bullets and live ammunition have been used to kill protestors—I believe the total number of fatalities stands at 26 people—and the population has lost on average 10 kg per person through hunger. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford South (Mike Gapes) on securing an urgent question yesterday. I am delighted to quote what he said:

“The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation says that there are 4.1 million people with malnutrition in Venezuela. The Catholic charity Caritas says that 41% of Venezuelans are now feeding on waste in markets. There is a shortage of medicines, including vital antibiotics for children, and blood banks are collapsing. Two thirds of buses in Caracas are out of action because there are no spare parts. An estimated 1 million people have sought refuge in neighbouring Colombia.”—[*Official Report*, 28 January 2019; Vol. 653, c. 482.]

That is in a country with an abundance of its own assets.

In recent days, Juan Guaidó from the National Assembly has been sworn in as interim President, and that appears to be the first fragile glimmer of hope for the country. The tragic political, social and economic situation in Venezuela has been caused by a failed Marxist revolution, now 20 years old, which was evoked in the name of one of the founding fathers of Venezuela, Simón Bolívar.

John Howell (Henley) (Con): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Graham P. Jones: I would like to make some progress, please.

Bolívar's revolution in the 1820s gave Venezuela a legacy of freedom and self-determination. Chávez and Maduro's Bolivarian revolution in the 21st century plagued Venezuelans with destitution and dictatorship. There is no worthy comparison between the two. Some in the UK claim that Maduro's cause is a rightful one, and the British left is aligned to that. They are wrong, and those who think that Venezuela is now subject to some right-wing coup are wrong. One is an economy of bankrupt Marxist ideas, and the Opposition represent democratic socialism.

Juan Guaidó, and his left-leaning Opposition, needs our party's support. His party, Popular Will, is, in fact, a member of one of Labour's sister parties in Venezuela, and a member of Socialist International, like the Labour party. It is worth stating too that the bankrupt Marxists who have ruined Venezuela over the last 20 years are not members of Socialist International and are, in my opinion, anything but socialist. They, and their fellow Marxist travellers who propagandise about foreign interference, are wholly responsible for a bankrupt economic policy.

It is ironic that those Marxists should reject unwelcome foreign interference. Perhaps they could include their list of friends who seem to be interfering in Venezuela: Iran, Russia and Turkey, who are propping up the illegitimate, authoritarian and kleptocratic regime. It would carry more weight if they knew what they were talking about. The United States, our long term ally, has so far resisted economic sanctions, instead targeting the extreme wealth of the Chavismo politicians, some with links to drugs cartels. The US has also targeted currencies that facilitate the syphoning of Venezuela's assets into private bank accounts.

The truth is that the "Bolívarists" of Venezuela have ensured that Venezuela's problems will never affect their luxurious lifestyles. According to the Venezuelan news website Noticias Centro,

"the late-president's family owns 17 country estates, totalling more than 100,000 acres, in addition to liquid assets of \$550 million...stored in various international bank accounts".

The Marxist hypocrisy is astonishing. Hugo Chávez said:

"Being rich is bad, it's inhumane. This is what I say and I condemn the rich".

He also said that

"capitalism leads us straight to hell"

and that

"we must confront the privileged elite who have destroyed a large part of the world".

Meanwhile, his daughter, María Gabriela Chávez, is reported to be one of the richest people in Venezuela, with a net worth of \$4.2 billion. I would like to know where she got that money from.

Finally, it is worth pointing out how the US has so far resisted economic sanctions and continues to allow US companies to purchase 21% of Venezuelan crude oil, which provides the Venezuelan Government with vital overseas currency. It is a regime that is increasingly despised by a majority of its citizens, that routinely

arrests, imprisons and tortures its opponents, that mismanages the economy and that profits from narco-trafficking with the cartels, with much of the result finding its way on to the streets of English towns and cities such as mine.

It is not a functioning Government in the name of the people. Speaker after speaker at the APPG has relayed their and their families' stories of just how bad the situation is, from hunger to property theft, gun crime and the "colectivo"—the Chavismo motorbike gangs that terrorise ordinary citizens on behalf of Maduro. The rest of the international community has a duty to support the values of liberty, democracy, the rule of law and human rights, and to support the Venezuelan people at this time, not an oppressive dictatorship that ignores those values.

In the last partially free and fair elections in November 2015, the majority of the Venezuelan people voted in droves for the Opposition, and three years later those people are out on the streets protesting en masse. The biggest priority for the international community is to address a devastating consequence of Maduro's Marxist regime: the migrant crisis—the exodus of almost 4 million people since 2014.

The Minister said yesterday that

"those who have left Venezuela are in staggering numbers: well over 1 million have gone to Colombia; well over 1 million to Peru; nearly half a million each to Ecuador, Argentina and Chile; and 180,000 to Brazil. This is the biggest movement of population we have ever seen in Latin America".—[*Official Report*, 28 January 2019; Vol. 653, c. 485.]

Christine Jardine (Edinburgh West) (LD): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Graham P. Jones: I would like to make progress, thank you.

That is a direct result of an economic meltdown, a huge spike in violent crime and a climate of fear towards the authorities, who routinely kidnap and torture those who dare to speak up against the regime. Human rights groups say that Maduro's forces have arrested more than 12,800 people for speaking up against his regime since taking power in 2013.

The Amnesty report says that the Venezuelan Government are guilty of

"one of the worst human rights crisis in its history."

It says that there have been 8,292 extrajudicial executions between 2015 and 2017—an absolute totalitarian disgrace. As a result, the Organisation of American States and the Lima Group referred the Venezuelan Government to the International Criminal Court last September for crimes against humanity, citing 8,000 extrajudicial killings, 12,000 arbitrary arrests and the detention of 13,000 political prisoners. It is the first case in which an entire state has been referred to the ICC. President Macri of Argentina said in an interview with CNN:

"For me, there is no doubt: in Venezuela, human rights are systemically violated by steamrolling the opposition and everyone. There is a growing sense that we need to take more forceful action."

