

**Wednesday
30 January 2019**

**Volume 653
No. 243**



**HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

Wednesday 30 January 2019

House of Commons

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The House met at half-past Eleven o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

NORTHERN IRELAND

The Secretary of State was asked—

Border: Use of Technology

1. **Charlie Elphicke** (Dover) (Con): What assessment she has made of the feasibility of using technology to avoid a hard border in the island of Ireland; and if she will make a statement. [908804]

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (John Penrose): Today marks the tragic anniversary of the events of 30 January 1972, a day more commonly known as Bloody Sunday. I am sure the entire House will want to join me in marking this day, and our thoughts are with everyone who lost loved ones or who was injured as a result of the troubles.

In answer to my hon. Friend's question, everyone agrees that we have to avoid a hard border in Northern Ireland, and I agree with him that technology will play a big part in doing so. In fact, in his excellent and thought-provoking report "Order at the Border", he identified 25 systems that will have to be updated to cope with our new relationship with the EU. Those systems are owned and operated by different departments across government, particularly Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs and the Cabinet Office. I am sure they will describe their progress to him should he ask.

Charlie Elphicke: I thank the Minister for that answer. What work, studies or advice the Northern Ireland Office has sought or commissioned to examine how existing techniques and processes within existing EU customs law can maintain the free flow of cross-border trade between the UK and Ireland? Will Ministers put a copy of this in the House of Commons Library?

John Penrose: I understand that the Cabinet Office commissioned work on what existing software and other technologies are available from other low-friction land borders around the world to see whether they could provide a solution to the problem. The conclusion was that no existing off-the-shelf package could deliver exactly what will be needed in Northern Ireland, so new solutions will be needed. That is why the political declaration outlines that there will be urgent work on alternative arrangements to permanently guarantee no hard border in Northern Ireland.

Owen Smith (Pontypridd) (Lab): May I associate myself with the Minister's remarks about Bloody Sunday? He will know that in that same city of Derry/Londonderry

just a fortnight ago the dissident republicans tried to take more lives of Northern Irish citizens. Can he understand that the Chief Constable in Northern Ireland thinks that any infrastructure at the border—any technology—will be a target for those same dissidents? Will the Minister offer a guarantee here today that there will be no technology on or near the border, and therefore no violence at the border?

John Penrose: I am very happy to repeat what I said earlier: nobody, on any side—not just the police, as this is much more broad than that—wants a hard border in Northern Ireland. Ultimately, that is the best guarantee that there will not be one.

Dr Andrew Murrison (South West Wiltshire) (Con): Will the Minister confirm that the alternative arrangements the Government will be pursuing in the next fortnight have to do with technology and systems, as evidenced in the European Parliament's "Smart Border 2.0" report in 2017, rather than a customs union that may potentially tie the United Kingdom into an arrangement in perpetuity?

John Penrose: All I can do here is go back to the Prime Minister's point of order after the votes last night, where she explicitly said that she was going to take the decisions that had commanded a majority in Parliament back in not only reaching out to people who tabled amendments yesterday, but in her discussions with the EU. I am sure that none of us would want to rule in or out any particular methods of achieving those outcomes that have mandated by Parliament. We need to make sure that those discussions can move forward as freely as possible while still delivering on the outcomes that Parliament has decided.

Sammy Wilson (East Antrim) (DUP): This week, the EU chief negotiator, Michel Barnier, has indicated that he has a team studying how we could have checks without having any points along the border, including by paperless means and decentralisation—checks away from the border. Will the Minister confirm that he will be seeking to work with the EU to deliver on those things?

John Penrose: I can do better than that. The Prime Minister, in her comments last night, already made the point that she wishes to discuss all these things with the EU. I would regard it as immensely promising if such a team were indeed already working on it from the EU's side.

Tony Lloyd (Rochdale) (Lab): I join the Minister in his commemoration of the tragic events of Bloody Sunday, but may I also use this opportunity to recognise the work of and thank the Chief Constable of the Police Service of Northern Ireland? As he announces his forthcoming retirement, I think the whole House will agree that we owe him a debt of gratitude.

The Minister and the Secretary of State know that there is no operable technology anywhere in the world in current use that would not of itself become a target for the terrorists. The Prime Minister has said this in the past. We have to rule out the idea that a technological solution is available. If the Minister and the Secretary of State are going to use their influence to say that there can be no hard border across the island of Ireland, they

have to say that they will abandon the attempts to placate those in favour of a no-deal Brexit on their own side and move towards a customs union.

John Penrose: All I think I can do is repeat my earlier comments. After examination, there are no currently available, off-the-shelf solutions, which is why the political declaration says that new solutions will be required. I would not want to rule out what those will be and what they will include or not include at this stage, because clearly they will need to be innovative.

Peace and Reconciliation

2. **Sir Henry Bellingham** (North West Norfolk) (Con): What recent steps she has taken to promote peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland. [908805]

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Karen Bradley): May I associate myself with the comments of my hon. Friend the Minister of State about Bloody Sunday? The shadow Secretary of State has pre-empted me, but I too have a debt of gratitude to George Hamilton, the Chief Constable of the PSNI.

The Government fully support efforts to promote peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland. I was pleased to announce earlier this month that about £300 million of UK Government funding will be committed to projects to support peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland between 2021 and 2027.

Sir Henry Bellingham: Does the Secretary of State agree with me that no discussion of peace and reconciliation can take place without considering the plight of Northern Ireland veterans, both police and military, who put their lives on the line for their country? Will she assure the House that she personally will do all she can to draw a line under these investigations, which breach the military covenant and our pledge to police forces in the UK?

Karen Bradley: My hon. Friend is a doughty campaigner on these matters. He will know from the extensive discussions we have had that I am committed to delivering on the legacy proposals that were first agreed in the Stormont House talks and on which we have had a consultation. I look forward to working with him further on those matters.

Conor McGinn (St Helens North) (Lab): From Caroline O'Hanlon to Carl Frampton, we know the ability of great Ulster sportsmen and women to bring people together. May I ask the Secretary of State about the curriculum sports programme? It receives £1.2 million of funding each year to provide Gaelic football, hurling and soccer coaching in 450 schools in Northern Ireland. That funding has been cut. Will she restore it to bring sport back to the people in all those communities?

Karen Bradley: The hon. Gentleman has campaigned on this matter. I know he is very keen to make sure that this funding is maintained. He makes a point about the fact that we do not have devolved government, which we will come on to later during questions. We do need Ministers in Northern Ireland to make those important decisions, because the example he raises is a very good one.

Mr Shailesh Vara (North West Cambridgeshire) (Con): The recent events in Derry/Londonderry clearly showed that the peace we have in Northern Ireland is still fragile at times. Given that, does my right hon. Friend agree with me that, as the Brexit process progresses, it is crucial that politicians on both sides of the border and indeed in this House use language that is measured rather than inflammatory?

Karen Bradley: My hon. Friend makes a very important point. We all need to be careful in our language at this very fragile time.

Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson (Lagan Valley) (DUP): The Secretary of State will recall the excellent work of the centenary committee that oversaw the world war one commemorations in Northern Ireland and sought to promote reconciliation through its work. As we look towards celebrating the centenary of Northern Ireland—this landmark in our history—will the Secretary of State assure me that she will work with us to do the same?

Karen Bradley: The success of the world war one commemorations in Northern Ireland was very much down to the right hon. Gentleman's hard work in ensuring that all parts of the community came together. I think we saw a real moment in St Anne's cathedral in November, when all parts of the community and the Irish Government came together with the UK Government to recognise what happened 100 years ago. I know he is very keen and we have met to discuss the 100th anniversary of the establishment of Northern Ireland, and we are working with him on it.

Lady Hermon (North Down) (Ind): To promote peace and reconciliation across the island of Ireland, will the Secretary of State confirm that, after Brexit, British and Irish citizens will of course continue to be able to cross freely the Irish border in accordance with the common travel area? Will the Secretary of State confirm that technological solutions are being looked at to ease the flow of other EU nationals across the Irish border?

Karen Bradley: The hon. Lady is absolutely right that the common travel area is a very important foundation of the lives of those in Northern Ireland and Ireland, and it of course predates our membership of the EU. We are absolutely committed to ensuring the common travel area continues. We want to see that, and it is a very important point.

Devolved Government

3. **Vicky Ford** (Chelmsford) (Con): What progress has been made on restoring devolved government in Northern Ireland. [908806]

6. **Paul Masterton** (East Renfrewshire) (Con): What progress has been made on restoring devolved government in Northern Ireland. [908809]

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Karen Bradley): The restoration of a fully functioning Executive and Assembly remains my top priority. I am focused on bringing the parties together to work towards re-establishing devolved government at the earliest opportunity.

Vicky Ford: May I draw to the Secretary of State's attention the very serious comments made to the Women and Equalities Committee last Friday by the chief medical officer for Northern Ireland regarding patient safety for certain women? Will the Secretary of State meet members of that Select Committee to discuss what actions can be taken?

Karen Bradley: My hon. Friend has alerted me to the comments that were made, and I am very happy to meet her and other members of the Committee to discuss the matter.

Paul Masterton: The lack of a functioning Assembly creates real problems for setting Northern Ireland's budget. Can the Secretary of State explain what steps she is taking ahead of the 2019-20 budget? In particular, is she meeting with all parties represented in the Assembly?

Karen Bradley: I would very much prefer there to be a devolved Government in Stormont setting the budget for the Departments in Northern Ireland, but sadly that is not the case. Therefore, it is incumbent on me, as Secretary of State, to ensure that we have a proper statutory basis for public spending in Northern Ireland, and I am working on that budget. I will, of course, talk to other parties about the matter.

Nigel Dodds (Belfast North) (DUP): In relation to budgetary matters, the Secretary of State will be aware of the massive extra boost to the block grant as a result of the confidence and supply arrangement. Will she ensure that the Northern Ireland Office works closely with devolved Departments to ensure that progress is made on all blockages to the proper roll-out of all that money, and the other major infrastructure projects for Northern Ireland, as quickly as possible?

Karen Bradley: I want to make sure that all projects in Northern Ireland are properly delivered. Clearly, I do not have executive powers to ensure that they are delivered, but I am working closely with the Departments to make sure that money, particularly confidence and supply money, is spent properly.

Nigel Dodds: In relation to devolved issues more generally, does the Secretary of State accept that there could be a greater role for Assembly Members, who are currently not meeting, in input into decision making and policy making in Northern Ireland? It is deplorable that certain elected representatives from Northern Ireland do not take their places here, and that the same party refuses to get the Executive up and running.

Karen Bradley: I want the institutions in Stormont to be restored as soon as possible, and I want to work with all parties to make sure that that can happen. It is important that where there are roles for Members of the Legislative Assembly, they continue to contribute. I pay particular tribute to the Churches, which have organised a number of meetings to allow civic society, MLAs and others to get together and discuss important matters. Those are great initiatives.

Maria Caulfield (Lewes) (Con): We have heard at first hand in the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee about the detrimental effects of not having devolved government

in Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland has no mental capacity legislation, and in education it is working to statements rather than education, health and care plans. What devolved powers can the Secretary of State give officials in Northern Ireland to help to rectify those problems while there is no devolved government?

Karen Bradley: We passed the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation and Exercise of Functions) Act 2018 last year to allow civil servants to take decisions based on guidance issued by me, as Secretary of State. I have to be clear that those are not major policy change decisions; they are to allow public services to continue to be delivered. The way to get through this is to get Ministers back into government.

Gavin Newlands (Paisley and Renfrewshire North) (SNP): On behalf of the SNP, I join the Minister and the Labour Front-Bench spokesman in marking the tragic and entirely avoidable events of Bloody Sunday. Earlier this month, the former Taoiseach John Bruton accused this Government of seeking to tear up the Good Friday agreement. Last night, the Government did exactly that. As a result of recent events in Northern Ireland and the implications of last night's vote, it is imperative that we get power sharing back up and running as soon as possible. Is the Secretary of State concerned that increasingly strained Anglo-Irish relations will harm efforts to restore Stormont?

Karen Bradley: I like the hon. Gentleman very much, but I could not disagree with him more. This Government are absolutely steadfast in our commitment to the Belfast Good Friday agreement, and we will do nothing that jeopardises it.

Stephen Pound (Ealing North) (Lab): The House has just heard of the sad necessity of the setting of a budget for the coming financial year, in the absence of a devolved Assembly. May I ask the Secretary of State if she has begun discussions with the Northern Ireland civil service on this? While she is in such a warm and inclusive mood, may I ask her if she will follow the example of her predecessor and involve Opposition parties in the process?

Karen Bradley: The hon. Gentleman will recall that last year when the budget was set, I made sure, as Secretary of State, that all the main parties and the Opposition were part of the process. As I say, I would much rather that Ministers in Northern Ireland were setting the budget, but given the situation, we have to work together to make sure that a budget can be set.

Backstop Protocol

4. **Carol Monaghan (Glasgow North West) (SNP):** What recent discussions she has had with the Prime Minister on the backstop protocol in the EU Withdrawal Agreement. [908807]

8. **Angela Crawley (Lanark and Hamilton East) (SNP):** What recent discussions she has had with the Prime Minister on the backstop protocol in the EU Withdrawal Agreement. [908811]

9. **Chris Law** (Dundee West) (SNP): What recent discussions she has had with the Prime Minister on the backstop protocol in the EU Withdrawal Agreement. [908813]

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Karen Bradley): I have regular discussions with the Prime Minister and others about all aspects of our exit from the European Union.

Carol Monaghan: Last October, the Secretary of State gave a guarantee that her Government would not renege on the backstop, saying:

“We are committed to everything we have agreed to in the joint report and we will ensure there is no border on the island of Ireland.”

Can she explain why there has now been a U-turn and the Government’s policy has changed to ditching the backstop?

Karen Bradley: The commitments made in the joint report remain. Those commitments were that we would find a solution to the Irish border, ideally through our future relationship. We are still committed to that being the case. Last night, the House showed that there is a majority to pass the withdrawal agreement if changes are made to the backstop. The Prime Minister is working on that basis.

Angela Crawley: The deputy head of the Irish Government, Simon Coveney, has stated that

“the backstop is already a compromise...And the European Parliament will not ratify a withdrawal agreement that doesn’t have a backstop in it.”

Again, that was confirmed last night by the EU. Does the Secretary of State agree that her Government are pursuing a dead-end policy by seeking to renegotiate the backstop?

Karen Bradley: Can I very gently point out to the hon. Lady that she voted against the backstop?

Chris Law: In order to protect the Good Friday agreement, the backstop protocol was designed as an insurance policy to prevent a hard border in all circumstances. The only major party in these islands that opposed the Good Friday agreement was the Democratic Unionist party. Did the Secretary of State consult with any other party in Northern Ireland before throwing her support behind the new Government policy of ditching the backstop?

Karen Bradley: This Government are committed to ensuring that we meet all our commitments under the Belfast-Good Friday agreement, and that we deliver on the vote of the British people to leave the European Union. That is what we are working to achieve.

Mr Mark Harper (Forest of Dean) (Con): As the Prime Minister develops the alternative arrangements, will the Secretary of State remember that we have an incredibly close working relationship with the Irish Government to deliver the common travel area? It seems to me that that perhaps provides a model for how we might deliver no hard border in the future.

Karen Bradley: Clearly it would not be appropriate to speculate on what discussions the Prime Minister will have with the European Union and the European Commission, but my right hon. Friend makes a very important point about the common travel area, to which, as I have said previously, we are absolutely committed.

Luke Graham (Ochil and South Perthshire) (Con): Last night, the right hon. Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Ian Blackford) made one of the most reckless and irresponsible speeches I have heard since coming to this place. The comments about the Good Friday agreement do not—[*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is supposed to be asking a brief question, and the Secretary of State has no responsibility for the pronouncements of the right hon. Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Ian Blackford). Single sentence, question mark, and sit down.

Luke Graham: Will my right hon. Friend assure the House, and the people in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, that that is not the case, and that we are committed to the Good Friday agreement?

Karen Bradley: I can absolutely do that. This Government are committed to ensuring that we deliver on leaving the European Union in a way that works for all people who live in the United Kingdom, wherever that may be, fully respecting the commitments that we have under the Belfast-Good Friday agreement.

Karin Smyth (Bristol South) (Lab): We do not have much time to find new technological solutions. In October, from the Dispatch Box, the Prime Minister said that

“technical solutions effectively involve moving the border—and it would still be a border. Some involve equipment, which could come under attack, and some involve a degree of state surveillance that, frankly, I think would not be acceptable in Northern Ireland.”—[*Official Report*, 15 October 2018; Vol. 647, c. 421.]

Does the Secretary of State agree with the Prime Minister?

Karen Bradley: If the hon. Lady had listened to my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office, in his answer to the first question, it was clear that we have said as a Government that no technological solutions, off the shelf, exist today that solve this problem, but we are committed to working to find alternative arrangements because we have all agreed that the backstop, should it ever come into force, is a temporary measure. No one wants to be in it, and we want to find ways of avoiding it.