The UN Human Rights Commissioner stated:

"The UN Human Rights Office understands that at least 280 individuals who had been arbitrarily deprived of their liberty for their political opinions, for exercising their human rights, or because they were perceived as a threat to the Government, remain in detention in dreadful conditions."

[Graham P. Jones]

Given the scale of the problems, the response has been pitiful. Words have not matched actions, and refugees are suffering in horrendous circumstances. There seems to be reluctance to classify the situation as a full-on refugee crisis, perhaps because that comes with more responsibilities to act than a migrant crisis. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has referred to a “mixed flow” of migrants and refugees pouring out of the country.

I appreciate that the Minister is here today as a representative of the Foreign Office, but I say to him that more needs to be done by the Government to address the human cost of the political crisis that manifests itself not just in Venezuela, but in neighbouring countries and right across Latin America—a point I raised with him in the urgent question yesterday.

From Ministers’ recent answers to questions on aid to Venezuela, we can see that not enough is being done. From the Minister’s responses to parliamentary questions from me, it appears that the UK spends just £10.2 million on aid through various agencies. I note that he told the United Nations last weekend:

“People are starving, children are malnourished, essential items are absent from the bare shelves of bankrupt stores. And from this wretchedness, millions have fled to seek refuge in neighbouring countries where they have been rescued by an outpouring of human generosity.”

I doubt that last point. He went on to say:

“This inexcusable and wholly avoidable wasteland...is entirely the creation of one man and his cronies.”

That contrasts sharply with a lack of commitment in his speech. At no point did the UK Government show any leadership on the refugee crisis or suggest the allocation of further resources. To put it in perspective, the UK Government give £1.6 billion to the Syrian refugee crisis, which makes £10.2 million seem insignificant. According to the National Audit Office, only five applications have been accepted from the 79 Venezuelans who have sought political asylum in the UK since Maduro took power in 2013. We must do more and recognise the crisis for what it is.

Last year, Channel 4’s Krishnan Guru-Murthy went to the border between Venezuela and Colombia to report the experiences of the thousands of people who attempt to cross it every day. The conditions he found were terrible: rivers were crossed on foot, armed gangs constantly patrolled the streets, and the Colombian army was at the border. The area is littered with narcotics; the UK Government advice is not to go to those areas. The huddled masses in his film were not optimistic migrants packing up their old life and moving to another country for a job; they were scared, malnourished and resorted to walking hundreds of miles to flee daily life in their home country, which had become unbearable. It is suggested that half the refugees are children, and Colombia cannot cope. One boy cried for his mummy, and another said that the basic meal Channel 4 bought him was worth a month’s wages. Young girls are turning to prostitution.

Who suffers the most? It is the voiceless in society, particularly children. Venezuela’s Ministry of Health published damning figures in 2015. The death rate among babies less than a month old increased more than a hundredfold in public hospitals run by the Ministry.

According to the Government report provided by lawmakers, the figure has increased from 0.02% to 2% since 2012. Maternal mortality has increased nearly fivefold in the same period, and 11,446 children under the age of one have died since 2016—a 30% increase in one year—as the economic crisis has accelerated.

In Krishnan Guru-Murthy’s documentary, he met a woman with a small, gravely ill child in her arms. Her daughter has kidney disease and was previously treated at the children’s hospital in Caracas until it ran out of drugs and equipment to help her due to hyperinflation and lack of resources. The only option to save the child was to leave everything and walk to Colombia. In tears, the mother pleaded with the Colombian soldiers to let her in for the sake of her child, whose life would surely have ended had she not received the medical attention she desperately needed. In this instance, the mother and her daughter were granted passage to Colombia. This is just one of the millions of stories of Venezuelans fighting to survive.

I have had the immense privilege of meeting many members of the Venezuelan National Assembly in the past couple of years. They come to London to learn about the Westminster system, and to learn about government. Some of them have risked their own safety and that of their allies by leaving the country and re-entering it when they return. Their bravery is a testament to their belief that, one day, freedom and democracy will rule once again in their country.

As I mentioned, this debate comes after the unconstitutional presidential election in Venezuela last year. The election process was rightly criticised by every country with a functioning democracy. Polling stations in areas of high opposition were closed, and food coupons were given away at others. There were counting irregularities, and people were intimidated in the streets by Maduro and his supporters. It is no wonder that many countries, including the UK, did not recognise the Maduro victory as legitimate. Let us not forget the British company Smartmatic, which provided the software that was used in the 2017 Constituent Assembly election. When it came back to the UK, Smartmatic said that the elections results had been “tampered with”. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, stated that the election

“does not in any way fulfil minimal conditions for free and credible elections.”

It is important to thank Members of all parties who have turned up today to engage in this debate, and I look forward to listening to their contributions. There is consensus among almost everyone, but sadly there are malign individuals for whom the Venezuelan people are no consideration. As I said yesterday in the House, it is vital that the UK Government, who have yet to step up to the plate and do what Britain does best—caring for those in need—begin to put together an international response that meets the scale of the crisis. This is foremost a human catastrophe: human beings, particularly children, are experiencing inordinate suffering. If there is one closing thought, let it be of the children of this or any other refugee crisis, who are suffering tonight and going forward.

Mr Philip Hollobone (in the Chair): I am obliged to call the Front-Bench spokespeople no later than eight minutes past 5. The guideline limits are five minutes for

the SNP and for Her Majesty's Opposition, and 10 minutes for the Minister. Mr Graham Jones then gets two minutes to sum up the debate at the end. Seven Back-Benchers seek to contribute within 18 minutes, so there has to be a two-and-a-half-minute limit. I call Mark Menzies.

4.49 pm

Mark Menzies (Fylde) (Con): Thank you, Mr Hollobone. It is with great pleasure, but with some sadness, that I rise to support the words of my friend, the hon. Member for Hyndburn (Graham P. Jones). As chair of the APPG on Venezuela, he knows only too well the issues that the people of Venezuela face. He has covered much territory and time is short, so I will keep my words focused on the impact on the people of Venezuela, as a side-effect of the economic crisis and political corruption there.

I speak in my capacity as chairman of the APPG on Latin America and not in my capacity as the Prime Minister's trade envoy to Colombia, Argentina or Peru, or any other governmental role. I mention those roles because, by going to Colombia, I have seen at first hand the misery of hundreds of thousands of people who have had their normal lives, dignity, and good prospects torn from them, by no fault of their own.

There is no sight more heart-breaking than the one I saw when I went to Barranquilla and Santa Marta in Easter last year. I saw women with children begging by the roadside, in the morning, to be taken by men, in order to get money to see them through the day. No greater humiliation can befall any individual. I saw professionals washing car windows. On the whole, those people are not there to beg, but to survive. They will do whatever they can, and they are the lucky ones.

The unlucky ones are those who are still in Venezuela and who have no medicine. Forget complex cases; if someone is diabetic or HIV-positive, at the moment, they are simply counting down the days to their death because they cannot access treatment or basic healthcare in hospitals. Some 90% of urgent care in Venezuelan hospitals has gone. At the end of last year, Channel 4 produced a documentary, *Unreported World*, which was one of the most powerful pieces that I have seen.

In the time I have left, I urge the Minister to work with the Lima Group. Let us ensure that we capacity-build for the Venezuelan refugees in Colombia, and that we work with Colombia to look after those people, because by goodness, they deserve better than what they are getting at the moment.

4.52 pm

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): It is a pleasure to speak in this debate. I congratulate the hon. Member for Hyndburn (Graham P. Jones) on securing it. This is an issue on which I have been vocal. It is incomprehensible that democracy is so vaunted but much of the world remains silent. Yet again, I am thankful that this House—the home and foundation of democracy—has not remained silent, and neither has the Minister. He too has been vocal—well done to him, as I said yesterday and say again today.

The Venezuelan Government decided to go ahead with presidential elections without instigating any of the reforms of the electoral system that the Opposition had requested. The Opposition candidates did not

participate and claimed that there was widespread fraud, for which there is evidence. The UK, along with the EU, the US and the 14 members of the Lima Group to which the hon. Member for Fylde (Mark Menzies) referred, has refused to recognise the result as legitimate, and with good reason. I was very shocked to read in the news on Sunday night that a teacher's salary in Venezuela will currently buy only 12 eggs. What does she have to offer to her family and friends? There must be a swift resolution, and it is past time that we in the UN stopped hand-wringing and began to take action to help the people of Venezuela.

More specifically, the army is believed to be targeting political opponents, and the everyday person lives in fear. That is the kind of regime to which we are diametrically opposed, and the causes of democracy and freedom scream out that we put action behind words and do all that is possible to help in this scenario. The army has killed, injured, beaten, tortured and raped. I believe that it must be held accountable for its actions.

There are supposed champions of human rights whose brand of human rights murders on one hand but battles against supposed slights to human rights on the other. As usual, I will not follow the myopic trail of Sinn Féin, who are attempting to support someone who can only be called a despot, and were one of the first political parties in the United Kingdom to do so. We must do what we know to be right and support the calls for intervention.

Our intention is to do what we should for those who cannot stand alone. If we believe that there must be an interim President, will we offer advice and support? I hope that we will. If we believe that the currency issue must be rectified, will we offer advice and help? Do we have aid to help those who are working, yet are literally starving day by day as the world watches? This Government, this House and the people of this country will not stand idly by. We will do all we can to help. I ask the Minister to let us do everything that we can to help democracy and freedom.

4.54 pm

Andrew Lewer (Northampton South) (Con): I thank the hon. Member for Hyndburn (Graham P. Jones) for securing the debate. I speak as vice-chair of the APPG on Venezuela. I have been following the escalation of events closely for some time and have a deep personal interest in them.

In December last year, I sent letters to the Governor of the Bank of England and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, urging them to be more transparent on the \$500 million of gold belonging to the Venezuelan people that is held by the Bank of England. In my letters, I sought reassurance over reports that the Venezuelan Minister of Finance, Simón Zepa, who had been sanctioned by the US Treasury, and Calixto Sánchez, the illegitimate president of the Venezuelan central bank, had met Bank of England officials and were seeking to take the gold away. Unfortunately, the reply I received from the Bank of England hid behind references to "individual customer relationships" and "customer confidentiality", rather than directly addressing my concerns.

Two weeks ago, I met the Economic Secretary to the Treasury to express my concerns about the situation in Venezuela, the illegitimate nature of the Government

[Andrew Lewer]

and the importance of ensuring that the dictatorship does not get custody of the gold—we all know what it would do with it. He undertook to repeat my concerns to the Bank of England. I thank him and Foreign Office Ministers for their reassurances as the situation has moved on. I understand that the Bank has independence from Government, but it is a pillar of the state and it is 100% owned by the state, so it is reasonable to expect a high standard from it.

For a while, protests in Venezuela had died down, as a consequence of the sheer exhaustion of the country's hungry and abused citizens. Juan Guaidó has managed to resurrect democratic voices, gather a strong Opposition—left and right—to Maduro's autocratic criminal Government, and offer a real chance of change. Maduro has been financially rewarding the military for its loyalty, making it harder for his regime to be overthrown.

As the UK has declared its support for Guaidó, I urge the Government to continue to be forthright with the Bank of England and not allow it to misuse its independence or to cite "customer confidentiality" in an inappropriate fashion. The hon. Member for Hyndburn expressed the bigger picture brilliantly and bravely. Although I understand the political situation for him does not make that particularly welcome, I still think he needs to be congratulated.

4.57 pm

Siobhain McDonagh (Mitcham and Morden) (Lab): In September 2017, I had a heart-breaking meeting with the Venezuelan community in my constituency. I subsequently came to this Chamber to raise the desperate realities faced by their friends and families. Eighteen months on, the economic and humanitarian crisis that they face has soared to unprecedented and simply frightening levels.