Devolution

5. **Rosie Cooper** (West Lancashire) (Lab): What recent steps she has taken to help restore devolution in Northern Ireland. [908808]

14. **Kerry McCarthy** (Bristol East) (Lab): What recent steps she has taken to help restore devolution in Northern Ireland. [908818]

Karen Bradley: Last year, I passed the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation and Exercise of Functions) Act 2018, which creates a limited period in which an Executive can be formed at any time. I am actively encouraging the parties to use that opportunity to come together to make progress on restoring the Executive.

Rosie Cooper: On 31 October, at the last Northern Ireland questions, the Secretary of State answered questions on restoring devolution and said:

“The point of the legislation is that it provides the space and the time for the parties to come together”—[*Official Report*, 31 October 2018; Vol. 648, c. 895.]

That language almost suggests that she does not have any role in it. Will she therefore outline what she has actually done to convene talks, or have we given up?

Karen Bradley: As Secretary of State, I clearly have a role in helping to facilitate those talks, but I cannot impose a solution on the parties in Northern Ireland. That must be something that they want to do for the good of the people in Northern Ireland. I am working to find that.

Kerry McCarthy: Environmental campaigners in Northern Ireland have raised concerns with me about the fact that the push towards ever-more intensive industrialised farming is continuing unchecked because of the power vacuum. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs does not seem to be interested. May I urge the Northern Ireland Office to take an interest in the environmental damage that is being caused by that trend?

Karen Bradley: The hon. Lady will know that DEFRA does not have jurisdiction over environmental policies in Northern Ireland; that is for the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland. I am sure the permanent secretary has heard her comments.

Mr Gregory Campbell (East Londonderry) (DUP): In endeavouring to restore devolution, will the Secretary of State ensure that there is appropriate emphasis on those who caused devolution to fall in the first place and are refusing to enter in without preconditions being met?

Karen Bradley: It is important that we find a framework in which the parties can come together. I know that the hon. Gentleman feels strongly that a devolved Government should be in place in Stormont delivering for his constituents. That is what I want to see.

Rural Hospitals: Public Transport

7. **Robert Halfon** (Harlow) (Con): If she will hold discussions with the Northern Ireland civil service on the provision in Northern Ireland of public transport servicing rural hospitals. [908810]

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (John Penrose): As I am sure my right hon. Friend is aware, public transport in Northern Ireland is a devolved issue. The Northern Ireland (Executive Formation and Exercise of Functions) Act 2018 allows Northern Ireland Departments to continue to deliver public services in

the absence of a functioning Executive. There are ongoing discussions on all these issues, including services to hospitals.

Robert Halfon: The brain injury charity Headway recently supported a lorry driver who had to pay £370 in hospital car parking charges to visit his comatose son in the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast. Will my hon. Friend work with the Secretary of State to scrap hospital car parking charges once and for all?

John Penrose: My right hon. Friend is pursuing one of the energetic and effective campaigns that have become his signature in Parliament. I believe that he is also pursuing the issue at Welsh and Scottish questions. I am sure that many of us have a great deal of sympathy with the case he described, but changing the policy in Northern Ireland to deal with it is best done by a functioning Executive at Stormont. I hope that he will agree that that is the clearest possible illustration of why people in Northern Ireland need the Executive to reform as soon as possible.

Paul Girvan (South Antrim) (DUP): Community transport gives rural dwellers access to hospital care, but in the past four years it has been reduced by 40%. What measures will the Minister put in place to ensure that that is addressed in the new budget?

John Penrose: The difficulty that everybody faces at the moment is that all budgetary allocations have to be done on a business-as-usual basis. To make more fundamental changes and reforms—to modernise anything in any devolved area—requires the Stormont Executive to be sitting. I share the hon. Gentleman's desire for change, but the answer, I am afraid, is that we have to get Stormont working.

Supporting Business

10. **Daniel Kawczynski** (Shrewsbury and Atcham) (Con): What recent steps she has taken to support Northern Ireland's business community. [908814]

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (John Penrose): At the autumn Budget, the Chancellor announced £350 million for a Belfast city region deal to boost investment and productivity, and the opening of formal negotiations for a Derry/Londonderry and Strabane city region deal. Furthermore, late last year, I was delighted to announce a £700,000 investment in Randox, a County Antrim life sciences company. That investment, through the Government's industrial strategy, should help create well-paid manufacturing jobs in Northern Ireland.

Daniel Kawczynski: Government Members are starting to feel more and more like honorary Ulstermen. Will the Minister commit to increasing and expanding the city deal to other cities in Northern Ireland to help that integral part of the United Kingdom?

John Penrose: I can confirm, as I have already mentioned, that the Derry/Londonderry and Strabane city deal discussions have begun, following my right hon. Friend

the Chancellor's announcement, and I am sure that everybody here hopes they will progress speedily and successfully.

Angus Brendan MacNeil (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): We know that the business community in Northern Ireland does not want a hard border, so surely, if technology and connected promises do not avoid that, the backstop is an understandable insurance policy for Dublin and the European Union, as indeed the United Kingdom agreed in December 2017. Surely the Government will not be reneging on that promise, which is beneficial to business.

John Penrose: I keep coming back to it, but Parliament voted last night and a democratic consensus has been reached. We all need to respect that decision.

PRIME MINISTER

The Prime Minister was asked—

Engagements

Q1. [908899] **Toby Perkins** (Chesterfield) (Lab): If she will list her official engagements for Wednesday 30 January.

The Prime Minister (Mrs Theresa May): I am sure that Members on both sides of the House will want to join me in sending our thoughts and prayers to all those affected by the collapse of the Brumadinho dam in Brazil. We are in touch with the local authorities and stand ready to provide whatever support we can.

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

Toby Perkins: I associate myself with the Prime Minister's comments about the tragic situation in Brazil.

My son is one of thousands of young people to have their life chances transformed by their studies at Chesterfield College. Its funding, like that of further education colleges across the country, is 30% down in real terms since this Government came to power. Further education funding is in crisis. Why is the education of young people in further education colleges worth so little to the Government?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman could not be more wrong. It is this Government who are ensuring that by 2020 the funding available to support—[Hon. MEMBERS: "Now!"] The funding we are putting into further education is providing the best life chances for young people going into further education. It is this Government who are taking steps to ensure that young people can take up the opportunities that are right for them. For too long in this country, the assumption has been that the only way to get on in life is to go to university, and other ways, such as apprenticeships and further education colleges, have not been similarly respected. It is this Government who are ensuring respect for further education, and for technical education as well.

Q8. [908906] **Mr John Whittingdale** (Maldon) (Con): Is my right hon. Friend aware that last year was the worst on record for the deaths, imprisonment and hostage taking of journalists, with 80 across the world killed in the course of their work. Does she agree that journalists fulfil a vital role in a free society, and will she ensure that

every opportunity is taken to put pressure on the Governments with the worst records to respect media freedom and take action to protect international journalism?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend raises a very important issue. I certainly agree about the important role a free press and journalists play in our democracies, and I thank him for raising an issue that I know is important to him and many Members across the House. Sadly, as he says, 80 journalists were killed in 2018; 348 are currently in prison and 60 are being held hostage around the world. We are deeply concerned because, as he said, these numbers have risen on the previous year. That is why in 2019 we are placing our resources behind the cause of media freedom. We are helping to train journalists around the world, such as in Venezuela, where we have seen an authoritarian Government suppress their critics, and this year we plan to host an international conference in London on media freedom to bring together countries that believe in this cause and to mobilise an international consensus behind the protection of journalists. This is an important issue, and the Government are putting their weight behind it.

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Lab): I join the Prime Minister in sending support to the victims of the Brumadinho dam collapse in Brazil. I am very pleased that all possible support is being offered to the authorities there to try to deal with the crisis.

Following the vote in the House last night against no deal, the Prime Minister is again going to attempt to renegotiate the backstop on the basis of finding "alternative arrangements". Will she tell us what those alternative arrangements might be?

The Prime Minister: Absolutely. Last night, the House set a clear direction on the way in which it could agree a deal, and that, as the right hon. Gentleman says, is about dealing with the issue of the backstop. As I said yesterday, there are a number of proposals for how that could be done. We are engaging positively with proposals that have been put forward by my right hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Nicky Morgan) and my hon. Friends the Members for North West Hampshire (Kit Malthouse), for Wycombe (Mr Baker) and for North East Somerset (Mr Rees-Mogg). Others, including my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale West (Sir Graham Brady), have put forward different proposals, such as a unilateral exit mechanism—

Emily Thornberry (Islington South and Finsbury) (Lab): Where are they?

The Prime Minister: I am just telling the shadow Foreign Secretary, if she will listen—let me give her a piece of advice: if she wants to shout things, it might be better to shout them in response to what I am saying.

My right hon. and hon. Friends have put forward proposals such as a unilateral exit mechanism or a time limit to the backstop. The political declaration already refers to alternative arrangements and raises a number of proposals that can be addressed, such as mutual recognition of trusted trader schemes.

Jeremy Corbyn: None of that was very clear to me; I do not know about anybody else. It would have been really nice if the Prime Minister had acknowledged that she did whip her MPs to try to support no deal, and she was defeated on that.

The EU said at the weekend that it was willing to renegotiate if the Government's red lines could change. Will the Prime Minister now tell us which of her red lines are going to change?

The Prime Minister: What has been absolutely clear in my contacts with European Union leaders is that they want a deal. What the House voted for last night was to leave the European Union with a deal, but it also crucially showed what it will take to see support in the House for a deal in the future. I think that the plan that was set out last night shows that we can obtain a substantial and sustainable majority in the House.

The right hon. Gentleman talks about not being clear about positions on various things. I am very pleased that he is now going to meet me, because there are a number of issues that I want to discuss with him. For example, he talks about a strong single market relationship with the European Union in the future. I want to know whether that means that he wants to accept all EU state aid rules, because he has objected to them in the past, and he cannot have it both ways.

We need to know, with greater clarity, what it is that the right hon. Gentleman believes in. Perhaps next time one of his own Back Benchers wants to ask him about his position on a second referendum, he will actually take a question or an intervention.

Jeremy Corbyn: Last time I looked at the Order Paper, it said "Prime Minister's Question Time". The Prime Minister has herself said that "the only possible deal" is within her red lines, so it is perfectly reasonable to ask which of her red lines has changed.

This morning, the Brexit Secretary was asked:

"What is the alternative to the backstop?"

He replied:

"Well, that is what we're exploring."

Can the Prime Minister tell us which options are being explored?

The Prime Minister: I covered that in the answer to one of the right hon. Gentleman's earlier questions. Perhaps if he listened to the answers to his questions, he would not have to repeat them.

Jeremy Corbyn: I look forward to meeting the Prime Minister later today, because I want to put forward Labour's alternatives, which could command a majority in the House and which are about protecting jobs and people's living standards across the country.

This morning, the Brexit Secretary said that alternative arrangements meant looking at technology. That is a very interesting question. Will the Prime Minister make clear what technological advances she is expecting to be made in the next 58 days?

The Prime Minister: May I say to the right hon. Gentleman that it would be helpful—*[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. I want to hear about these matters.

The Prime Minister: I say to the right hon. Gentleman that I have pointed out that there are a number of options that people are putting forward that we are working positively with them on. I have already referenced

a number of things that are in the political declaration on alternative arrangements that do set out various aspects that could be looked at; I referenced one of them in my answer to his earlier question.

But I would also say to the right hon. Gentleman that last night the House did vote to reject no deal, but it also voted to do what the European Union has consistently asked this House to do since it rejected the withdrawal agreement, which was to say what the UK wanted to see changed. Last night, a majority in this House voted to maintain the commitment to no hard border between Northern Ireland and Ireland, to leave the European Union with a deal and to set out to the European Union what it will take to ensure that this House can support a deal. That is a change to the backstop; that is what I will be taking back to the European Union. That is what we will be doing to ensure that we can avoid no deal. The right hon. Gentleman stands up regularly and says he does not want no deal; I am working to ensure we get a deal. He has opposed every move by this Government to get a deal; he is the one who is risking no deal.

Jeremy Corbyn: I would be grateful if the Prime Minister actually acknowledged that the House has voted to take no deal off the table. Can she assure the House that if she is unable to secure any legal changes to the backstop, she will work to find a solution based on a comprehensive customs union, a strong single market deal and the guaranteeing of rights and protections, rather than go back to the alternative that she has been threatening everybody with for months and months, which was to crash out without any deal whatsoever?

The Prime Minister: Last night, the House did vote to reject no deal, but that cannot be the end of the story.

Jeremy Corbyn: Of course not.

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman says "Of course not." I think that is the first time he has actually accepted that you cannot just vote to reject no deal; you have to vote for a deal, otherwise you leave with no deal. So far, he has opposed everything this Government have put forward in relation to a deal, and he said previously he will reject any deal that the Government put on the table. He says this is Prime Minister's questions, but people want to know his position as well. Will he ensure that if this Government come back with a revised deal that ensures we do not leave with no deal, he will actually support it?

Jeremy Corbyn: It really is time that the Prime Minister acknowledges that she has got to move on from the red lines she has put down in the first place, and she does not acknowledge that in answer to my questions or indeed anybody else's.

Our responsibility is to bring people together, whether they voted—*[Interruption.]* Mr Speaker, we are the Houses of Parliament; we are the House of Commons; we do represent the entire country; and the point I am making is that we should bring people together, whether they voted to leave or remain. Indeed, I look forward to meeting the Prime Minister to discuss a solution that could in my view unite the country. Changes to the backstop alone will not be sufficient. Businesses and trade unions are very clear that any solution must

involve a customs union and the strongest possible deal with the single market to avoid the damage of no deal. The Prime Minister may have possibly temporarily united her party, but is she willing—*[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. Mr Ellis, you were at one time a barrister of one rank or another in the courts; there is no way that you would have been allowed to shout from a sedentary position in that way. The judge would have ruled you out of order; I do not know whether that is why you stopped practising law and came into Parliament. Behave yourself young man; you can do so much better when you try.

Jeremy Corbyn: As I was saying before I was so rudely interrupted—*[Interruption]*—the Prime Minister may have succeeded in temporarily uniting her very divided party, but is she willing to make the necessary compromises, which are more important, to unite the country going forward to secure jobs and living standards right across the UK?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is a fine one to talk about coming together, when it was only last night that he agreed to actually meet me to talk about these issues. Time and again, he has told me to listen to the views of the House. He has just stood up and said that the backstop is not the only issue in the withdrawal agreement, but last night the house voted by a majority to say that the issue that needed to be addressed was the backstop, so he needs to listen to the House and to recognise that. He put forward a proposal last night that referenced the customs union and the single market, but his proposal was rejected by this House. I will tell him what this Government have been doing. Over the past week, we have been getting more teachers into schools, we have been ensuring that we are giving more money to councils and we have won a majority on Brexit. What did he manage? His Brexit plan was voted down, he opposed ending free movement and he will not rule out a second referendum. He has no plan for Brexit, no good plan for our economy and no plan for our country.

Q10. [908908] **Chris Philp** (Croydon South) (Con): First-time buyer numbers, which collapsed under the last Labour Government, are now at a 10-year high thanks to initiatives such as Help to Buy and the first-time buyer stamp duty cut, but there are still many people in their 20s and 30s who want to buy their own home. Will the Prime Minister join me in asking local authorities to use their existing powers when they grant planning consents to ensure that as many properties as possible are designated as starter homes or discount market sales homes, to help those people in their 20s and 30s to realise the dream of home ownership?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend raises an important issue and points out not only the good news of the 10-year high in the number of first-time buyers but the opportunities available for local authorities to provide for this. We are clear that the planning system has a key role in delivering more affordable homes, and the national planning policy framework, which was revised last year, is central to that. It includes a wider definition of affordable housing, and local authorities are expected to consider the new definition—which includes starter homes and discounted market sales homes—in identifying

the types of housing their communities need. There is an expectation that major developments will make a minimum of 10% of homes available for affordable ownership, including starter homes and discounted market sales homes. We have made good progress on first-time buyers, but there is more for us to do and this Government are doing it.

Ian Blackford (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP): Two weeks ago, the Prime Minister told this House that if we voted down the deal in the hope of going back to Brussels and negotiating an alternative deal, no such alternative deal would exist, yet last night she told the House that she would go back to Brussels to seek an alternative arrangement. So what is it? Has the Prime Minister inadvertently misled the House, or has this Government's incompetence reached a whole new level?

The Prime Minister: The very simple fact that the right hon. Gentleman appears to have omitted is that the deal was brought to the House of Commons and the House rejected that deal. Therefore, we looked to see what could be changed, what we could take back to Brussels and what we could fight for to ensure that the deal could get the support of this House. I was going to respond to his point of order last night, but unfortunately, when I looked, he had left. I think he had gone to do a Sky News interview—*[Interruption.]* I want to confirm absolutely the commitment of this Government to the Belfast/Good Friday agreement, and the remarks that he made last night in relation to that were frankly irresponsible.