I will communicate to the House just two cases that I have been contacted about today. I was contacted by my constituent Erika, who is struggling to support her family back in Venezuela. Sadly, Erika's sister was diagnosed with cancer four years ago, but has been unable to receive any treatment for the last two years because of the cost and the lack of medicine. I will quote from Erika's incredibly upsetting email. She said:

"We are not talking about trivial stuff. We are talking about life or death situations. When you need to decide which one of your family members is the one who is going to eat today. If my parents get ill at the same time, my sister may be in the position of choosing which one is going to survive."

I also heard from local resident Militza. Her brother is a doctor with over 20 years' experience and a private practice. The Venezuelan economy is in such disarray, however, that he cannot charge more than \$1 per patient visit. That solitary dollar gets paid three months later by an insurance company, with an inflation rate of over 1,000,000%. By the time it reaches him, it is almost worthless. His clinic has been robbed twice; his staff held at gunpoint; and his machinery stolen. Over 80% of his patients have lost a minimum of 8 kg since their previous visit, and can no longer afford to attend their regular check-ups.

This House and this country can no longer ignore the situation facing Venezuela. Democracy was breached by the illegitimate Constituent Assembly, and Nicolás Maduro is clearly not the legitimate leader of Venezuela. This is a regime that must be condemned loud and clear.

4.59 pm

Glyn Davies (Montgomeryshire) (Con): This is an important debate to me. Yesterday, I was not able to make the main Chamber for the urgent question from the hon. Member for Ilford South (Mike Gapes), so I am incredibly grateful to the hon. Member for Hyndburn (Graham P. Jones) not only for making a superb and comprehensive speech, every part of which I agreed with and which warrants all our congratulations, but for giving me the chance to say what I was not able to say yesterday.

I come to the debate from three different perspectives: as a citizen of the world, with a lot of us seeing this appalling tragedy, one of the biggest in the world and with the potential to become much worse, as hugely worrying; as a citizen of the UK, which has a good international aid reputation, although South America perhaps does not attract quite the international aid focus that it warrants; and in the interests of Colombia, because of family connections and my work with the all-party group, which is particularly important. The scale of the crisis is shocking.

For three weeks in August, during the summer holidays, I visited Colombia. It was shocking to see Venezuelans, with all their possessions, just walking from Venezuela to Bogotá or even Boyacá, where I spent several weeks. They came in twos and threes, on the backs of lorries with all their possessions. It was incredibly sad.

I have one or two important points to make in the short time I have available. One is that we should recognise the way in which Colombia and other countries have behaved towards the refugees. It is a lesson to the world. Colombia has accepted 1.1 million refugees, registering them and allowing them to get jobs. It is an absolutely brilliant way for a country to deal with refugees. We should be incredibly proud of them for that.

In fact, I will leave it at that. I will have to look for another opportunity to say all the things that I would like to say.

5.2 pm

Chris Williamson (Derby North) (Lab): There is undoubtedly a crisis in Venezuela, but I am afraid that what we have heard today has been something of a caricature of the situation there. Clearly, the severe crisis affecting the people of Venezuela has been exacerbated by sanctions imposed by the United States of America—[*Interruption*]*—*from Barack Obama in 2015 onwards. That has led to the very real shortages to which hon. Members have referred, in spare parts, medical supplies, food and so on, exacerbated by economic sabotage by elites in Venezuela—[*Interruption*].

Mr Philip Hollobone (in the Chair): Order. There is to be no noise from the Public Gallery, or it will be cleared. This is Parliament and everyone has a right to be heard without interference.

Chris Williamson: Thank you very much, Mr Hollobone.

The UN rapporteur, the first to visit Venezuela in 21 years, clearly said that the US sanctions were illegal and could amount to crimes against humanity—

The Minister for Europe and the Americas (Sir Alan Duncan): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Chris Williamson: No, I am afraid not; we do not have the time.

The rapporteur said that the US was waging “economic warfare” against the people of Venezuela. It is also important to challenge on the record the assertion about the election being rigged. I have spoken to election observers who were there, and they said that although the election process was not perfect, it was not rigged—it is impossible to stuff ballot boxes with ballot papers because each vote is twinned with the voter ID and fingerprint of each elector who votes in a Venezuelan election. A Member of this House, the hon. Member for South Down (Chris Hazzard), has said that it was complete rubbish to suggest that the Opposition were not allowed to campaign, because he saw them doing so openly during the election process.

We have seen this all before, have we not? Manufactured shortages and the intervention of the United States—we saw that in Chile, and we have seen similar influences in Honduras and other Latin American countries. It never ends well. Surely what the UK should be doing, rather than acting as Donald Trump’s poodle, is calling on the United States and the world community to urge the Venezuelan Opposition and Government to get together around the table, to meet and to reach a mutually acceptable solution. There is no place for external intervention by foreign powers.

5.5 pm

Crispin Blunt (Reigate) (Con): It is rather impressive to follow an assault on the facts as heroic as the one that the hon. Member for Derby North (Chris Williamson) just presented to us. One only has to look at the whole situation of Venezuela, and to see what has happened to it and the enormous wealth with which it is endowed, to draw the appropriate conclusion about the management of the country and its economy.

I do not intend to add to the evidence adduced by my hon. Friends. In the two minutes left to me, I simply want to ask what the Government will do now. Will they identify all funds belonging to the Venezuelan Government in the United Kingdom and freeze them? Will they place those funds at the disposal of Juan Guaidó when, inevitably, it comes to recognising him on Mr Maduro’s refusal of a new election process? Will the Government provide direct funding to the Juan Guaidó Government through development assistance? Will they start a major crackdown on the stolen and laundered Venezuelan funds that are in the United Kingdom or have passed through it? Will the Government take action against individuals and institutions in the United Kingdom that have facilitated the corruption of the Maduro regime?

Over preceding years, that state has been looted systematically by its leadership, not least the military. I understand Juan Guaidó’s offer of an amnesty, but I am not sure that the United Kingdom needs to be party to that on foreign moneys. Those people need to be held accountable for what they have done to their country.

Will the Government facilitate the immediate transfer of the Venezuelan embassy in London to officials appointed by the interim President? Will the Government withdraw the visas of, and declare persona non grata, those appointed by the Maduro regime to London, inviting them to return to Venezuela? That is a list of concrete steps that one would expect the Government to take. I assume that some of that will be in anticipation of there being no response to the Government and the EU’s collective position on the need for a new electoral mandate for the President.

I also want to reinforce the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton South (Andrew Lewer) about the gold held by the Bank of England. My right hon. Friend the Minister got rather a good write-up in the *Telegraph* today, but I have to say that I do not think that it was entirely deserved, because I think he should have been significantly tougher with the signal he sent the Bank of England about the position of the Government on that gold.

Mr Philip Hollobone (in the Chair): We now come to the Front-Bench speeches. The guideline limits are five minutes for the SNP, five minutes for Labour and 10 minutes for the Minister.

5.7 pm

Chris Law (Dundee West) (SNP): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Hollobone. I thank the hon. Member for Hyndburn (Graham P. Jones) for securing an important, timely and incredibly factual debate.

As we have heard, the political and economic crisis in Venezuela is spiralling into an economic and humanitarian disaster. Schools are being closed, and hunger is killing Venezuelan children at an alarming rate as stores have run out of food. The country’s hospitals are collapsing under chronic shortages of antibiotics, food and other supplies, and diseases such as malaria and diphtheria have re-emerged. The United Nations has estimated that as many as 3 million citizens—a tenth of Venezuela’s population—have fled since 2015. Almost 90% of those who remain live in poverty. In recent days, the desperate conditions have led to thousands protesting on the capital’s streets in a bid to topple President Nicolás Maduro. Amnesty International has reported that more than a dozen people have been killed in the protests in the past week alone.

Maduro and his Government have overseen Venezuela’s collapse, and yet have maintained a tight grip on power. Last year, Maduro won a widely criticized re-election, with reports of coercion, fraud and electoral rigging. The roots of the crisis lie in the country’s political corruption and economic mismanagement, and a complex combination of short and long-term factors. Venezuela holds the world’s largest supply of crude oil, which has been an essential part of its economy. However, plummeting oil prices in 2016 triggered an economic implosion, and the oil-dependent country lapsed into political turmoil and economic misery.

The economic crisis has been decades in the making, but Maduro has presided over its acceleration. There can be no excuse made for him and his Government. Now, as the parliamentary chief Juan Guaidó has declared himself the interim President, Venezuelans find themselves with two declared leaders, unrest in the streets and

[Chris Law]

foreign powers divided about who to recognise as the legitimate President. What comes next? I fully understand that there will be a range of views across the Chamber, and among those watching this speech, on whether Maduro should stay or go, but it is clear that Venezuela cannot recover while Maduro is in charge.

Research has suggested that most Venezuelans want a negotiated settlement and fresh elections. Previous attempts at talks between Venezuela's political players failed, due largely to bad faith on the Government's side. International engagement must take the form of considered action to support Venezuelans inside and outside the country, not crude and dangerous interventions such as we saw today when the US announced sanctions that will only worsen the situation for ordinary Venezuelans. Therefore, can the Minister tell us what discussions he has had with his US counterpart about the crisis in Venezuela and the US policy towards the country?

Last Thursday, Federica Mogherini, the European Union's foreign policy head, said in a statement that the voice of Venezuelans calling for democracy "cannot be ignored." Constitutional order must be followed. So will the Minister confirm that the UK Government support EU calls for the immediate commencement of the political process that can lead to legitimate free and fair elections?

I turn my attention to the humanitarian crisis that has gripped the country. Venezuelan refugees need access to shelter, medical care, social programmes and employment opportunities in order to mitigate any risk of their becoming vulnerable to recruitment by armed criminal groups active along the border. Therefore, will the Minister tell us what support the UK Government are providing to border countries hosting refugees, particularly Colombia, to improve access to those services? The SNP firmly believes that any approach to the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela must address the regional aspect, as the suffering in Venezuela is increasingly felt in the neighbouring nations of Columbia, Peru, Brazil and Ecuador. Can the Minister tell us what discussions he has had with EU and UN counterparts on providing humanitarian relief to Venezuelans?

The safety and rights of all Venezuelans must be upheld, and the UK must support a return to democracy and the rule of law. Ultimately, the Venezuelan people must choose their own political future. In the meantime, the UK Government must uphold the rule of law and promote strong democratic institutions, while doing whatever possible to help those suffering during this political upheaval.

5.12 pm

Helen Goodman (Bishop Auckland) (Lab): It is a pleasure to see you in the chair this afternoon, Mr Hollobone.

I begin by congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn (Graham P. Jones); he has uncanny timing in securing the debate on Venezuela. He set out very well the humanitarian crisis overtaking the country. There is malnutrition, and refugees in their millions are leaving the country. More than 1 million have gone to Colombia, which puts at risk their peace process. There are shortages of medicines and there are now more than half a million cases of malaria.

Between 2012 and 2016, the oil price collapsed. That was a problem, but mismanagement by the Government compounded it, leading to massive inflation and the collapse of the currency. None of that excuses the Maduro Government's abysmal human rights and political failings. Amnesty reports excessive use of force against demonstrators and torture of detainees. I believe the May 2018 elections were rigged by the Government and, following serious intimidation, boycotted by the Opposition. It is not surprising, therefore, that they were not recognised by the Lima Group of neighbouring states.

The Venezuelan people should not be a battleground for other countries' ideological differences. Their welfare and well-being should be at the forefront of our minds. Free and fair elections are the priority. Dialogue and respect for human rights, rather than violence, are essential. Humanitarian support for refugees is needed, rather than the further sanctions announced by the Trump Administration overnight.

Given the rising death toll from the latest protests, does the Minister agree that the Maduro Government must respect the rule of law and move to elections? I note his carefully chosen words in the Chamber yesterday: "Juan Guaidó is the right man to take Venezuela forward and that we will recognise him as constitutional interim President if new elections are not announced within eight days."—[*Official Report*, 28 January 2019; Vol. 653, c. 481.]