Ian Blackford: The only thing that is irresponsible are the actions of this Prime Minister—*[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman has a right to be heard, the public would expect him to be heard, and he will be heard. Attempts to shout him down are not just rude; they are irresponsible and undemocratic, and they should certainly not have the sanction of anyone who sits on the Treasury Bench. Stop it! It is low grade, it is useless and it will not work.

Ian Blackford: Thank you, Mr Speaker. That was a graceless response from the Prime Minister, who is acting with sheer irresponsibility. What she demonstrated in that answer was, "Here are my principles. If you don't like them, you can have some more."

Last night, a majority of Scottish MPs rejected Brexit. The Scottish Parliament, the Welsh Assembly—*[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. Stop it. Chanting in the background is utterly irresponsible. Let the right hon. Gentleman ask his question and the Prime Minister answer it. That is what the public would expect.

Ian Blackford: The Scottish Parliament, the Welsh Assembly and this House of Commons have rejected the Prime Minister's deal. The UK Government told Scotland in 2014 that being part of the UK meant continued EU membership. The UK Government told us that we would be part of a family of equal nations. Prime Minister, Scotland wants to stay in the EU. We are scunnered by this Government ignoring Scotland. Does the Prime Minister accept that she promised Scotland everything but delivered nothing?

The Prime Minister: Scotland is part of the United Kingdom and voted in 2014 to stay part of the United Kingdom, and the United Kingdom will be leaving the European Union. If the right hon. Gentleman wants to talk about the impact on Scotland in the future, perhaps he should look at the figures for exports that came out just this morning. Over 60% of Scotland's exports go to the rest of the UK. That is more than Scotland's trade with the rest of the world and over three times more than with the rest of the European Union. However, he represents a party that wants to erect a border between Scotland and England. The biggest threat to the future of Scotland is sitting on the SNP Benches.

Q11. [908909] **Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown** (The Cotswolds) (Con): There is a clear choice between remaining in the customs union or a fully functioning independent UK trade policy. Does my right hon. Friend think it is time that the Leader of the Opposition altered his red lines—repeated twice in this question time—accepts the will of the British people and allows businesses to thrive in a post-Brexit world by having a free trade policy?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is absolutely right about what we are aiming to ensure that we get from leaving the EU, which is the ability to have that independent trade policy. That is so important for us as we leave the EU. Yes, I want to have a good trade relationship with the EU, but I also want to ensure that we are able to have an independent trade policy and have trade deals around the world. This country should be a champion for free trade around the world. That is the way not only to enhance our economy and prosperity and to bring jobs to this country, but to benefit countries around the world, including some of the countries whose economies need to be helped and improved. Some of the poorest people in the world would be helped by those trade arrangements. That is what we are going to deliver and that is our commitment to the British people and, as my hon. Friend says, it delivers on the result of the referendum.

Q2. [908900] **Sandy Martin** (Ipswich) (Lab): My constituent Lynne Sherman, who has two terminal illnesses, reapplied for her personal independence payment on 19 September, but she did not receive a home visit assessment until 6 January. She has still not received a decision on her claim. Does the Prime Minister consider it fair or sensible that, in addition to losing her benefit, Ms Sherman has also lost her blue badge, her bus pass and her carers?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman has raised a specific constituency case, and I will ask the relevant Department to look into the details of that case.

Andrew Percy (Brigg and Goole) (Con): On 12 July last year, my constituents took their son Jack to Leeds Children's Hospital for surgery on his craniosynostosis. The surgery went well but, after that care, Jack declined post surgery. His parents raised concerns, and he had declined so much by 16 July that a nurse raised concerns regarding sepsis. Jack continued to be treated for gastroenteritis, and the next day Jack died of overwhelming sepsis. Sadly, this is now the subject of a coroner's inquest, but my constituents want to ensure that this

never happens again to another set of parents. Jack was just three days short of his second birthday. The hospital has since introduced an early-warning system for paediatric sepsis, but that came too late for Jack. Can the Prime Minister assure me that she will do everything in her power to ensure that no other parent has to go through what my constituents have been through?

The Prime Minister: First, I am sure the whole House will join me in sending our deepest condolences to the family and friends of Jack. A terrible tragedy has occurred with the loss of such a young life.

We recognise, as I am sure my hon. Friend the Member for Dudley South (Mike Wood) will confirm, that sepsis is a devastating condition, and it is important that the NHS carries on developing its programme of work on recognising sepsis and improving outcomes. I know NHS England and NHS Improvement are working urgently with the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health to establish a single England-wide paediatrics early-warning system to improve the recognition of sepsis and the response of healthcare services to children and young people.

Obviously, nothing we can do will bring Jack back or compensate for the devastating impact on his family, but I can reassure my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Goole (Andrew Percy), and I hope he will be able to reassure his constituents, that we will continue to do all we can to improve the care for those with this devastating condition.

Q3. [908901] **Owen Smith** (Pontypridd) (Lab): The Prime Minister will know that there is a rising tide of racism in our country. Since she came to office, race hate crime has increased by 100% to 72,000 separate attacks last year. What is happening to our country on her watch?

The Prime Minister: When I was Home Secretary, I took measures to ensure that we improved the recording of hate crime because—[*Interruption.*] Actually, no. We did not have a full picture of what was happening.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has recently reviewed and revised our hate crime strategy, but the point underlying what the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Owen Smith) has said is that none of us should accept hate crime. We should all be very clear from this House that there is no place for hate crime in our society. Wherever we see racism, in whatever form, we should all take action to eradicate it.

Vicky Ford (Chelmsford) (Con): In her discussions with EU leaders, will the Prime Minister be making it crystal clear that this Government stand firmly behind all their commitments under the Belfast/Good Friday agreement?

The Prime Minister: I am very happy to give my hon. Friend that absolute assurance and commitment. We stand fully behind our commitments under the Belfast/Good Friday agreement, and everything we do will be in light of those commitments.

Q4. [908902] **Tracy Brabin** (Batley and Spen) (Lab/Co-op): Batley and Spen is a community made up of small towns and villages, and buses are a valued and essential service. I am sure the Prime Minister will sympathise

with my constituents' anger at the cuts to services announced by Arriva this week, so much so that commutes are thrown into chaos and people cannot get to the shops. One headteacher told me they are concerned about how their pupils will actually get to school. Does the Prime Minister agree that people are more important than profit? Is it not time to invest in bus services, after years of cuts, and bring them under public control?

The Prime Minister: We recognise the importance of buses to local communities, which is why we spend £250 million every year to keep fares down and maintain an extensive network that benefits people up and down the country. We particularly put money into supporting free bus travel for older and disabled people, because we recognise how particularly important buses are to vulnerable people. We are looking at what we can do to further improve access for people with disabilities, but we have been putting money in to ensure that there remains an extensive bus network that is of benefit to local communities.

David Duguid (Banff and Buchan) (Con): Last night, a majority of this House voted in favour of a deal to deliver on the democratic will of the people of the United Kingdom and leave the EU. In the next phase of the negotiations, will my right hon. Friend continue to stand firm against the fishing nations of the EU and their vain attempts to maintain guaranteed common access to our waters?

The Prime Minister: I can give my hon. Friend an absolute commitment that I will do that. Leaving the common fisheries policy and becoming an independent coastal state is so important to this country, to enable us to enhance and give opportunities to fishing communities around the United Kingdom. I recognise that fishing is particularly important in Scotland, but fishing communities around the UK will benefit from our becoming an independent coastal state. I am very clear: our position is there, we have that agreement, and it is not up for renegotiation.

Q5. [908903] **Ian Paisley** (North Antrim) (DUP): The Prime Minister will be aware of Sir John Gillen's report on the laws and procedures around serious sexual offences in Northern Ireland. The very serious preliminary report has already revealed that the conviction rate is declining in Northern Ireland, that we have the longest delays in getting cases to trial, and that there is a 40% drop-out rate among those who want to go to trial. These are serious issues. What is the Prime Minister going to be able to do to ensure that any changes in the law that Sir John Gillen recommends can be implemented in Northern Ireland?

The Prime Minister: Clearly, this is a very serious issue, and I understand that the judiciary and devolved justice authorities in Northern Ireland are keeping it under close and active consideration. Of course, as the hon. Gentleman knows, policing and justice is a devolved matter in Northern Ireland, as is the length of custodial sentences. In recently passing the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation and Exercise of Functions) Act 2018, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland enabled Departments to continue to take decisions in the public interest to ensure the continued operation of public services, but that is not and cannot be a replacement for

a devolved Government. The example the hon. Gentleman has given is yet another reason why it is important for us all to work to get the devolved Administration back up and running.

Bim Afolami (Hitchin and Harpenden) (Con): The Prime Minister will appreciate that the Government are spending over 50% more per head, in real terms, on education than was spent in the year 2000—and achieving much better results, might I add. However, there are still some challenges with resources and funding in many areas across Hitchin and Harpenden, especially in small rural schools. Will the Prime Minister commit to special consideration for education in the upcoming spending review? I believe that would command widespread support across the House.

The Prime Minister: I think the Chancellor was listening to my hon. Friend's remarks and comments on funding. As he says, it is absolutely right that we have been putting more money into schools. It is also right that we now see 1.9 million more children in good or outstanding schools than there were in 2010. We will of course look carefully across all elements of public expenditure when we come to the spending review but, as I said to my hon. Friend, I am sure the Chancellor has heard the lobbying in which my hon. Friend indulged in his question, particularly for small rural schools.

Q7. [908905] **Stephen Morgan** (Portsmouth South) (Lab): Unlike this Government, John Lewis has never knowingly undersold Portsmouth, but last week partners announced that they are closing Knight & Lee, a much-loved store in the heart of my community since 1865. That is just one example. Retailer after retailer, store after store, job after job—when will the Government finally bring our high streets back from the brink?

The Prime Minister: I recognise that this is a concerning time for the employees at Knight & Lee in Southsea. It is obviously a commercial decision for the company to take. We will ensure that the Department for Work and Pensions and Jobcentre Plus work with the company to understand the level of employee support required. I have to say to the hon. Gentleman that if he is worried about jobs in his constituency, the policies that would cause most damage to jobs there are the policies of the Labour party and those on the Labour Front Bench.

Douglas Ross (Moray) (Con): Last week, SNP-led Moray Council announced a number of devastating cuts to local services, many of which will impact young people. From the closing of libraries and swimming pools to the ending of the Active Schools programme and increasing of fees for music tuition, young people are affected while the council's highest-paid senior managers are not. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the SNP in Moray should focus on services rather than managers, and will she call on the Scottish Government to deliver a fairer funding deal for Moray?

The Prime Minister: Of course, the UK Government have increased the block grant that is going to the Scottish Government next year, so decisions on cutting budgets are a matter of priority for the SNP rather than necessity. Extra money has been given to them. It is a question of where they want to put that money and

what they put as a priority. It is time that the SNP empowered local government in Scotland, rather than hoarding power at Holyrood.

Q9. [908907] Mr Stephen Hepburn (Jarrow) (Lab): Next week is World Cancer Day. I regret to say that, last week, St Clare's Hospice in Jarrow closed as a result of funding difficulties. Will the Prime Minister use her offices to facilitate a meeting between me and the relevant Health Minister to see if we can secure and ensure healthcare for the terminally ill in future in the Jarrow constituency?

The Prime Minister: I will ensure that the relevant Minister meets the hon. Gentleman and addresses this issue with him.

Rachel Maclean (Redditch) (Con): With record numbers of women in the workplace now, more and more women will experience the symptoms of peri-menopause or menopause while they are at work. Often, the symptoms are not well understood by the general population and they include much more than just hot flushes and night sweats. Will the Prime Minister please join my campaign, which calls on employers to update their health and wellbeing policies to ensure that women can get full information and proper support so that they can continue contributing at work?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend for raising this issue. Obviously, this is something that many Members across this House will recognise as an important issue. We recognise the difficulties that women going through the menopause face. We are encouraging employers to adopt menopause-friendly policies such as flexible working and giving women information about healthy lifestyles that may help to improve their experience of the menopause. I will certainly encourage all employers, as she is doing, to take reasonable steps, including those that she has referenced, to support employees so that they can continue to carry out their jobs and contribute to our economy in the way they have done so far.

Q12. [908910] Jack Dromey (Birmingham, Erdington) (Lab): Prime Minister, we are 58 days away from a cliff. If we plunge over the precipice into an abyss, our country will be poorer in every sense of the word. Last night, this House voted that there can be no question of a no-deal Brexit. Will the Prime Minister honour the will of Parliament and rule out a no-deal Brexit, because to proceed with a no-deal Brexit will not only impoverish our country, but be contemptuous of Parliament?

The Prime Minister: Obviously, the hon. Gentleman is right that, last night, Parliament voted to reject no deal. What Parliament also voted for last night was to say that it wanted to leave the European Union with a deal, and it identified what was necessary to change in the deal in order to enable that to happen and for the House to support a deal. That is where we should be focusing. We can only ensure that we avoid no deal by having a deal, by agreeing a deal and by this House supporting a deal and voting for a deal.

Mr Simon Clarke (Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland) (Con): May I commend my right hon. Friend for her commitment yesterday to return to Brussels and reopen the text of the withdrawal agreement? That is

the right thing to do. People in Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland will welcome it because they want to leave with a good deal for our country. I commend the excellent compromise proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for North West Hampshire (Kit Malthouse), which has every chance of success in uniting this Parliament and this country behind a good exit.

The Prime Minister: Obviously, there was a very clear message from the House last night as to what needs to happen in terms of returning to Brussels, but also we are engaging positively, as my hon. Friend said, with the proposals that my hon. Friend the Member for North West Hampshire and others have put forward in relation to dealing with the issue of the backstop.

Q13. [908911] Luke Pollard (Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport) (Lab/Co-op): Next week marks five years since the train line at Dawlish was washed away in storms. Five years on, that train line remains fragile. We need money, not more press releases. Can the Prime Minister help to unblock the £300 million upgrade that the Department for Transport is sitting on and use the anniversary next week to help the south-west—Plymouth and the rest of the far south-west—to keep our train line open and stop it being fragile and precarious?

The Prime Minister: Obviously, passengers expect better. I understand from the Department for Transport that the first phase of work to protect the sea wall at Dawlish began in November, with essential repairs to the breakwaters. That is part of the £15 million wider investment to make the railway at Dawlish and Teignmouth more resilient to extreme weather. I reassure the hon. Gentleman that world-leading engineers have been carrying out the detailed ground investigations to develop a long-term solution to protect the railway in a way that minimises disruption for passengers. Network Rail will soon be reporting on how it will deliver this solution. I am clear that delivering this improvement to the south-west's transport infrastructure is a national priority. It is essential for unlocking the region's economic prosperity and jobs, and that is why we are giving it the focus that we are.

Maggie Throup (Erewash) (Con): Cotmanhay Junior School in my constituency has increased its proportion of pupils attaining the required level of key stage 2 standards from 35% to an amazing 67% over the last year. Will my right hon. Friend join me in congratulating the pupils, the teachers and the head, Simon Robinson, and 13 other primary schools across Erewash, on all improving their key stage 2 performances?

The Prime Minister: I am delighted to hear of the increase in performance at Cotmanhay Junior School. The education of children is improving, regardless of where they live or their background, so that they can get the education that they need to fulfil their potential. I am happy to join my hon. Friend in congratulating the pupils and staff of that particular school, and of the other schools she referenced across her Erewash constituency that have seen improvements, which are important for the future of those children.

Q14. [908912] Marsha De Cordova (Battersea) (Lab): Yesterday evening, MPs from across the House voted against a no deal. The TUC has warned that no deal

would be devastating for jobs and it is an outcome which the CBI has this morning said business will be speeding up preparations for. The people hit hardest by a no deal will be the ordinary people in Battersea and across the country, so will the Prime Minister finally listen to this House, trade unions, businesses and our constituents, and categorically rule out no deal?

The Prime Minister: The House rejected no deal last night, but I hope that the hon. Lady, when the time comes, will play her part in avoiding no deal and will vote for a deal.

Mr Mark Harper (Forest of Dean) (Con): The Prime Minister knows that I want to ensure that we leave the European Union on 29 March. She also knows that, regretfully, I could not support her deal two weeks ago because of the backstop, its impact on the relationship between Great Britain and Northern Ireland and its potential to trap us in a customs union. I welcome the fact that the House yesterday voted by a clear majority to renegotiate the backstop. If the Prime Minister can deliver that, I will vote for her deal, and I am confident that there will be a sustainable majority to get it and the legislation through the House. I ask my right hon. Friend to tell the European Union that there is a majority in this House for that deal to get us out of the European Union on good terms. I ask my colleagues to give the Prime Minister space; the EU is not going to crumble tomorrow. We are going to have to hold our nerve and we can be successful.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend is absolutely right about the importance of the vote that took place last night. Winning that vote with a majority—agreeing what it was necessary to change in the withdrawal agreement in order to achieve a majority across this House—gave a very clear message to the European Union that a deal can go through this House, but it has to be a deal that recognises the concerns that have been expressed across the whole of this House in relation to the backstop. I am going to be fighting for the change that this House has been very clear that it wants to see in the future. Then, as my right hon. Friend says, I am confident that we can see a sustainable and substantial majority across this House for leaving with the deal.