That will be 3 February. Usual practice is to recognise whoever is in charge in a country, rather than who we would like to be in charge. The Lima Group is just as concerned as the EU; it has called for elections but has not issued an ultimatum. If Nicolás Maduro does not announce elections, and is still sitting in the presidential palace, supported by the army, on 3 February, what will the UK and EU Governments do? How does the Minister see this situation unfolding?

As Chair of the International Development Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Stephen Twigg) said yesterday that the history of US intervention in Latin America is "tragic and troubled". We all heard Donald Trump last week say that all options are on the table. Indeed, the Minister used similar language in October. John Bolton tweeted a note that said, "5,000 troops to Colombia". The Colombian Government have not been consulted about that; their Foreign Affairs Minister issued a statement saying that an invasion from Colombia is absolutely out of the question.

Will the Minister give us some clarity? Do the UK and the President of the United States include in their list of all options the possibility of military intervention in Venezuela? Have the British Government discussed that with the American Government, and has the UK promised support in the event that the US takes action? Her Majesty's Opposition would like military intervention to be ruled out.

We all appreciate the huge challenges for neighbouring countries of dealing with the influx of refugees from Venezuela, especially in Colombia, so will the Minister tell us what efforts are being made to ensure that those refugees receive the humanitarian support they need? Will he answer the questions on asylum that my hon. Friends have asked?

Yesterday, the Father of the House said that we should not impose further economic sanctions; overnight, the Trump Administration did just that. Instead, will

the Minister use the Magnitsky powers that we gave him several months ago, and impose targeted sanctions against those who are abusing human rights?

5.17 pm

The Minister for Europe and the Americas (Sir Alan Duncan): I am very grateful to the hon. Member for Hyndburn (Graham P. Jones) for securing this debate. I thank him and his many colleagues for their continued interest in and support for Venezuela. I congratulate him on his re-appointment in October as chair of the all-party parliamentary group. However, I very much regret that I am unable to use such a welcoming tone for the hon. Member for Derby North (Chris Williamson). He has become a defender of the indefensible, a champion of someone who has impoverished his people, and a supporter of someone who has smashed the rule of law and usurped the constitution. I rather sense that he wants to make himself the most hated man in Venezuela. It is perhaps a race between whether he becomes so there, and whether he establishes that reputation in this House first.

Let me make no bones about it: Venezuela is a failing state in the midst of the deepest man-made economic and humanitarian crisis in modern Latin American history.

Melanie Onn (Great Grimsby) (Lab): Will the Minister give way?

Sir Alan Duncan: I will make some progress, but if I have time, I will give way later.

When I spoke about Venezuela at Chatham House in October, I described the demise of a once vibrant nation, charting, for the benefit of the hon. Member for Derby North, the many decisions that had been taken to prove that this was a Chavista-made crisis and not a US one. Since then we have seen no improvement; in fact, the situation has gone from bad to worse. The social implications are astonishing: four-fifths of Venezuelans are living in poverty. They are vulnerable to malnutrition and disease because of shortages of food and medicines. The poor are not just poorer—they are destitute. More than 3 million people have been driven to leave the country—10% of the population. In the UK, that would equate to almost the entire population of London. That massive exodus puts enormous pressure on neighbouring states, particularly Colombia, Peru and Ecuador. We applaud the remarkable generosity towards Venezuelan migrants of those countries, and that of Brazil and other countries in the region.

As well as punishing his own people, Maduro has damaged Venezuela's reputation and relations in the region and the wider international community. Instead of diplomacy, he has chosen confrontation. He has deliberately sought confrontation through reckless border incursions by the Venezuelan security forces. He has cut off any means of diplomatic engagement, including by announcing Venezuela's withdrawal from the Organisation of American States in 2017, and his conduct inexcusably threatens the peace process in neighbouring Colombia.

Under the Maduro regime Venezuela's democratic institutions, including the judiciary, the national electoral authorities and local government, have been systematically undermined, while political repression and electoral

malpractice have increased. The creation of an all-powerful Constituent Assembly in August 2017 was clearly a deliberate attempt to neutralise the democratically elected National Assembly. Over the past two years, election after election has been manipulated, culminating in a presidential election in May 2018 that few apart from the Government themselves considered free and fair. At Saturday's United Nations Security Council meeting, which I attended, Venezuelan Foreign Minister Arreaza waved a copy of, and spoke passionately about, the constitution, yet it is Maduro who has trashed that constitution and Juan Guaidó who has upheld it.

The political Opposition have been suppressed and intimidated, their leaders have fled or been imprisoned, and we will never forget that the Opposition activist Fernando Albán was detained and then found dead beneath the windows of the national intelligence facility. Some leading Opposition leaders have been imprisoned, forced into exile or banned from holding public office. Maduro has cynically used his control of supposedly independent institutions such as the Supreme Court and the National Electoral Council to cement his position. There was global criticism of the May 2018 presidential elections, with allegations of electoral malpractice and the banning of Opposition parties.

Those actions, along with the recent brutal suppression of demonstrations in Venezuela, are symptoms of an increasingly intolerant Government turning to repression simply to cling on to power. Ironically, Maduro's re-inauguration on 10 January might just have been a catalyst for change, but a clumsy attempt to intimidate the new president of the National Assembly, Juan Guaidó, by temporarily detaining him backfired spectacularly.

We know what has happened recently. During an Opposition protest on 23 January, Guaidó declared the May 2018 presidential elections fraudulent—and they were. Citing article 233 of the Venezuelan constitution, he declared himself interim President of Venezuela, and he was swiftly recognised by the United States and 12 Lima Group countries. As of this moment, 22 countries have recognised him as the interim President.

John Spellar (Warley) (Lab): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Alan Duncan: Very briefly.