Q15. [908913] **Siobhain McDonagh** (Mitcham and Morden) (Lab): Anna is a carer for the elderly, living with her girls in a flat above Barclays bank. Because her husband left, she cannot pay the rent without claiming universal credit. She does not have a guarantor, so Barclays' agents are evicting her—another private landlord evicting a hard-working family on universal credit. Will the Prime Minister intervene and ask Barclays to grant Anna a tenancy so that her girls are not just two more children added to the 130,000 children in this country in temporary accommodation?

The Prime Minister: Like one of her hon. Friends, the hon. Lady has raised an individual constituency case and the details of that individual constituency case. I will ask the relevant Minister to look into that case and to be—[*Interruption.*] She is asking me to take a position purely on the question that she has asked me. I am

asking the Minister in the relevant Department to look into the case and to be able to assess that case and to respond to her.

Nigel Huddleston (Mid Worcestershire) (Con): This afternoon we shall be debating the Crime (Overseas Production Orders) Bill, which, among other things, will facilitate the cross-border exchange of data, enabling us to investigate crimes such as terrorism and paedophilia. Is it not the responsibility of all of us in this House to wholeheartedly support that Bill?

The Prime Minister: Absolutely, yes. This is a very important Bill in the impact that it will have. I am sure that everybody across this whole House wants to ensure that we can deal with terrorism, with paedophilia and indeed with other organised crime. Exchange of data is an important way of doing that, and I hope that everybody will see the importance of support for that.

Nigel Dodds (Belfast North) (DUP): In recent days we have heard the Irish Prime Minister talk about bringing his troops up to the border in the event of no deal. We have heard the Irish Deputy Foreign Minister talking of people jumping out of windows. Is not this highly reckless talk extremely dangerous in the present circumstances? That sort of rhetoric should be toned down and we should instead focus on what Michel Barnier said the other day—that even in the event of no deal, we would sit down and find operational ways to have checks and controls away from the border. Is not that the way forward? And it blows a hole in the entire concept of this backstop.

The Prime Minister: Obviously it is important—I will be speaking to the Taoiseach later today—for us to work with the Government of Ireland on the arrangements that will be in place in the future. We have obviously sent a clear message from this House about what needs to happen in relation to the backstop. We retain our commitment to no hard border between Northern Ireland and Ireland, and look to working with the Government of Ireland and with the European Union to ensure that we can all maintain our commitments under the Belfast/Good Friday agreement and that commitment to no hard border on the island of Ireland.

Bob Blackman (Harrow East) (Con): Last Sunday, we commemorated Holocaust Memorial Day, when we remembered the darkest period in Europe's history. Will my right hon. Friend join me in thanking the Holocaust Educational Trust, its youth ambassadors, and the incredible survivors, who give their personal testimony to young people so that they will remember what the ultimate destination of racial hatred and antisemitism truly is?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is absolutely right to raise the excellent work that the Holocaust Educational Trust does, and the youth ambassadors. I have met some of these youth ambassadors, who have understood the importance of learning the lesson from the holocaust, and understood the importance of acting against antisemitism wherever it occurs—and, indeed, wider racial hatred. As my hon. Friend says, the survivors from the holocaust have given their time to ensuring that nobody is in any doubt about where man's inhumanity to man can lead. They have done a really important job.

I pay tribute to them and to their continuing work. It is important that we all recognise the terrible things that can happen when we let antisemitism occur. We should all be fighting against antisemitism wherever it occurs.

Liam Byrne (Birmingham, Hodge Hill) (Lab): In the cold of Sunday, Kane Walker was found dead on the pavements of Birmingham. He was 31, and he became one of over 2,600 homeless people to have lost their lives in the last five years. When will the Prime Minister recognise that the scale of homelessness today is a moral emergency, and that we cannot wait until 2027 for this Government to end homelessness for good when we need action now?

The Prime Minister: First, we all want to ensure that everybody in this country can have a safe and secure roof over their head—that nobody has to be on the streets sleeping rough. That is why we are putting money into this. We have taken a number of initiatives like Housing First which are already showing benefits in helping people who would otherwise be homeless and could end up on the streets in having a home and dealing with the issues that ensure that they are able to stay in that home. This is something that we recognise the importance of. That is why we are putting money into it. That is why we are acting. That is why we are ensuring that action is being taken across the country to deal with this.

Draft Domestic Abuse Bill: Territorial Extent

12.50 pm

Stella Creasy (Walthamstow) (Lab/Co-op) (*Urgent Question*): To ask the Home Secretary to make a statement on the territorial extent of the draft Domestic Abuse Bill and the consequences of this for victims of violence across the UK.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Victoria Atkins): The landmark draft Domestic Abuse Bill, which we published last week, will help to transform the response to these horrific crimes. It is aimed at supporting victims and their families and pursuing offenders, to stop the cycle of violence. The Bill will cement a statutory definition of domestic abuse that extends beyond violence to include emotional, psychological and economic abuse. The Bill does not create new criminal offences in relation to domestic abuse, because those offences are already settled law—for example, section 18 grievous bodily harm, coercive and controlling behaviour and even, in the saddest of cases, murder—and are all devolved.

In line with existing criminal law, the provisions of the draft Bill extend to England and Wales only. Contrary to the suggestion in the hon. Lady's question, there has been no change in the territorial application of the Bill compared with the proposals in the Government's consultation published last spring. That was made clear in the consultation paper and reflects the fact that the subject matter of the draft Bill is devolved in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

We are currently in discussion with the Scottish Government and Northern Ireland Department of Justice about whether they wish to extend any of the Bill's provisions to Scotland and Northern Ireland respectively. We are seeking to establish a Joint Committee of both Houses as soon as practicable to undertake pre-legislative scrutiny of the draft Bill, and I encourage the hon. Lady and all Members to contribute to that process.

Stella Creasy: Domestic abuse affects communities in every nation in the UK, yet last week, after two and a half years of waiting, the Government published a draft Bill that restricts action to only England and Wales. I am asking this question not to debate the nature of devolution, but to ask why this Bill has been restricted when what was promised from the outset was very different.

The original consultation recognised that

"Insecure immigration status may also impact on a victim's decision to seek help."

We know that migrant women are much less likely to seek help because they fear deportation. Some may point to other immigration legislation going through this place, but that does not include anything on this issue either. This Bill would have been the vehicle for helping those victims, as immigration is not a devolved matter.

The then Home Secretary, who is now the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, has rightly recognised that financial destitution can hold women in abusive relationships. This Bill contains much to be welcomed regarding action in the courts and an independent

commissioner, but because it is restricted, it does not address critical areas of policy. Why, after two and a half years, would the Government do this?

The Sunday Times provided the answer this weekend, with confirmation that the Bill had been vetted by the Cabinet Office and that the Government feared making the Bill UK-wide because of the Democratic Unionist party. Why? Because this Bill is also about implementing the convention on violence against women—a convention the United Nations has said that we are breaching right now, because citizens in Northern Ireland are denied the right to choose not to continue an unwanted pregnancy.

Today, a brave young woman aged just 28, Sarah Ewart, is taking our Government to court to vindicate her human rights. She suffered a fatal foetal abnormality but, as a resident of Northern Ireland, was denied the right to an abortion at home, so she had to travel to England, as 28 women a week currently do. Last June, the Supreme Court told the Government that this situation breached the rights of UK women, but because of a technicality, it could not compel them to act.

This Bill from the outset could have been the remedy, but this weekend's revelations show that the Government have drafted the Bill with a mind not to the victims of domestic violence but to their partners in the coalition. The Bill talks about domestic abuse protection orders, which are supposed to have effect across the whole of the UK, yet there is no clarity, given the restricted scope, on how the Government intend to compel Scotland or Northern Ireland to act on them. Given that the original consultation talked of working with the Northern Ireland Executive, these problems are clearly of the Government's own making and a direct response to the call for equal rights for the women of Northern Ireland.

Given this mess, can the Minister confirm at which of the DUP co-ordination committees this decision was taken? It is not minuted in the notes of those meetings from July 2017 to Christmas 2018. The power to veto legislation affecting all of the UK is not in the confidence and supply agreement, which I note was updated on 19 December, so can the Minister explain how the decision to restrict the Bill for this purpose was made? What implications does it have for the role of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, who has direct responsibility for upholding the human rights of the people of Northern Ireland? Can the Minister explain why migrant women and those on low incomes in abusive relationships should pay such a price?

Can the Minister stop hiding behind devolution and say sorry to Sarah Ewart for making her relive the trauma of what happened to her, just because the Government need the 10 votes of the DUP to stay in power? We saw that last night, and I have no doubt that we will see it again, but this Bill shows the human consequences for women across the UK of the confidence and supply arrangement.

I know that Members across the House want to see action on domestic violence, and these restrictions will trouble women only in their constituencies but across the whole UK. Given that this is a draft Bill, will the Minister commit to going back to the drawing board and coming up with a Bill that helps to protect every victim across the UK? I ask the Minister to fight us fair and square on abortion rights in this place, not through backroom deals and bargaining. Otherwise, it will take

a rape victim having to come to court to make the Government do the right thing and not block this change. Put DV, not the DUP, first.

Victoria Atkins: Home should be a place of safety and love, and yet for 2 million people in this country a year, that is not the case. That is why we are introducing this unprecedented Bill, to try to help the victims of domestic abuse.

The hon. Lady rightly highlighted the fact that the Bill applies only to England and Wales at the moment. I set out the reason for that in my initial statement: the raft of offences that would support prosecutions of domestic abuse, including section 18 GBH and coercive and controlling behaviour, are devolved.

We have not rested on our laurels. I have written to the Scottish Government and the Northern Ireland Department of Justice to ask whether they will replicate this legislation in their own territories. I am delighted to say that the Scottish Government are looking at their own measures. I am sure that Scottish National party Members will have their own thoughts on devolved matters and the UK Parliament respecting that.

I must bring the hon. Lady back to the central subject of the Bill. This is about tackling domestic abuse, which I know she and many Members across the House feel strongly about. We must focus on the Bill. Let us not throw taunts across the Floor of the House. Let us work together to ensure that the Bill is in a good state when it is introduced formally. She asked about scrutiny of the Bill. We have said from the very beginning that this is a draft piece of legislation that will be scrutinised by a Joint Committee of both Houses. We anticipate that taking about 12 weeks, and once the Committee has produced its recommendations, we will look at those carefully before introducing the Bill.

Whatever the hon. Lady may have read on Sunday, I urge her not to believe everything she reads in the papers. We have to remember the people whom we are trying to help through the Bill. I have been delighted at the cross-party consensus on the Bill. Let us work together to stop this cycle of violence and help the victims of domestic abuse.

Anna Soubry (Broxtowe) (Con): I highly commend the Minister and the Government for this very good Bill, but I very much share the concerns of the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Stella Creasy). I am gravely concerned that this is, in effect, a way of stopping what should be happening: a fundamental reform of the laws in Northern Ireland so that women in Northern Ireland have exactly the same rights as women in my constituency. Forgive me, Mr Speaker, for asking the Minister this, but I genuinely do not know the answer: are there any civil remedies in this Bill? If there are, I am afraid that the Minister's response falls absolutely flat, because civil remedies are relevant across all the UK—*[Interruption.]* Apart from in Scotland—and therefore the scope of this Bill immediately needs to be changed.

Victoria Atkins: I am extremely grateful to my right hon. Friend for raising that issue. I know how passionately she has worked to help the victims of domestic abuse, not only in this place, but in her previous career. I note her concerns and she knows that I, too, have my concerns, although those are not for today. I am sure she will join me in urging all those people who can make a difference

in Northern Ireland to get around the table so that they can represent people and deal with this in the devolved Administration. On civil remedies, we have sought to consolidate the range of orders that are in existence at the moment, which can be very confusing, not only for victims, but for professionals involved in safeguarding victims. We are seeking to consolidate the range of orders available to protect victims in domestic abuse protection orders. They apply across the courts—family, civil and criminal courts. My understanding does not accord with hers, but I am happy to take that issue away.

Carolyn Harris (Swansea East) (Lab): As a Welsh MP, I have every confidence that the Welsh Labour Government are working towards delivering an excellent strategy on support for victims of domestic violence—I have no doubt that the same is true in Scotland. I totally respect the concept of devolution—when it works. But with the absence of Stormont, victims in Northern Ireland will see the progress in other parts of the UK only as further evidence of where they are falling behind in the support services and legislation available to them. We already know that in Northern Ireland they have no coercive control law and no stalking law, and the current controversy over the legality of abortion rumbles on. We need the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to take firmer action so that we can see a return to devolved government.

The good people of Northern Ireland deserve the same rights as everybody else in the UK, and currently they are not getting that. They are not protected by a devolved Government because of Stormont's suspension. Even in today's Northern Ireland questions we have been calling for the return of devolved institutions. We believe that support and services for victims of domestic violence in Northern Ireland are best made in Northern Ireland, but after two years of no Government the situation is stagnant. The people of Northern Ireland are suffering the effects of this political hiatus, none more so than the victims of domestic violence, as their voices reverberate in an echo chamber. I know that no MP in this place would believe that policies and strategies that support our constituents should not be afforded to the people of Northern Ireland, with one of the most notable issues being that of abortion. Human rights issues are not devolved to the Northern Ireland Executive and, as such, issues around women's reproductive health are the responsibility of this Home Secretary and other relevant Ministers. Decisions on the provision of public services, legislation and support for the people of Northern Ireland need to be reached urgently. If there is no likelihood of Stormont reconvening very shortly, this Government need to take responsibility to protect and support victims of domestic abuse in Northern Ireland.

Victoria Atkins: As always, I am extremely grateful to the hon. Lady. Indeed, I should call her my hon. Friend, as she and I are agreeing furiously on the hope and aspiration that those who can make a difference and express the wishes of the residents of Northern Ireland—I hope we can all accept that they may not agree with our individual viewpoints on issues such as abortion, but that is why that topic is devolved—will get back round the table to sort this issue, as well as many others. I am sure we all encourage them in that, as I know she does. I gently remind colleagues again that this is about domestic abuse. Although, sadly, some abortions may be as a result of an intimate abusive relationship, not all abortions

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fall into that category, and I am keen that we try to focus on the victims of domestic abuse in this Bill and our scrutiny of this Bill, because they are the people we really are trying to help with the passing of this piece of legislation.

Fiona Bruce (Congleton) (Con): Let us call this out for what it is: part of an orchestrated campaign to alter abortion laws in Northern Ireland and here, and to replace those laws with extreme proposals for which there is no public appetite whatsoever. Does the Minister agree that it is highly inappropriate for such campaigners to hijack the Domestic Abuse Bill in this way, undermining a Bill to support victims of domestic abuse and their families? Does she agree that it is equally inappropriate to interfere in a devolved matter, one that has been devolved for almost 100 years, and set a dangerous constitutional precedent—a precedent of interference that would undermine the Good Friday agreement itself?

Victoria Atkins: I thank my hon. Friend for her question. She demonstrates the range and depth of views, and the passion with which they are held, across the House on this topic of abortion. I am grateful to her for reminding us that this Bill is, as it says in the title, a draft Domestic Abuse Bill. I very much note her observations about the political structure in Northern Ireland. Again, I am not sure that this urgent question is the forum in which any changes to that are going to happen. I am grateful to her for her question, which underlines that we have to keep in mind the subject matter of this Bill; we are trying to tackle domestic abuse here.

Joanna Cherry (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): The situation in Northern Ireland as regards women's rights, particularly on abortion, is deplorable and requires addressing. However, this Bill could never have been UK-wide, because civil and criminal justice are devolved to Scotland. Indeed, last year Scotland passed its own Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018, which has already significantly strengthened statutory definitions and protections in respect of domestic violence, for example, by recognising the offence of coercive control.

There is much to be welcomed in the UK Government's Bill, but I am pleased to hear that they are putting it through pre-legislative scrutiny, which we hope signifies that they are willing to listen to genuine concerns from Members from across the House. There are some UK-wide issues that this Government could and should legislate on. My hon. Friend the Member for Central Ayrshire (Dr Whitford) has led the campaign calling for default separate payments in universal credit, to protect the victims of domestic abuse from financial coercion. Scottish National party Members were dismayed that that was dismissed out of hand by the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions. Will the Minister speak to her counterpart at the Department for Work and Pensions so as to urgently introduce default separate payments or at least to create provision for the Scottish Government to do that, because of course that is one of the many aspects of welfare powers that are not yet devolved?

As has been mentioned by others, the insecure immigration status of women who are victims of domestic violence also needs addressing. I want to know what the

Minister is doing to extend the eligibility of the destitute domestic violence concession, so that it supports more migrant women. More generally, what discussions will she have with her counterparts to support migrant women, throughout the UK, who are victims of domestic abuse?

Victoria Atkins: I am very grateful to the hon. and learned Lady for her astute and concise analysis of the legal position. May I put on the record the UK Government's thanks to the Scottish Government for the work they do with us on this and other associated crimes, such as stalking and harassment?