John Spellar: If we get Juan Guaidó as the full, proper President, he will still need to reconstruct the economy, which has been wasted by the Maduro regime. Will the Minister look again at my suggestion yesterday that we need a Marshall plan to get Venezuela's resources up and running as quickly as possible so that it can, like post-war Europe, sustain itself?

Sir Alan Duncan: One of the blessings of Venezuela is that it has resources; its tragedy is that they have been exploited and destroyed by Maduro and his cronies. The right hon. Gentleman is right. We will look at anything to try to get those resources serving the needs of Venezuelans, who I hope will be able to return in their hundreds of thousands, if not their millions, to the country they have fled.

As my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary said in Washington on 24 January, the UK believes that Maduro is not the legitimate leader of Venezuela, and that Guaidó

[Sir Alan Duncan]

is the right person to take Venezuela forward. As I said at the UN Security Council meeting on Saturday, we will recognise Guaidó as constitutional interim President if new elections are not announced within eight days of that meeting. The sorts of actions called for by my hon. Friend the Member for Reigate (Crispin Blunt) will be addressed then, as we assess what needs to be done after the world comes together, as I hope it does, to point out and act on the fact that Maduro is not the legitimate President of Venezuela.

Crispin Blunt: That deadline expires on Sunday, I think. Will my right hon. Friend lay a written ministerial statement on Monday to say exactly what measures the Government are taking?

Sir Alan Duncan: I am not going to make a commitment about what precise reaction we will make in terms of procedures in the House. As my hon. Friend appreciates, that is a matter for the usual channels.

Melanie Onn: The Minister mentioned that he accepts that Venezuela is in a state of crisis. If that is the case and that is the Government's position, why are they wasting taxpayers' money on trying repeatedly to appeal the asylum claim of my 73-year-old constituent Nelly Gelves, which was approved by a tribunal? Is it their intention to send her back to Venezuela while it is in that state of crisis?

Sir Alan Duncan: As the hon. Lady will well appreciate, asylum is a semi-judicial process that is handled by the Home Office. I regret that I am unfamiliar with that case and she did not notify me of it in advance of the debate, so I did not ask the appropriate questions in advance.

In addition to what I have described, the UK stands with Spain, France, Germany and the Netherlands in demanding the announcement of urgent free and fair elections within six days, and in calling for a legitimate Government to be established. We stand with the Organisation of American States and the Lima Group, whose members last September referred the Venezuelan Government to the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity. We stand shoulder to shoulder with the United States in saying that the National

Assembly and its president, Juan Guaidó, are best placed to lead Venezuela to the restoration of its democracy, its economy and its freedom.

Helen Goodman: On that point, will the Minister give way?

Sir Alan Duncan: I have no more time, I am afraid. I have to leave the hon. Member for Hyndburn a couple of minutes at the end.

Today, we should all stand together against the tyranny of Nicolás Maduro and in support of the legitimate democratic forces in Venezuela. Venezuela can and must recover from the depths of its current despair. To do so, it needs an end to tyranny, an end to corruption and an urgent return to freedom, democracy and the rule of law.

5.27 pm

Graham P. Jones: This has been a very worthwhile debate, and the contributions by nearly all Members were exceedingly valid. I hope the Minister reflects on the questions that Members asked and provides some sort of response to them. I think that would prove worthwhile. This issue appears not to be going away. In fact, it may deteriorate somewhat; we ought to be mindful that the crisis may become even bigger in the coming days, weeks and months.

We must think immediately about the people who are suffering. Yes, there is a political question—yes, there is a bankrupt Marxist Administration running the country down—but right now, as the vice-chair of the APPG on Venezuela, the hon. Member for Fylde (Mark Menzies), said, there is a humanitarian catastrophe. We simply are not putting enough resources in. I am not backing away from attacking the failed Marxist regime, but the people who are suffering should be paramount in our thoughts tonight, this week and next week. We should all take away the experiences that the hon. Gentleman recounted as our lasting memory of this debate. I say in summary that the contribution from the UK Government needs to increase dramatically.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House has considered the political situation in Venezuela.

5.28 pm

Sitting adjourned.

Written Statements

Tuesday 29 January 2019

HOME DEPARTMENT

Crime (Overseas Production Orders) Bill

The Minister for Security and Economic Crime (Mr Ben Wallace): I am today placing in the Library of the House the Department's analysis of the application of Standing Order 83L of the Standing Orders of the House in respect of the Government amendments tabled for Commons Report stage of the Crime (Overseas Production Orders) Bill scheduled for 30 January 2018. The analysis should be read alongside annex A to the explanatory notes to the Bill.

[HCWS1281]

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Local Government Finance

The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (James Brokenshire): Today I laid before the House, the "Report on Local Government Finance (England) 2019-20", the "Council Tax referendum principles report 2019-20" and "Council Tax alternative notional amounts report 2018-2019", which represent the annual local government finance settlement for local authorities in England.

I would like to thank all colleagues in the House, council leaders and officers who contributed to the consultation after the provisional settlement was published on 13 December.

My Ministers and I have engaged extensively with the sector, including offering a teleconference to all local authorities, and holding meetings with representative groups, including the Local Government Association, and with councils and MPs. Representations from around 170 organisations or individuals have been carefully considered before finalising the settlement.

This settlement is the final year of the four-year offer which was accepted by 97% of councils in return for publishing efficiency plans. This settlement comprises a broad package of measures and confirms that core spending power is forecast to increase from £45.1 billion in 2018-19 to £46.4 billion in 2019-20, a cash-increase of 2.8% and a real-terms increase in resources available to local authorities.

Yesterday, I released £56.5 million across 2018-19 and 2019-20 to help councils prepare for EU exit.

Adult and children's social care

The Government have listened and responded to the pressures local authorities are facing and announced at autumn Budget in October 2018 that we will be providing additional resources across 2018-19 and 2019-20 to support social care. This funding includes £240 million in both 2018-19 and 2019-20 to support adult social

care services to reduce pressures on the NHS, and an additional £410 million social care support grant for local authorities to support adult and children's social care services. Having considered responses to the provisional settlement consultation, I can confirm that this will be distributed according to the existing adult social care relative needs formula.

The additional resources announced at autumn Budget, alongside the adult social care council tax precept and the improved better care fund, mean that councils will have been given access to £10 billion in dedicated funding that can be used for adult social care over the three years from 2017-18 to 2019-20. For 2019-20, local authorities will have access to £4.3 billion in dedicated resources for adult social care, including £1.8 billion in improved better care fund grant.

Business rates growth, and the distribution of funds within the levy account

In addition, every authority in England also stands to benefit from increased growth in business rates income, which has generated a surplus in the business rates levy account in 2018-19. I can confirm that £180 million will be returned to the sector and distributed based on each local authority's 2013-14 settlement funding assessment.

This highlights the continued success of the business rates retention system, from which local authorities estimate they will gain an additional £2.4 billion in retained business rates growth in 2018-19 on top of settlement core funding.

Business rates retention pilots

As we move towards our aim of devolving additional grants to increase business rates retention to 75% from 2020-21, I will continue to test increased business rates retention with a range of local authorities across a wide geographical spread.

At the provisional settlement I confirmed that 15 new pilots will get under way in 2019-20 in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, East Sussex, Hertfordshire, Lancashire, Leicester and Leicestershire, Norfolk, North and West Yorkshire, North of Tyne, Northamptonshire, Solent authorities, Somerset, Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, West Sussex and Worcestershire. I will also be piloting 75% business rates retention in London and continuing ongoing pilots in five devolution deal areas.

New homes bonus

Local authorities are instrumental in ensuring the building of homes this country needs. As well as providing extra resources for social care, rewarding local authorities for economic growth and testing elements of future reform, I am keen to provide as much continuity and certainty to the sector as possible. As a result, I can confirm that the payments threshold for new homes bonus will be retained at 0.4%. To keep the baseline at 0.4%, I am investing an additional £18 million. The total budget for the bonus this year is therefore £918 million.

The consultation illustrated that the sector wants certainty on the future of the new homes bonus after next year. The Government remain fully committed to incentivising housing growth and will consult widely with local authorities on how best to reward housing delivery effectively after 2019-20.

Rural funding

The 2019-20 settlement confirms that the rural services delivery grant will continue to be £81 million in 2019-20, maintaining the highest ever levels of funding provided in 2018-19. This has been welcomed by rural local authorities from particularly sparse communities. Our review of local authorities' relative needs and resources will consider the specific challenges faced in all geographic areas, including rural areas, to inform the final distribution formula.

Negative RSG

Having listened to representations since the provisional settlement, this settlement also confirms that the Government will directly eliminate the £152.9 million negative revenue support grant (RSG) that occurs in 2019-20 using foregone business rates.

Negative RSG is a direct consequence of the distribution methodology adopted for the 2016-17 settlement, whereby for less grant dependent authorities the required reduction in core funding exceeded their available RSG.

The Government's decision will prevent any local authority from being subject to a downward adjustment to their business rates tariffs and top-ups that could act as a disincentive for growth, and I believe this is the most straightforward and most cost-effective means of dealing with this issue.

Council tax referendum principles

Finally, I can confirm that in 2019-20 local authorities, with the exception of police and crime commissioners, will retain the same flexibilities to increase council tax as in 2018-19, with a core council tax referendum principle of up to 3%. I have agreed with the Home Secretary that the referendum limits for police and crime commissioners will be set at £24 to address changing demands on police forces.

I have also decided to provide Northamptonshire County Council with an additional 2% council tax flexibility, to assist with the improvements to council governance and services after their serious issues. Use of the flexibility will ultimately be a matter for the authority's cabinet and full council.

During the consultation, many local authorities called for referendum limits to be removed. However, I believe the proposed limits allow local authorities to retain the flexibility to raise additional resources locally to address local needs, whilst protecting households from excessive increases in council tax, in line with the Government's manifesto pledge.

Future of local government finance

A strong theme during the consultation was calls for certainty on the future of local government finance. To meet the challenges of the future, we have published two consultations on future reform of the business rates retention system and on the assessment of local authorities' relative needs and resources. These consultations close on 21 February.

Alongside the 2016-17 local government finance system, the Government announced a review to develop a more up-to-date and responsive distribution methodology for

the sector. In December, I announced a new consultation, seeking views on the future assessment of relative needs and resources, and on principles for transitioning to new funding arrangements in 2020-21.

Alongside the new funding methodology, in 2020-21 we will also be implementing the latest phase of our business rates retention programme that gives local councils the levers and incentives they need to grow their local economies. The consultation seeks views on how the business rates system can be reformed to provide a strong growth incentive; strike a desirable balance between risk and reward; and reduce complexity and disproportionate volatility in local authority income where possible.

Conclusion

This settlement recognises the pressures that councils face in meeting growing demand for services and rewards their impressive efforts to drive efficiencies and help rebuild our economy.

This settlement answers calls for additional funding in 2019-20, and it paves the way for a more self-sufficient and reinvigorated system of local government.

[HCWS1282]

JUSTICE

Convention against Torture: UN Protocol

The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice (Mr David Gauke): The optional protocol to the convention against torture (OPCAT), which the UK ratified in December 2003, requires states parties to establish a "national preventive mechanism" (NPM) to carry out visits to places of detention to prevent torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

The Government established the independent UK NPM in March 2009, and extended its membership in December 2013, and in January 2017. The UK NPM is currently composed of 21 scrutiny bodies covering the whole of the UK, and prepares annual reports on its activities. It also has an independent website at: www.nationalpreventivemechanism.org.uk.

Following previous practice, I have presented to Parliament the ninth NPM's annual report (Command Paper CP 17). This report covers the period from 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018. This year we mark 10 years since the establishment of the NPM, and I continue to commend the important work that the NPM has carried out over this period and the NPM's independent role in safeguarding the human rights of detainees across the UK. I also note the NPM's observations on prisons, children in detention, police custody, immigration detention, health and social care detentions, and court custody.

[HCWS1283]

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