The hon. and learned Lady is absolutely right. I hope the House realises that we are being very open and transparent about the process for this Bill. It is a draft Bill specifically so that there can be a Joint Committee of both Houses—I think it is fair to say that this is an unusual level of scrutiny for the House—to look at the detail of the Bill and see whether improvements can be made.

On the specific issue of universal credit, I very much know about the issues that have been raised on these Benches. There is already a range of special provisions for victims of domestic abuse—for example, temporary accommodation, easements, same-day advances and signposting to expert support. However, I welcome the recent measures introduced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions regarding payments to the primary carer.

We will continue to work on this together, but I would make this observation. Those of us who take a particular interest in this subject all know that economic abuse, like all forms of domestic abuse, has no regard to income levels, job status or whatever. We must make sure that our answers are right not just for those on low incomes, but for women who do not need to have recourse to the welfare system.

Maria Caulfield (Lewes) (Con): I echo the words of the shadow Minister, the hon. Member for Swansea East (Carolyn Harris), in agreeing that there is a democratic deficit in Northern Ireland at the moment. In Northern Ireland questions this morning, we heard that there is currently no mental capacity legislation in Northern Ireland. In our Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, we have heard that it is still working to statements, rather than to education, health and care plans. The suicide strategy is sitting there but cannot be implemented, and we have the issue of equal marriage. This is much bigger than the Bill, and just to change the Bill to deal with one issue undervalues the role of devolution. The priority must be to get the Assembly back and functioning in Northern Ireland and dealing with all the inequality issues that are so important to the people in all communities.

Victoria Atkins: Very much so. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for setting out the political complexities of this, but also the impacts on people living in Northern Ireland. Again, I am not sure we can solve the issue of devolved politics in Northern Ireland on the Floor of the House during this urgent question. However, we have contacted the permanent secretary who is currently acting in a temporary capacity in relation to Northern Ireland, because we want to see what can be done to help women in Northern Ireland as well as in England and Wales.

Diana Johnson (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): I have a great deal of time for the Minister, but what does she really think about how long it is acceptable to use the problem of there being no Assembly in Northern Ireland as a reason for this House not to act on the breach of women's human rights in Northern Ireland, which we have debated at length in this Chamber? I would be interested to know what the Minister has to say about that.

Victoria Atkins: I am extremely grateful to the hon. Lady, and I note her campaign on the particular issue of abortion and the decriminalisation of the law regarding abortion. At the risk of overreaching myself, I am not sure it is my place at the Dispatch Box at this time to give an assessment of how long this is taking, other than to say that the Prime Minister, the Home Secretary and everyone in this Government are very keen and we urge all those parties present in Northern Ireland to get back around the table. There are so many issues that need their attention.

Helen Whately (Faversham and Mid Kent) (Con): May I ask my hon. Friend to confirm two things? First, is she committed and determined to tackle domestic abuse in all its forms? Secondly, is she determined to improve rights and protections for women across the United Kingdom?

Victoria Atkins: As this Bill passes through pre-legislative scrutiny, but also through this House and the other place, I hope the message will go out to people who are not perhaps as passionate about tackling domestic abuse and those for whom it has not yet become a priority that domestic abuse is not restricted to acts of violence, but can encompass sexual abuse, coercive and controlling behaviour, and economic abuse. Interestingly, since we launched the draft Bill last week, I have been inundated with emails from victims of all different forms of domestic abuse seeking help and thanking me for recognising the hell they are going through. If every Member can help us to inform and educate people about the forms of domestic abuse that in itself will be incredibly powerful in helping victims.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): My party, the Democratic Unionist party, recognises the importance of tackling domestic abuse and of supporting victims of domestic violence. However, this is a devolved issue in Northern Ireland, and the need to strengthen the legislation should be dealt with by the Northern Ireland Assembly. If the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Stella Creasy) was to amend the Bill to change the law on abortion in Northern Ireland, this would breach the devolution settlement. The emphasis should be, must be and has to be to restore devolved Government in Northern Ireland. The Government and all Members of this House on both sides of the Chamber should respect the right of the people of Northern Ireland to deal with these matters through their elected Assembly.

Victoria Atkins: The hon. Gentleman of course speaks for his constituency, and I am pleased to hear that he is urging others in Northern Ireland to get back around the table and help to deal with these many issues. As has

already been pointed out, however, this is but one of the important issues facing Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom as a whole.

Vicky Ford (Chelmsford) (Con): May I thank the Minister for this Bill, which I believe will transform the way in which we deal with this horrific crime? It largely impacts on women, although men can of course be impacted by domestic violence as well. I think it is totally despicable that politicians in Northern Ireland have left such a void in this and other areas for two years now. Will the Minister confirm that the devolved powers, which mean that this Bill has to be only for England and Wales, have actually been devolved for many decades?

Victoria Atkins: My hon. Friend is absolutely right, and I am particularly grateful to her for pointing out that, although the vast majority of victims are female—indeed, of the 2 million people affected, it is estimated that 1.3 million are female—men can be victims of domestic abuse as well. That is why, through the non-legislative package of measures that sits alongside the Bill, we are also investing in, for example, a specific helpline for male victims. We understand that they face particular stigmas in being a male victim, and they may feel even greater pressure not to seek help.

On the point about the nature of the criminal laws underpinning the prosecution of domestic abuse offences, my hon. Friend is absolutely right. Section 18 of the Offences Against the Person Act dates back to 1861.

Jess Phillips (Birmingham, Yardley) (Lab): When Ireland was part of the UK.

Mr Speaker: I call Jess Phillips.

Jess Phillips: I would just like to point out that in 1861 there was no devolution—the whole of Ireland was part of the UK—so things have somewhat moved on since 1861. Anyway, that was not my question, Mr Speaker; it was just an indulgence.

I am going to ask about domestic abuse. Specifically, why does the Bill in its current form—I accept that it may well change, and I will certainly be seeking to change it—not have any immigration statutory law changes in it to protect migrant women? I know that throughout the consultation there was a very strong push on how this Bill will not help any women unless it helps all women. We have to leave no woman behind, and currently migrant women are left behind by this Bill. If we extend it to cover immigration law, the extent of the Bill will of course be expanded. Would the Minister welcome that?

Victoria Atkins: I am extremely grateful to the hon. Lady, who needs no introduction in terms of her experience and expertise in this area. On expanding the Bill to alter the immigration status, the view was taken that, although domestic abuse does, of course, affect women who are not British citizens, or who do not have the right to remain, the Bill as a whole must focus on victims, the types of abuse and how we treat abuse.

I very much welcome the hon. Lady's wish to assist—*[Interruption.]* I am sorry—I am trying to keep a straight face; the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Stella Creasy) is gesticulating wildly from a sedentary position. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Jess Phillips)

[Victoria Atkins]

knows that I will welcome her contributions during the scrutiny process—indeed, I hope that she will be involved in it.

I note that various provisions are in place to help women who, for example, have come across on a spousal visa, but both the Minister for Immigration and I are very alert to the challenges that those women face, and we are very keen to work with the hon. Lady.

Rebecca Pow (Taunton Deane) (Con): I agree that Northern Ireland must get its political system up and running to tackle these really serious issues. I welcome the draft Bill. It is such an important step in tackling domestic abuse, particularly areas that have not been tackled previously—for example, controlling behaviour towards the elderly. I wonder whether the Minister could put the whole thing in perspective, so that we can really understand how important the Bill is. How many people does she think will be helped by the Bill in all its forms?

Victoria Atkins: I thank my hon. Friend. She is absolutely right to draw attention to elder abuse. The number of colleagues and other people who have contacted me since the launch of the draft Bill to tell me their stories of abuse by their children or grandchildren is heartbreaking. Several months ago, the hon. Member for Chesterfield (Toby Perkins) called a very important Westminster Hall debate on abuse by children of their parents and grandparents.

It is something that we are keen to uncover and shine a light on, because if a parent is being abused by their child, the stigma and shame that victims unfortunately and wrongly feel that they should be able to control the behaviour of their children. We want to shine a light on that, and say to everyone, whether they are parents, children or grandchildren, “Abuse in your home is not right, and we are here to help.”

Liz Kendall (Leicester West) (Lab): The Minister failed to answer the central question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Stella Creasy). Who decided to exclude Northern Ireland from the Bill, and was it discussed with the DUP?

Victoria Atkins: As the hon. Lady knows, the process is that any Bill that is introduced has to go through various Government committees to ensure, across Government, given that we have collective responsibility, that it meets with approval. I do not know of any such meetings with the DUP. I will happily take that away, but as far as I am concerned, I looked at the Bill, I have examined it very carefully, and I am afraid that the central point about devolved matters seems to me to apply.

I know that that does not meet with the hon. Lady’s approval, but the fact is that the law is the law, and we have to build a Bill around it. As I say, I have written to the devolved Assembly in Scotland and to the permanent secretary in Northern Ireland, and those communications are ongoing.

Huw Merriman (Bexhill and Battle) (Con): The Supreme Court judgment made it absolutely clear that lawmakers would have to change the law to give greater rights to

women from Northern Ireland in the circumstances that were discussed. The women who my colleagues and I met and women such as Sarah Ewart should not have to go all the way through a court process to get their rights—it adds insult to injury for them. I ask the Minister, who always listens: if not this law, what law will be introduced by this Parliament, which unlike Northern Ireland is responsible for treaty compliance, to give those rights to women, who deserve them?

Victoria Atkins: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I know that he works on a wide range of issues tackling violence against women and girls. First, on the case that he referred to—I do not want to be legalistic about this, but he asked me about it specifically—he may recall that the Supreme Court judgment was unable to deliver a full ruling, because the litigant bringing the proceedings was not judged to have locus. I have to say that, because that is the situation.

I obviously must not comment on the specific case that has been referred to in the Chamber and that is going through the court process at the moment, but I return to the point that the Bill is about domestic abuse. We have to focus on the subject matter of the title of the Bill, and any matters in relation to devolved powers are part of a much wider debate across Government.

Christine Jardine (Edinburgh West) (LD): I welcome, as I am sure others do, the Minister’s obvious passion and commitment to tackling domestic abuse, which I think is the central issue for all of us present. I also believe passionately in devolution, but devolution means to transfer, or delegate, power to another body. That body at the moment does not exist. Devolution does not mean to abrogate responsibility.

Those women are citizens of the United Kingdom, and the United Kingdom Government surely have a responsibility to respect the views expressed by our Supreme Court and the United Nations that the human rights of women in Northern Ireland are not being protected. Does the Minister not agree that that should be the overriding principle, not whether devolution, which is not working at the moment, should be preserved?

Victoria Atkins: I thank the hon. Lady for her kind comments. She has perhaps recognised the situation in which we find ourselves, in that these matters have been devolved. I go back to the point that the criminal laws that underpin the prosecution of domestic abuse, and so on, are devolved. As we have heard, that does not have an impact only in relation to domestic abuse; a wide range of measures are affected by the Assembly not yet being able to be convened in Northern Ireland. I am sorry that it will not meet with the hon. Lady’s approval, but the only answer that I can give is yet again to urge those who can make a difference in Northern Ireland to please get back round the table and start talking to each other.

Danielle Rowley (Midlothian) (Lab): Although I welcome the inclusion in the Bill of financial abuse as a type of domestic abuse, it is not enough to have that simply as words when Government policy is trapping women in financially abusive relationships. Universal credit payments must be automatically split. Charities have said that not having automatically split payments gives a hand to abusers. The hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh South West (Joanna Cherry) did not quite get a straight

answer. Will the Minister recognise the problem, and meet her colleagues in the Department for Work and Pensions to urge that universal credit payments be split?

Victoria Atkins: If I may just correct the hon. Lady, we are not talking about financial abuse; we talk about economic abuse, because we appreciate that abuse can take many forms—for example, preventing access to food cupboards in the kitchen, taking a woman's mobile phone away, so who she can contact is restricted, and even hiding the car keys, so that she cannot get to work on time in the morning, which puts her employment at risk, with all the ramifications that that can have.

On the point about universal credit, I am in constant dialogue with my colleagues in the Department for Work and Pensions. The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions is formerly of the Home Office manor. I very much hope that the fact that one of her first announcements was an important one about looking after primary carers gives reassurance and comfort to the House that we are looking at this matter very carefully.

Liz Saville Roberts (Dwyfor Meirionnydd) (PC): Criminal justice is not yet devolved to Wales, but I draw attention to, and commend, the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015, which came into force in Wales in 2015. The 2018 progress report raises concern about the lack of collaboration and integration between the devolved and non-devolved organisations charged with taking forward the aims of the Act. What discussions has the Minister had with the Minister responsible in the Welsh Government to address that?

Victoria Atkins: I am very concerned to hear that, not least because I visited Cardiff a few months ago, as part of our domestic abuse consultation engagement events, to listen to people who are doing great work in Wales to tackle domestic abuse and to see how we can improve collaboration. I very much take on board what the hon. Lady says. If we need to improve, I hope she knows that I will not rest until that has happened.

Martin Whitfield (East Lothian) (Lab): I welcome the Minister's response today. I also welcome the support from the Scottish National party, in particular the hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh South West (Joanna Cherry), with regards to women in Northern Ireland. The Minister said that the criminal elements are devolved, but the Supreme Court's warning from last year is that human rights are not devolved but extended. Is this not a missed opportunity to empower the Minister and the Secretary of State at the Home Office with regard to the human rights of victims of domestic violence and of women in general?

Victoria Atkins: I absolutely understand the hon. Gentleman's feelings and his reasons for raising that point. At the risk of being legalistic, the Supreme Court judgment was advisory because of the locus. I hope he appreciates that I cannot talk about the case going through the court process at the moment. When that judgment is delivered we will of course look at it very carefully, but I come back to the point that at the moment, on this and on a whole range of issues, domestic abuse is devolved. I gently remind the House, by way

of explanation, that the topic of the Bill is domestic abuse and that not every abortion is as a result of domestic abuse.

Alison Thewliss (Glasgow Central) (SNP): I would like to start by saying to the Minister that unless she is going to devolve Department for Work and Pensions and UK Visas and Immigration functions, it will be a missed opportunity for the Bill not to tackle the issues those Departments are responsible for, particularly with regards to women in the immigration system and some DWP policies, including the rape clause, which, in the way it is formed, either forces a woman to leave an abusive relationship at a time not of her choosing, which can be extremely dangerous, or denies her support.

I would also like to know a bit more about the recommendations for training DWP staff. I have heard from some organisations that that can be sorely lacking in the advice that is offered to women. I would like to know how exactly that would operate for both England and Scotland.

Lastly, if Mr Speaker will allow, it was announced today that all judges and sheriffs in Scotland will be given specific domestic violence training, particularly around coercive control. Will she consider doing something similar for all judges in the English court system, too?

Mr Speaker: I think the hon. Lady can be satisfied that she has provided comprehensive coverage of her concerns, to which, doubtless, there will be an equally comprehensive response from the Minister on the Treasury Bench.

Victoria Atkins: I am grateful, Mr Speaker. First, I thank the hon. Lady for pointing to the fact that the draft Bill, important though it is, is not the only action the Government are taking to tackle domestic abuse. Indeed, there are some 120 commitments that sit alongside the Bill. She mentioned training. That is a crucial part of our package, not just for DWP or jobcentre workers but across what I would call the frontline, for example housing association officers, police officers and the judiciary. The judiciary in England and Wales already receive training, which we keep under review. I should also say that we are looking at the offence of coercive control and behaviour. It has been in force for three years, but we appreciate that it can be a very difficult offence to investigate and prosecute. We are reviewing it to ensure that it is as effective as possible. On the DWP more generally, I am in conversation with my counterparts there. We want a wraparound approach, which is why the announcement by the Secretary of State was so significant.

Alex Norris (Nottingham North) (Lab/Co-op): Like many Members from across this place, I am very enthusiastic about the Bill and the potential for making a real difference in our communities. That is why it is so disappointing that we are not even at the first hurdle and we are already divided. I have worked very constructively with the Minister on a number of issues, so it gives me no pleasure to ask this question but I feel that I must. When the decision was made to not put things in the Bill such as migration and welfare, therefore allowing the Government to restrict their territorial scope to just England and Wales, was it based on the best interests of women in the United Kingdom or was it a narrow political judgment?

Victoria Atkins: I am extremely grateful to the hon. Gentleman. Indeed, I find myself being held to account by him in pretty much all of my portfolio. On the territory of the Bill, I draw the attention of hon. Members to the consultation that was launched last year. At that point, the consultation's scope was England and Wales. I would not want hon. Members to leave the Chamber thinking there has been some kind of handbrake turn in relation to the territorial decisions made for the Bill. The fact is that this is a devolved matter. That is why I have written to the devolved Government in Scotland and our Northern Irish counterparts to see if we can reach an agreement on whether they want to implement the measures too. I hope he understands that my motivation all along has been to help the victims of domestic abuse not just today, or for the victims I could not help when I was prosecuting in the criminal courts 15 years ago because none of these measures were anywhere near coming into being, but the victims in the future. We all know the impact domestic abuse can have on children growing up in abusive households and we need to break that cycle of violence.

Ian Paisley (North Antrim) (DUP): Earlier, an hon. Member said that there were no devolved institutions in Ireland in 1861. Of course, in 1840, under Daniel O'Connell, the first home rule movement commenced and in 1861 the second movement was well under way, leading to devolution and the creation of two Parliaments in Ireland. I think it is important to have that on the record.

It is unfortunate that some Members have tried to conflate a very important domestic abuse Bill here in England and Wales, which we will support, with what is happening in a very confusing situation in Northern Ireland. Does the Minister agree that that confusion means we have a strange arrangement whereby at one moment in this Parliament some Members talk about

protecting absolutely the integrity of the Belfast agreement when it comes to some matters that we discuss, namely Europe, but that when we move on to domestic arrangements that are specifically devolved under the terms of the Belfast agreement we can suddenly cast those arrangements aside? That confusion has to go. We either accept devolution and implement it, or we do what the Labour Front Bench seems to be saying and introduce direct rule.

Victoria Atkins: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his history lesson on Ireland and Northern Ireland. He makes the point eloquently that we cannot pick and choose between devolved matters. The mention of the Good Friday agreement reminds us all, if we need reminding, about the particular sensitivities in Northern Ireland, how we have reached where we are today and its broad history. We of course very much hope that those who can get around the table will do so, so we can sort out those and other matters.

Sandy Martin (Ipswich) (Lab): Was the Bill vetted by the Cabinet Office in relation to the confidence and supply agreement?

Victoria Atkins: I do not understand what the hon. Gentleman is trying to get to. I have already said that the Bill, like every piece of proposed legislation, has to go through what is called "write round". That is where every Government Department, including the Cabinet Office, considers a Bill. I am very conscious of my responsibility as the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Home Office and that we share the Bill with the Ministry of Justice. That is how the Bill has been developed. The consultation last year was clear in its scope and we are bringing the Bill forward in good faith.

Points of Order

1.39 pm

Jess Phillips (Birmingham, Yardley) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I apologise for not giving you advance notice of this; it just came to me. If the Domestic Abuse Bill relates just to England and Wales, can I clarify that the rules of English votes for English laws will apply, and that Members from Scotland and Northern Ireland will not be invited to vote on anything to do with it?

Mr Speaker: It would be somewhat premature of me to offer a judgment from the Chair on that matter at this time. Certainly, when legislation is potentially open to such designation, it is the normal practice that I am advised on it, that I see the paperwork relating to it and that a view is formed. That is something of a holding response, but the matter will clearly be live.

It is, of course, a draft Bill and will be considered by a Committee. It seems unimaginable that that point will not be further explored, both during consideration by the Committee and subsequently. The hon. Lady is herself a living testimony to the truth of what I have just said. It is unimaginable that it will not be the subject of further discussion and questioning, and therefore there will be a requirement for a ministerial response. I should say, as much for the benefit of people attending our proceedings as for Members in the Chamber, that the very fact that I granted an urgent question on it—I think it is the 550th urgent question—is testament to the fact that I regard it as a matter that warrants the attention of the House and the response of a Minister in the Chamber.

Mr Gregory Campbell (East Londonderry) (DUP): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I notified you earlier about the point of order that I seek to make, as I did the hon. Member I wish to mention—the hon. Member for Dulwich and West Norwood (Helen Hayes). Yesterday in Treasury questions, the hon. Lady indicated that she had received correspondence from a constituent. That is fine; we all respond to constituents. The quotation that she cited, which relates to a bomb that went off in Londonderry two weeks ago, reads:

“‘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.’”—[*Official Report*, 29 January 2019; Vol. 653, c. 640.]

Immediately after the bomb, the police made it clear who was responsible: the dissident republican movement in Northern Ireland. Those who planted the device issued a statement—I will not read it in full—which said:

“All this talk of Brexit, hard borders, soft borders, has no bearing on our actions and the IRA won’t be going anywhere.”

I seek your guidance, Mr Speaker, on the need for all of us to speak responsibly and deal effectively with the issues that come to us in a way that does not raise the spectre of giving incentives to those who activate violence or support or give credence to it.

Mr Speaker: I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his courtesy in giving me advance notice of his intention to raise his point of order. I am also obliged to

him for confirming in the Chamber that he notified the hon. Member for Dulwich and West Norwood (Helen Hayes) of his intention to raise the matter.

It is, of course, the responsibility of each and every hon. Member to have a care for the accuracy and appropriateness of what is said in this Chamber. It must be added that, in saying what they think is accurate and appropriate, very often other right hon. and hon. Members disagree with their assessment. I say that, as people will readily appreciate, because that is the nature of political discourse.

Does anybody else wish to contribute on this matter?

Helen Hayes (Dulwich and West Norwood) (Lab)
rose—

Mr Speaker: Of course, I will happily hear the hon. Lady. She is not under any obligation to respond, but if she wishes to do so, she may. I hope the hon. Member for East Londonderry (Mr Campbell) feels that he has registered his point with his usual force and courtesy. That is on the record.

Helen Hayes: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I too thank the hon. Member for East Londonderry (Mr Campbell) for advance notice of his point of order. I hope he will respect the fact that yesterday I quoted verbatim from a constituent of mine who works and is an employer in the hon. Gentleman’s constituency in Northern Ireland, and has spent extensive time there over several years. It was not conjecture, but a report of reality on the ground.

Responsibility for individual despicable acts of violence clearly rests squarely with the perpetrator, but after 30 years of the troubles, peace in Northern Ireland was painstakingly negotiated through the Good Friday agreement. My constituent has been raising concerns with me for several months about escalating tensions in the community in Londonderry where his business is based. Those issues and the impact that Brexit is already having on the fragile and complex situation in Northern Ireland have been reported widely, but there has been very little discussion of them in this Chamber. They are of an order of magnitude that demands that they be raised. If the Democratic Unionist party will not raise them, I will do so where I have cause to do so via my constituents.

The Prime Minister has so far failed to give any details of alternative arrangements for the Irish border to provide reassurance that a frictionless border without infrastructure is possible—

Mr Speaker: Order. I have indulged the hon. Lady, who always addresses the House with great courtesy. I hope she will forgive me. She is very forensic, but she was reading out what amounted to a speech on this matter. It therefore strains credulity to suppose that it could be characterised as a point of order. I normally have no wish to cut her off. She has made her point with considerable force and insistence—[*Interruption.*] And she enjoys the benefit of the endorsement of her right hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr Bradshaw), who has just observed from a sedentary position that she made her point very well. I suspect that her cup runneth over, and I think she should leave it there.

The Minister for Security and Economic Crime (Mr Ben Wallace): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I rise to support your comment that political discourse of course produces different points of view. Speculation in this House on live intelligence actions and investigations is unhelpful and rarely reflects the facts. All Members should be cautious about entering into sub judice or live investigations with speculation that can add fuel to the fire.

Mr Speaker: Everybody should be responsible in his or her use of language. I can say only, however, that although I am not unmindful of the Minister's point, no breach of order has taken place. We will leave it there. He has made his point with some force, and I do not think there is any need for me to add to it.

Mr Mark Francois (Rayleigh and Wickford) (Con)
rose—

Mr Speaker: I have got a feeling that the right hon. Member for Rayleigh and Wickford (Mr Francois) thinks that the House needs to hear him. Therefore, we will have a point of order from Mr Mark Francois.

Mr Francois: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I apologise for not giving you notice of this, but it is a very straightforward matter. I had a meeting earlier this month with Mr Andrew Haines, the chief executive of Network Rail, to discuss the delay in completing engineering works on the Southend Victoria to Liverpool Street line, which is vexing my constituents greatly. Network Rail representatives briefed me on a new plan to shorten the works, which was welcome. I then went on the

media and explained what would happen in good faith. The following Monday, Network Rail contacted me and said, "I'm terribly sorry. We got that slightly wrong," and then changed what they had offered. I think that was a genuine mistake, but they promised to write to me by the end of the month to clarify the matter. There are two days to go, and no letter has been received. Do you agree that if they give a guarantee like that, Mr Speaker, it would be a good idea to keep it?

Mr Speaker: It would be a very good idea to keep it as a matter of principle. Moreover, as the right hon. Gentleman has aired the issue in the Chamber, that seems to me to constitute an additional reason why it would be politic or prudent for that letter of response to be provided.

The right hon. Gentleman probably recalls that the late Sir Gerald Kaufman was much given to tabling questions about when he would receive a reply to a letter he had sent or a question he had posed. He was wont to observe that, shortly after tabling said question, the reply—to a letter or question from some considerable period earlier—seemed miraculously and speedily to arrive.

If that chief executive were here, I would say to him—he is not, so I cannot, but I will say it indirectly—that I remember what a persistent fellow the right hon. Member for Rayleigh and Wickford was in 1986, when he stood against me in a student election. He was a very dedicated campaigner, although he was unsuccessful on that occasion. It would be altogether wiser for the chief executive to recognise that of one thing he can be certain: the right hon. Gentleman will not go away. He will just become ever more demanding, and so that letter should arrive sooner rather than later.

European Union (Requirements Relating to Withdrawal)

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

1.50 pm

Dr Sarah Wollaston (Totnes) (Con): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to establish requirements in connection to the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union.

We do not have the luxury of time. Unless an alternative is in place, in 58 days—just 29 sitting days—we will leave the EU with no deal. My Bill looks ahead to what happens if, as looks likely, the Prime Minister returns empty-handed from her mission impossible to Brussels, and is based on the recommendations of the 11th report of the Select Committee on Exiting the European Union, so I start by paying tribute to its Chair, the right hon. Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn), and all its members for that excellent report.

The Prime Minister has repeatedly commented that, while the House has said what it does not want, it needs to decide what it does. In the event of there being no agreement to change the backstop, we will be back to square one, but with one important difference: we will be much nearer the no-deal cliff edge. In a nutshell, my Bill would allow the House to express its view on what could command the support of the House through a serious of indicative votes on free-standing motions, and the Committee recommended that those be taken in order.

The motions would give the House an opportunity to vote first on the Prime Minister's negotiated withdrawal agreement and framework for the future relationship; secondly, on the option of leaving with no deal; thirdly, to instruct the Government to seek changes to the backstop—although I think by then we would have tested that to destruction; fourthly, to instruct the Government to seek a Canada-style deal, as set out in the report; fifthly, on seeking to join the European economic area through the pillar of the European Free Trade Association and remain in a customs union with the EU, or a variation of it; and finally, to return the decision to the British people by giving them the opportunity to decide in a public vote what kind of Brexit deal they want or whether they wish to remain in the EU on the current deal.

Last night, the House gave two instructions to the Government. Not for the first time, it rejected leaving the EU with no deal, but it also passed an amendment unilaterally requiring that the Northern Ireland backstop be replaced by unspecified “alternative arrangements” to avoid a hard border. It adds up, essentially, to tearing up the withdrawal agreement. Donald Tusk in his statement following the vote has made it clear that the backstop is part of the withdrawal agreement and that the withdrawal agreement is not open for renegotiation. Most people do not seriously feel that the EU will be prepared to renegotiate.

In the absence of meaningful changes to the withdrawal agreement, it is hard to see how the Government will secure support for a deal that we rejected so comprehensively, by a margin of 230 votes. If my Bill went ahead, the House would have the opportunity to

express its view on where the Prime Minister should go from here by giving it the opportunity not only to reject no deal but to consider other alternatives.

I want to be clear about why the House rejected no deal. No Government could seriously, knowingly and deliberately inflict such pain on their people. We are talking about changes not just to the economy but to livelihoods and jobs. It is the real world crashing into Brexit fantasy. It would affect not only our economy but many other sectors, including health, transport links, security, food and farming—the list is very long. No responsible Government could inflict that kind of pain, but unfortunately, up until now, the Prime Minister has given the House a binary choice: “My deal or no deal.” My Bill would allow the House to say there are other routes forward.

Some colleagues want to press forward with an EEA-EFTA arrangement and a customs union, while others would prefer a Canada-style arrangement. We should all have the opportunity to vote on the way forward. I and many of my colleagues have made it clear we favour returning the decision to the British people to give them the final say. The problem with the original referendum was that it did not set out which of these many options the public were voting for. Once we know that decision, we will see that it is far removed from the sunlit uplands promised during the referendum campaign.

We need to seek the informed, valid consent of the British people; otherwise, we are pressing forward with a deal that commands the respect of neither leavers nor remainers. Nobody could realistically claim it is the will of the people, but if we give it back to the people and tell them exactly what is involved, so that they can weigh up the risks and benefits themselves, we will get that informed, valid consent, and then we could proceed together.

It is quite possible that the British people would decide to proceed with Brexit—I accept that—and they would need the absolute guarantee that it would then be acted on as quickly as possible, but a second vote would also allow them to change their minds. Everybody deserves the opportunity to change their mind. Even our first Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union has famously commented that if people cannot change their minds in a democracy, it ceases to be a democracy.

I reject the notion sometimes put forward that it would be a betrayal of democracy to ask people again, and I particularly object to the assertion that it would cause civil unrest. We need to stop talking that up. Since when did this House bow or cave in to the concerns and demands of the far right? We should be standing up to them and making it absolutely clear that democracy does not stand still, and should never stand still, and that this House has a duty to give the public the right to vote and have the final say.

We must recognise that this call comes not from the EU but from the people—the hundreds of thousands of people who marched through the streets of London in the summer and the many hundreds of thousands beyond that who did not make it here but who have written to us and campaigned for the right to have the final say in a people's vote. The House owes it to them to debate and vote on that as part of a series of indicative votes, and I commend the Bill to the House.

1.59 pm

Charlie Elphicke (Dover) (Con): I rise to oppose the Bill.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Totnes (Dr Wollaston)—for whom I have the deepest respect—I voted in the referendum to remain, but in my constituency, as in hers, a majority voted to leave. It seemed to me, as a democrat and as one who had voted for a referendum to be held in 2016, that as 17.5 million people—a majority—had voted in the referendum to leave the European Union, we must respect that result. And so, from that day onwards, I made it plain that I would do everything I could to ensure that the people's vote was respected and that we executed the instructions that we had been given.

We need to be clear: the people of this country did not vote to remain. They voted to leave, which is why we must take “no Brexit” off the table. A second referendum asking people to choose between the Prime Minister's deal and remaining would load the question in a way that would be entirely wrong and entirely unacceptable, and I think that it would be a travesty of our democracy.

Let me explain why I originally backed remain. I did so because I thought that a big project like Brexit would be very difficult for Britain. If we could not manage a basic patient record system in the NHS, what hope did we have with a really huge project like Brexit? I feared that Members of Parliament would think that their constituents might have been very clever to elect them but were not so able to make a big decision like the decision to leave the European Union. I also feared that they might not accept that decision but fight it all the way. I worried that our civil society was not strong enough. I worried that our machinery of government would blow a fuse in trying to manage a project of this sort, and in that I have not been disappointed.

The vote having taken place, however, I thought that we must respect the result. I put my shoulder to the wheel and thought about how we could be ready on day one, deal or no deal. I thought about how we could make sure that this was a success. I thought about how we did not have to hand over all the money that the EU wanted, and the EU had no legal right to demand it. I thought about how to make the best negotiating case for our country. The worst negotiating case for our country is to rule out no deal. If the other side knows that you will not get up and walk away from the table, they know that they have got you, and if they have got you, they are going to give you a really rubbish deal, so the best way in which we can get a good deal is to be prepared and ready on day one not to do a deal.

Now, what have we seen? We have seen the people who do not want us to leave the European Union finance their campaign for a second referendum with foreign money. We have seen their spokesman from Davos telling us how we should lead our lives, and how we should not leave at all. They want a loaded question, and—this is what I think is really wrong—they try to frighten people by telling them that they will die of thirst because our water will be poisoned, that they will

die of starvation because no food will arrive, that our pets will die in quarantine and that our planes will never take off. That kind of irresponsible talk is what makes people so angry. They say that the establishment should be working to solve those problems and to ensure that we are thoroughly ready—not trying to scare us, not trying to tell us how bad the economy will be, but trying to make this work and to make a success of it.

So often, these “Project Fear” stories lose credibility. In my constituency, people shake their heads and say, “This is not credible.” I do not think that “Project Fear” is right, and I think it irresponsible. However, I do not subscribe to “Project Pangloss”, according to which it will all be a walk in the park. I think that if we left without a deal, there would be bumps in the road and that some of those bumps could be quite jarring, and we should be honest and open about that. However, I do not think we should try to frighten people. I do not think we should try to tell people that they were stupid. I do not think we should try to tell them that they did not know what they were doing. I do not think we should try to tell them that they did not have informed consent, or that they were too stupid in 2016 to know which way to vote.

I think that people had made up their minds about the European Union over many years and that they knew exactly what they were concerned about. When the question was put to them, they made their decision, and I strongly suspect that if they were asked again, they would make the same decision. They would say, “The establishment are not listening to us, so we will tell them again”—and they would. Worse than that, they would say, “To reverse the decision and turn our country around by 180 degrees would make our country a laughing stock across the world.” That is why I think that in a second referendum people would vote to leave by an even greater majority.

The real travesty is this. Were we to hold a second referendum, we would have endless Brexit, endless uncertainty. The key message that my constituents convey to me every day is, “Look, deal or no deal, let us just get on with it, put it in place, move on to the other things that concern us—jobs, money, schools, hospitals, and how we can build a better Britain for the future—and stop banging on about Brexit.”

Question put (Standing Order No. 23) and agreed to. [Interruption.]

Mr Speaker: I wish the right hon. Member for Rayleigh and Wickford (Mr Francois) well in recovering from his indisposition.

Ordered,

That Dr Sarah Wollaston, Mr Kenneth Clarke, Hilary Benn, Joanna Cherry, Mr Dominic Grieve, Luciana Berger, Anna Soubry, Chuka Umunna, Dr Philip Lee, Heidi Allen, Mr Ben Bradshaw and Guto Bebb present the Bill.

Dr Sarah Wollaston accordingly presented the Bill.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed (Bill 328).

Crime (Overseas Production Orders) Bill [Lords]

Consideration of Bill, as amended in the Public Bill Committee

New Clause 1

DESIGNATION OF INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS FOR PURPOSES OF SECTION 52 OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT 2016

‘(1) Section 52 of the Investigatory Powers Act 2016 (interception of communications in accordance with overseas requests) is amended as follows.

(2) In subsection (3), at the end insert “(see further subsections (6) and (7))”.

(3) After subsection (5) insert—

“(6) Subsection (7) applies where an international agreement provides for requests for the interception of a communication to be made by the competent authorities of a country or territory, or of more than one country or territory, in which a person found guilty of a criminal offence may be sentenced to death for the offence under the general criminal law of the country or territory concerned.

Such an offence is referred to in subsection (7) as a “death penalty offence”.

(7) Where this subsection applies, the Secretary of State may not designate the agreement as a relevant international agreement unless the Secretary of State has sought, in respect of each country or territory referred to in subsection (6), a written assurance, or written assurances, relating to the non-use of information obtained by virtue of the agreement in connection with proceedings for a death penalty offence in the country or territory.’—(*Mr Wallace*.)

This new clause amends section 52 of the Investigatory Powers Act 2016 to set out the assurances that must be sought before the Secretary of State may designate, for the purposes of that section, an international agreement that provides for the making of interception requests by countries or territories which have the death penalty.

Brought up, and read the First time.

2.7 pm

The Minister for Security and Economic Crime (Mr Ben Wallace): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following:

Amendment 1, in clause 1, page 1, line 19, at end insert—

‘(4A) The Secretary of State may not make regulations designating an international co-operation agreement providing for the use of—

- (a) section 52 of the Investigatory Powers Act 2016 (interception in accordance with overseas requests), or
- (b) any other enactment which provides for the collection of electronic data,

unless the condition in subsection 4B is met.

(4B) The condition is that the states party to or participating in the international cooperation agreement have given assurances that the death penalty will not be imposed in any case in which or in whose preparation the intercepted communication or electronic data obtained under this Act has been used.’

This amendment would prohibit the Government from entering into a treaty for the provision of intercepted communication or electronic data without securing assurances that the death penalty will not be imposed in cases where that data is used.

Amendment 12, page 1, line 19, at end insert—

‘(4A) The Secretary of State may not make regulations designating a treaty as an international co-operation arrangement under subsection (5)(b) where that treaty provides for requests to be made by the competent authorities of a country or territory, or of more than one country or territory, in which a person found guilty of a criminal offence may be sentenced to death for the offence under the general criminal law of the country or territory concerned.

(4B) Subsection (4A) does not apply if the country or territory has, within the international co-operation arrangement, given assurances that the death penalty will not be imposed in any case in which or in whose preparation electronic data obtained under this Act has been used.’

This amendment would require that assurances be secured from the foreign country or territory concerned that the death penalty will not be applied in respect of any offence for which a defendant has been found guilty and in which the information provided from the United Kingdom contributed in any way to securing.

Amendment 18, page 2, line 3, at end insert—

‘(5A) The Secretary of State may only make regulations designating an international agreement under subsection (5) where that agreement—

- (a) provides for safeguards and special procedures in respect of applications by competent authorities of a country or territory other than the United Kingdom for orders in respect of journalistic data and confidential journalistic data that are equivalent to those in this Act, and
- (b) provides for at least as much protection for freedom of expression and the protection of journalists’ rights sources as Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights and section 10 of the Contempt of Court Act 1981.’

This would amendment would seek to ensure that the terms on which other states may access electronic data held in the UK mirror the UK’s own safeguards for press freedom.

Amendment 10, in clause 3, page 3, line 40, at end insert “, or

- (c) confidential journalistic data (within meaning of section 12(4)).”

This amendment would bring confidential journalistic data within the definition of “excepted electronic data”.

Amendment 14, in clause 4, page 4, line 39, leave out “(6)” and insert “(6A)”

This amendment is consequential on Amendment 13.

Government amendment 2.

Amendment 13, page 5, line 26, at end insert—

‘(6A) Where an application for an order includes or consists of journalistic data, the judge must also be satisfied—

- (a) that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the specified data is likely to be relevant evidence;
- (b) that accessing the data is in the public interest, having regard—
 - (i) to the benefit likely to accrue to the investigation if the data is obtained; and
 - (ii) to the circumstances under which the person is possession of the data holds it,
- (c) that other methods of obtaining the data have been tried without success or have not been tried because it appeared that they were bound to fail.’

This amendment would require a judge to be satisfied that journalistic data which is the subject of an application for an order constitutes relevant evidence.

Government amendment 3.

Amendment 15, page 6, line 9, after “section” insert—

“relevant evidence”, in relation to an offence, means anything that would be admissible in evidence at a trial for the offence.’

This amendment is consequential on Amendment 13.

[Mr Speaker]

Government amendments 4 to 6 and 19.

Amendment 16, in clause 12, page 10, line 11, leave out

“that is confidential journalistic data”

This amendment would require notice to be given of an application for an overseas production order for electronic data which is believed to contain any journalistic data, not just confidential journalistic data.

Amendment 17, page 10, line 12, at end insert—

‘(1A) Where an application is for journalistic data, the court must not determine such an application in the absence of the journalist affected, unless—

- (a) the journalist has had at least two business days in which to make representations; or
- (b) the court is satisfied that—
 - (i) the applicant cannot identify or contact the journalist,
 - (ii) it would prejudice the investigation if the journalist were present,
 - (iii) it would prejudice the investigation to adjourn or postpone the application so as to allow the journalist to attend, or
 - (iv) the journalist has waived the opportunity to attend.’

This amendment would give a journalist opportunities to make representations in relation to any application for data which he or she may hold.

Government amendment 20.

Amendment 9, page 10, line 20, leave out subsection (4) and insert—

‘(4) Confidential journalistic data” means data—

- (a) that a journalist holds that is subject to such an undertaking, restriction or obligation; and
- (b) that has been continuously held (by one or more persons) subject to such an undertaking, restriction or obligation since it was first acquired or created for the purposes of journalism.’

This amendment would redefine confidential journalistic data for the purposes of the Bill.

Amendment 11, page 10, line 20, leave out subsection (4) and insert—

‘(4) Journalistic data is “confidential journalistic data” if—

- (a) it is acquired or created by a person or persons in their capacity as a journalist and is held in confidence, or
- (b) it is communications data of a person acting in their capacity as a journalist, or
- (c) it is held subject to a restriction on disclosure, or an obligation of secrecy, contained in any enactment (whenever passed or made).’

This amendment would amend the definition of confidential journalistic data.

Government amendments 21 to 23, 7 and 8.

Mr Wallace: May I begin by making a slight apology to the House? As the amendments have been grouped together, my speech will be in a single block, so I ask Members to be patient.

Let me begin by addressing amendments 12, 1 and 24. I recognise that amendment 24 has not been selected, but I am happy to deal with it, because it was tabled.

Throughout the progress of this Bill, as with others that I have piloted through the House, I have been keen to reach a consensus. Labour Front Benchers, as well as members of the Scottish National party, will know that I have often been open to their ideas, and that in the case of a number of Bills—such as the Counter-Terrorism

and Border Security Bill and indeed this Bill—I have taken their ideas on board and put them into law. I have done so not only because I truly care about keeping our citizens safe, but because I know that our laws work best when they do what they set out to do and are supported by the broadest consensus of the public.

The House of Commons cannot ignore the times in which we live. In the last decade, we have become more and more dependent on the internet and smartphones. In fact, 78% of people and 95% of 16 to 24-year-olds now possess a smartphone. Such technology can be a force for good, but it has also become an accelerant to those who wish us harm. Whether we are talking about county lines, terrorism or child abuse, smartphones have opened up a whole world of encrypted communications which I believe presents the biggest single challenge to our police and to law enforcement.

As Security Minister, I recall many occasions on which I was woken to deal with security issues. I remember being woken on the night of the Manchester Arena bombing, and I remember hearing the chilling news that a nerve agent had been used on the streets of Salisbury. But the day that I remember above all from the last two and a half years was the day of my visit to a regional and organised crime unit, where I had to listen, via an online chatroom, to a paedophile plot to kidnap, rape and kill a seven-year-old girl, about the same age as my daughter. If that was not sickening enough, I could sense the frustration of detectives who needed data from overseas to stop the abuse being committed, because in case after case timing is everything in these investigations.

So when the US Government, supported by Senators in the House of Congress, offered to help to solve this problem we grabbed at the chance. The House should recognise what they have offered: they have offered to remove legal barriers in the US to enable compliance with UK court orders. The Americans recognised, as we do, that the vast majority of data that we need for our investigations reside on the other side of the Atlantic—Google, Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, to name but a few. In fact, 99% of data that we need for child abuse investigations resides overseas and only 1% resides here.

These stark figures say two things to me. First, the reality is that we need the US data far more than they need ours. That was true before Donald Trump and it will be true after Donald Trump. Secondly, in this case, the US is doing us a favour. The Bill before us is the legislation required to give effect to a future US treaty and any other treaty we may make with another country in future, for example, Canada, so we can access that data much more quickly than we do now. These treaties will come before us separately, to this House and the peers House, at a different time, and Members will be able to scrutinise and challenge them at that point.

Let me deal directly with the Labour amendments. During the Bill’s passage in the Lords the Labour party attached to this Bill an amendment that would prevent the UK from making the necessary treaty with the US unless it got assurances that data sent across the Atlantic would not lead to the death penalty. This Bill allows enforcement agencies to access content directly from communications service providers based overseas using an overseas production order. These orders can only

work when a relevant international agreement, such as a treaty, is in place between the UK and another country and as the majority of the CSPs, as I said, are based in America we expect the first such agreement to be with the United States. Both amendments 1 and 12 attempt to amend the Bill and reinsert the Lords amendments.

First, and bearing in mind how little data we hold here, having looked back over 20 years, we have not been able to find a single case whatsoever where only the data that the Bill deals with would have led to a death penalty overseas. Secondly, this is about data, not people. Extradition from the UK is dealt with by separate legislation and Her Majesty's Government are already prevented from handing over someone without death penalty assurances. Thirdly, this Bill is about our data requests overseas in order to bring data back here for investigations and when I last looked we do not have the death penalty in this country. So to try to use the Bill as a vehicle to deal with a treaty as yet not concluded is simply wrong.

Throughout the passage of the Bill, I have been clear that the US has been generous in its offer. I have also admitted on the record that on this subject we do not have equality of arms with the US. This is not about a fantasy that we are bowing to the US. I noticed the allegations that the right hon. Member for Hackney North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott) made in her column in the *Daily Mirror* recently saying that this was all about cosying up to Donald Trump, that the Labour party amendment

"simply blocks data sharing co-operation with all countries if the death penalty is a risk",
and that the

"reason Ministers seem to be so keen to tear up our laws and ignore our human rights is because they are in a terrible mess in refusing to rule out a No Deal Brexit."

Of course, nowhere does her op-ed address the central allegation that her blocking data will mean child abusers will be free to continue abuse of children for longer because we simply will not be able to get the data that we want. And perhaps I could put her mind at rest: the US offer on this treaty was initiated not under President Donald Trump, but under President Obama. This is about the reality and the decisions we need to make to put our citizens' safety first. Members should understand that the current drawn-out methods of getting data can take months and years.

2.15 pm

Nick Thomas-Symonds (Torfaen) (Lab): As the Security Minister well knows, we have been working constructively on this Bill and I will not be opposing it on Third Reading irrespective of the outcome of various votes, but it is correct to say that, in the case in the summer in respect of which the High Court has just issued its judgment, the American embassy told the Government, when they failed incidentally to seek assurances at all, that if they asked:

"At worst, they will wind the president up to complain to the P.M."—

the Prime Minister—

"and, potentially, to hold a grudge."

The Foreign Office's strong advice was to seek a death penalty assurance, so why on earth did they not do so if it was not for fear of the American President's reaction?

Mr Wallace: The hon. Gentleman offers an incredibly selective quote from the ruling in the High Court by the Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales that found in favour of the Government on that case on all five counts. Every single count and every single challenge by Liberty and its glitterati up in the House of Lords failed at that test. The hon. Gentleman has also not answered the central charge, which is that to jeopardise this legislation and the treaty puts at risk children, because our law enforcement officers will not get the data in a timely fashion. Is he happy to accept that that delay should be maintained for the sake of a theoretical, never-happened occasion in the future?

Nick Thomas-Symonds: I am in favour of speeding up the data exchange. Under the mutual legal assistance treaty, since 1994 the seeking and securing of assurances has been commonplace. I take this from the High Court judgment. Ministers did not even bother to ask for assurances in the summer, so I am not confident that they have been as robust as they should be in their negotiations with the United States. There is no point in saying there is not equality of arms in this treaty. What if the Minister says that about a trade deal with the US—are we going to be allowing, then, US companies to come and take our NHS? The Minister should stand up for this principle.

Mr Wallace: I am going to stand up for the security of our citizens and a responsible Government have to balance abstract, theoretical, minute probabilities with keeping our constituents safe. Perhaps I should remind the hon. Gentleman of what we found in one of the cases. It is not related to this data, As I have clearly said, this Bill produces not a single example in the last 20 years, but under the MLAT process in the past no assurances have been sought and indeed the Government of the day indicated there was potentially a death penalty. It was a Labour Government who did not seek the assurances and did transfer the data. What does that mean? It means a responsible Government know the balance between keeping our citizens safe and making sure they comply with our international obligations. Members on the Opposition Benches have managed to do that in the past and I hope they do it again.

I have been absolutely clear. The hon. Gentleman may say he would do a better job in the negotiations if Labour was in power but, as I pointed out, we do not have equality of arms. Our negotiating position is this: there is 1% of data here versus about 90% of data there, which means our leverage is minuscule when it comes to demanding strings attached of the United States.

Ann Coffey (Stockport) (Lab): Does the Minister agree that this should not be a point of political division in this House? It is the overwhelming priority of Parliament to protect children who are being raped, abused and exploited, and data sharing is very important. One of the barriers to protecting children has been getting data to identify people who are doing this. We want to prevent the exploitation of children and to do that we need to identify those who would exploit them. Does the Minister agree that this should be the issue, not views about Donald Trump or otherwise?

Mr Wallace: I totally agree. The hon. Lady will have heard the example I had to listen to. That was a sobering and scary experience. It is an experience that our law

[Mr Wallace]

enforcement officers hear every single day and it is our duty to find a balance. I wish we had our own Google. I wish that all my constituents' data were held in the United Kingdom so we would have more control over it. But the fact is we live in the world we do. That is the tragedy and it makes us have to make deals that might not always be, as we would wish, perfect. But in this case, I am concerned, like her, that what must come first is the children's needs and dealing with terrorists, illicit finance and all the oligarchs we worry about—and Labour Front Benchers also worry about—and how we are going to get them. Until we can crack that data map, this is something that is important.

Mr Chris Leslie (Nottingham East) (Lab/Co-op): The Minister is making an important case for the provisions in the Bill, and I agree that we have to have this data sharing. We have to speed this up and get on with it. His new clause 1 looks like a pretty reasonable compromise to provide the necessary reassurances. It looks fairly complete to me, and I can see no reason why the House would not unanimously agree to it.

Mr Wallace: The hon. Gentleman is right. Further amendments that we have tabled provide for concessions to protect journalistic data. I have taken on board these points from Members on both sides of the House. Throughout the Bill, I have met many Opposition colleagues, including my shadow, the hon. Member for Torfaen (Nick Thomas-Symonds), on numerous occasions, and we have offered concessions that have never been offered before. One of them will put in primary legislation a mandate for the Secretary of State to seek assurances. In my view, we cannot go beyond that and force them to get those assurances, because a responsible Government might not have the upper hand at the time or have the leverage to do that, but the necessity for security is important.

This will be the first time that that has been put in primary legislation. It will put in place a policy that existed in loose form under the last Labour Government, when, in exceptional circumstances, Ministers were allowed not to seek assurances. The overseas security and justice assistance—OSJA—guidance was published in 2010 by the coalition Government, of which I think the right hon. Member for Kingston and Surbiton (Sir Edward Davey) was a member. That put in writing part 9. There are occasions on which we might be allowed not to seek a death penalty assurance, but I do not want that to become the dominant force. As I have said, we have not found a single example in the past 20 years that produced this challenge or quandary for a Minister. This is simply about comms content data; that is all it is about.

Sir Edward Davey (Kingston and Surbiton) (LD): I hope the Minister recognises that all Members on both sides of the House want to find ways of sharing data so that we can go after these wicked people who abuse children. Will he therefore tell us what efforts have been made, in discussions with our American friends, to find a treaty that deals with those crimes and others but stops short of those crimes that could result in the death penalty? What efforts have been made to carve out those crimes so that they could be dealt with in a second treaty?

Mr Wallace: I have personally asked them to look at carve-outs in that area, and I know that officials are still working on the drafts. This is my point: the treaty will come before the House when it is still in its draft stage. I have not read the draft as it stands; it is too early. This is not going to appear next Tuesday as a treaty. We will try to maintain as much as we can in the treaty, but we must recognise the leverage that we have, the generosity of the Obama Administration's original offer and the need of our law enforcement agencies to get on with these investigations as soon as possible.

Sir Edward Davey *rose*—

Mr Wallace: I will press on, because I want to give the House an example. An operation commenced in August 2017 in which there were indications that a UK male suspect was using Facebook, Instagram, Gmail and Snapchat for the purpose of committing child sex offences. On the male suspect's Facebook profile, he purports to be a teenage girl requesting friendship with teenage boys. He then engages them in sexual communication, asking them to send indecent images and/or videos of themselves committing sexual acts. The suspect sent indecent images of females sourced from the internet as bait to lure his victims into believing that they were communicating with and sharing indecent images with a teenage girl. The investigation has identified several individual Facebook accounts where indecent images of children have been sent to the user of the suspect Facebook account. Those individual accounts all belong to children.

The value of data evidence is apparent, because in that operation, the data has helped to identify in excess of 150 vulnerable child victims and enabled law enforcement to safeguard the children. However, the law enforcement agencies are still awaiting the authorisation from a judge in a US court to release the content that would enable us to prosecute and put away the individual who is doing this. Consequently, that individual is still at large. We have safeguarded the victims we know of, but our ability to charge and prosecute that person is being frustrated. We should not forget that a great deal of data is held for only 12 months, and some of the MLAT cases go on for two years or more. Not taking up the US's offer would mean shutting the door on our police's ability to stop abuse more quickly and to detect terror plots before they reach fruition.

Sir Edward Davey: I repeat that the case the Minister is making is supported on both sides of the House. I very much doubt that there will be a Division on Third Reading—certainly we on these Benches will be supporting the Bill at that time—so he does not need to make this case, because we all support him. The issue of this debate on new clause 1 and other alternatives is whether we can achieve the goals on which we all agree while also finding a way to implement existing Government policy on death penalty assurances. The Minister is recognised for working across the House—that is why he is held in such high regard—but it is our right to scrutinise legislation in this place, and in this debate we want to tease out whether we can find a way, through the treaties or through the Bill, to get those death penalty assurances that I am sure he also wants.

Mr Wallace: I understand what the right hon. Gentleman is saying, and I do not question his heartfelt desire to ensure that we keep people safe, but actions have consequences. He does not have to believe me when I say this, but the United States has indicated to the Government that if we attach strings to the treaty in the way that the Lords amendment would, the treaty will not progress. He does not have to believe me; he does not have to believe the United States; he can decide whether he thinks the United States will change its position or not, but let me tell him my reading of it. I have met representatives from the US Department of Justice, along with my officials and representatives from our embassy, and looked at the political situation in the Senate—I live in the real world; that is not necessarily how I would vote—and I am living with the challenge of balancing those realities, as any hon. Member would do. If these amendments, including that of the right hon. Gentleman, go through, they will jeopardise the treaty. I have set out clearly what the consequence would be if the treaty were jeopardised, and no amount of “I wish it wasn’t” will change that simple fact.

John Woodcock (Barrow and Furness) (Ind): Are we not in danger of believing that there is a false choice between upholding the UK’s international obligations and taking action to secure this treaty? Will the UK not be obliged to follow its treaty obligations, including those under protocol 12 of the European convention on human rights, without needing to follow one of the wrecking amendments tabled by the Opposition parties and making the treaty that we apparently all want impossible to achieve?

Mr Wallace: Yes, and in answer to the amendment that was tabled but not selected, Ministers are obliged to act in accordance with our ECHR obligations. Throughout this process, we have a legal duty under the Human Rights Act 1998 to act compatibly with convention rights, including article 1 of the 13th protocol, which was incorporated in schedule 1 to the Human Rights Acts 1998 through the Human Rights Act (Amendment) Order 2004. Were Ministers to act unlawfully in making subordinate legislation under subsection 5(b) that was incompatible with the convention rights, it would be open to the courts to strike down that legislation by applying ordinary public law principles.

Mr Dominic Grieve (Beaconsfield) (Con): First, I want to confirm what my right hon. Friend has said. This treaty being negotiated with United States has taken a long time to achieve. I remember being connected with it when I was Attorney General, and raising the matter subsequently on visits to the United States when I was Chairman of the Intelligence and Security Committee. It is quite apparent that the treaty is essential to prevent crime in this country. It is equally clear that attaching the proposed strings to it would destroy it; I have no doubt about that at all. I also endorse the point that the European convention on human rights has to govern everything that we do. In my view, in regard to the sort of data we are seeking to access and share for the purpose of fighting crime, the issue of whether the death penalty might result from an eventual criminal proceeding, which would be speculative at that stage, is entirely irrelevant.

2.30 pm

Mr Wallace: My right hon. and learned Friend, whom I have known a long time, is the straightest politician in this House and always has the best motives. He is also the lawyer that one would want at one’s side in government, because he tells it how it is, not how one wants it to be. I thank him for his point. He knows how far back this effort goes. This Bill is not a political charge or an ideological step. In fact, without this amendment, it is probably one of the most boring Bills that we have taken through the House, but it is not a playground for ideological posturing on a theoretical issue.

There is a clear choice here: take up the offer from the United States, reject the amendment and help to keep our constituents safe, or agree with the right hon. Member for Hackney North and Stoke Newington who believes that this matter is a problem even though there are no examples from the past 20 years. She believes that we should say no to the US offer and put the whole thing at risk because our tiny amount of data could be combined with a criminal investigation overseas, when the crime is a capital offence and the offender is in a country or US state that has the death penalty, and our data alone could be the crucial piece of evidence that leads to a conviction. If ever there was an example of politics getting in the way for the most bizarre and abstract reason, it is here.

Sir Edward Davey *rose*—

Mr Wallace: I will come to the right hon. Gentleman. All the amendments are grouped, so we have plenty of time.

Having said that, I have to apologise to the right hon. Member for Hackney North and Stoke Newington and to the Leader of the Opposition. In her column, the right hon. Lady said that I attacked her personally by criticising what was going on. I apologise that I did so, but I did so because I meant it. That is not the Labour party that I know. I have family in the Labour party. I have a relation who was a Labour MP in the 1930s and, if I remember correctly, the first socialist Lord Advocate in Scotland. The Labour party that I know would not play this type of politics with our constituents. A Labour party led by pretty much any other Labour Member would never have indulged in this type of nonsense.

The Labour party that I know in Lancashire, in the north of England and in Scotland keeps people safe and recognises the responsibility that goes with governing and that there is a balance. It is a truly difficult balance, which people of the best motives make every single day, between upholding values and keeping people safe. That is why I apologise that I had to make that attack, but I made it all the same. It is incredibly important that a Government in waiting should be led by people who recognise that their duty in government will be to make difficult decisions and to reflect the reality of the 21st century, not some abstract theoretical nonsense that panders to a few.

Nick Thomas-Symonds: I regret the Minister’s tone in places, because it is clear that we have worked together on this Bill and that the Opposition are in favour of it. Let me be clear about the difference here. The Minister is essentially saying that he is happy to be mandated to secure death penalty assurances. Labour’s amendment

[Nick Thomas-Symonds]

simply sets out that in the event that assurances are sought but not obtained, the data should not be handed over. As he says, the change will affect a tiny amount of cases, but nobody is disputing the need to speed up the MLAT process to obtain the data. That is exactly what the difference is.

Mr Wallace: No. The Labour Front-Bench team are saying that if we do not get what they want, we should block the treaty. The condition from the United States or any other country could be, “Look, I’m terribly sorry, but we have 90% of the data and you have 1%, so here’s our offer and this is the reality of it.” Labour is saying, “If they do not give us the assurances we want”—they go beyond the OSJA guidance and beyond the public policy of this Government and the previous Government—“the treaty will not be completed.” I am here to say that the treaty will not be concluded if those strings are attached in that way. That is the simple reality.

The consequences of that, as I have pointed out, will be felt in our constituencies up and down the country and will also be felt should the Labour Front-Bench team become the Government in a few years’ time. The people could be facing an existential threat to their security, and that Labour Government would have to make these same difficult decisions. We have worked incredibly well together on this Bill, but this issue cannot be removed into some abstract debate when this is about giving our law enforcement agencies the tools to do their job on a day-to-day basis.

Sir Edward Davey: The Minister is being generous in giving way. I repeat that, as he knows, both sides of the House want exactly what he has just described. However, this House’s job is to scrutinise and ensure that legislation is being done in the right way so that other parts of Government policy are also upheld. He said in response to the right hon. and learned Member for Beaconsfield (Mr Grieve), a former Attorney General, that we should not worry about this because ECHR obligations, which he read out in some detail, would prevent Ministers from not complying with this policy. Will the Minister elaborate on that for the benefit the House? When the Home Secretary recently did not seek death penalty assurances, was that decision in line with our convention obligations?

Mr Wallace: I refer the right hon. Gentleman to the rulings by the High Court and the Lord Chief Justice. On five of the grounds for challenge from the plaintiff—if that is the right word in a civil challenge—the rulings found in favour of the Government. I am happy to have a conversation with him about that further if he reads the whole judgment, but it was certainly the case that the OSJA guidance and other things were not found to be in conflict with our ECHR obligations or any other obligation. If my memory serves me right, it was also found that we were not breaking our own Government policy on the matter. I caution the House that we do not know whether that judgment will be appealed, but a hearing related to it is ongoing. The case does not relate to data; it is about broader evidence that would remain through the MLAT process. As I pointed out earlier, extradition is a separate process. This legislation is

about the data predominantly held by Facebook and Google and everything else, and it is so much part of the 21st century that we cannot escape the impact that it has on us.

Turning to amendment 18, I recall the hon. Member for Torfaen tabling something similar in Committee, and I am afraid that I am going to make the same arguments in response. Amendment 18 seeks to ensure that terms on which other states may access electronic data held in the UK mirror the UK’s own safeguards for press freedom. Forgive me, because I know that I have made this point countless times, but this amendment relates to incoming requests for UK-held data when this Bill is only about the UK’s outgoing requests for electronic data held overseas.

I completely accept the point that this Bill cannot work without a reciprocal international agreement in place, but amendment 18 directly relates to international agreements, as opposed to what our Bill provides for. This Bill is simply not the right place to mandate what is a right and laudable protection for journalists and their data. We cannot impose such conditions in advance of the negotiations of an international agreement. It is not a constructive proposition to tie our hands. I say to Opposition Members that I hear the case for change and that the United States’ first amendment is probably one of the strongest journalistic protections, so that would no doubt be reflected in a treaty. Of course, the UK would never agree to share data with a country with insufficient safeguards, but to mandate that on the face of this Bill is neither helpful nor necessary. Amendment 18 seeks to control the UK Government’s negotiating position, which would not prove desirable to any Government of the day.

Another point that I make repeatedly is to remind hon. Members that they will get ample opportunity to scrutinise any international agreement when the agreement is brought before Parliament, before it can be ratified under the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 process, and then again when secondary legislation is laid before Parliament designating the agreement for the purposes of clause 1 and under section 52 of the Investigatory Powers Act 2016. The Government amended the Bill in the other place to make it clear that only agreements to which the CRAG process applies may be designated under the Bill, so that scrutiny process must be followed in every case. Members will get the opportunity to scrutinise all international agreements related to this Bill properly before they are ratified.

I have two other brief points. First, the initial international agreement will be with the United States, as the majority of overseas CSPs are currently based there. As hon. Members will know, the US places a high regard on protecting freedom of speech and freedom of the press. Indeed, it is enshrined in the first amendment to their constitution.

Secondly, any additional international agreement that the UK enters into in future will, of course, be based on trust, mutual respect and each country’s adherence to principles that include the rule of law, due process and judicial oversight for obtaining and handling electronic evidence with regards to serious crime. No rational Government of the day would do a deal with a country that lacked regard for the rule of law or that failed to maintain press freedom. If a CSP moved to a country with insufficient legal safeguards, I would not push the

Government of the day in any way to negotiate such an agreement, and I highly doubt that Parliament would ratify such a treaty.

This Bill is not the right place for the proposals raised by amendment 18. The amendment is not necessary for the reasons I have outlined, and therefore the Government will not support it. I ask the hon. Member for Torfaen not to press it.

Amendment 10 seeks to make confidential journalistic data an excepted category of material for overseas production orders, meaning that it cannot be sought using the Bill's powers. Amendments 9 and 11 seek to define confidential journalistic data for the purposes of the Bill. Members have previously raised concerns about confidential journalistic data under the Bill, and I do not want to pre-empt our debate on other protections for journalists, which will come later, but the Government's concessions in this area are appropriate and proportionate. I do not think it is right that confidential journalistic data should be entirely outside the reach of law enforcement agencies.

As with the amendment tabled in Committee, amendment 10 goes further than what is currently provided for under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. Although confidential journalistic material is excluded under PACE, it is accessible if certain access conditions are met.

I repeat the point I made previously. The Bill has not been drafted to mirror PACE exactly. It also takes into account provisions of the Terrorism Act 2000 and the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002. The whole point of the Bill is to speed up the unnecessarily long, drawn-out process that law enforcement agencies currently endure to get access to material to help keep our constituents safe. Of course, this in no way undermines the stringent tests that must be passed for an order to be granted in a court by a judge. The substantial value test and the public interest test will both have to be satisfied, and I will shortly come on to the further inclusion of a relevant evidence test.

Amendment 11 would carve out journalists' communications data so that it cannot be accessed under the powers of the Bill. Such an amendment is not necessary, because clause 3(4) already precludes the possibility of obtaining communications data via an overseas production order. Where an overseas production order is sought against a telecommunications operator, the Bill will apply as if references to excepted electronic data included communications data.

The Bill has been deliberately drafted so as to avoid overlap with the existing regime for communications data under the Investigatory Powers Act 2016. Should law enforcement agencies wish to obtain any form of communications data, journalistic or otherwise, they will need to proceed using existing legislation to obtain it. To be clear, this Bill does not allow for the acquisition of communications data.

I agree entirely with the hon. Gentleman that journalists play a fundamental role in our society, but amendments 9 to 11 are not appropriate. This Bill will ensure that all journalists are part of the process of applying for an overseas production order when the material sought relates to them from the outset. Uniquely, they will be able to make representations to the court. I am confident that journalists will continue to be able to make a robust defence if they believe that is relevant.

Indeed, when working with the BBC on this legislation, one lawyer told my officials that not once in 10 years could he recall a court having overruled such representations. It is important that legislation drafted in the 21st century reflects the context of the day. The nature of journalism is evolving, and law enforcement officers must be able to adapt to those changes. I therefore ask the hon. Gentleman not to press amendments 9 to 11.

In Committee, colleagues including the hon. Members for Torfaen and for Paisley and Renfrewshire North (Gavin Newlands) and my hon. Friend the Member for Bexhill and Battle (Huw Merriman) expressed concern that the tests in clause 4 do not fully replicate the tests under schedule 1 to PACE, under which there is a relevant evidence test as well as a substantial value test and a public interest test, whereas the Bill currently includes only the substantial value and public interest tests. The Bill does not contain the relevant evidence test. As I explained in Committee, the Bill replicates the production orders not only under PACE but under POCA and the Terrorism Act. Neither POCA nor the Terrorism Act requires the relevant evidence test when seeking evidence in relation to the proceeds of crime, as our law enforcement agencies will do with overseas production orders. Nevertheless, I promise to go away and consider the issues.

2.45 pm

My officials have discussed the issues with operational partners, and their feedback is that a relevant evidence test would have neither a preventive effect nor a negative effect on their operation. I will therefore include a relevant evidence test in the Bill, and Government amendments 2 and 3 are sufficient in that respect and render amendments 13 to 15 unnecessary. I trust that introducing a relevant evidence test will satisfy the concerns of hon. Members.

Amendments 4 to 7 will ensure that the Bill is subject to and consistent with the existing data protection framework. I am sure hon. Members will welcome that clarification. It is also the Government's intention to ensure that the provisions of the Bill involving the use of personal data be read in conjunction with and remain subject to our existing data protection framework. These amendments will therefore avoid any confusion in how those measures are interpreted.

Under amendment 7, clause 17 will make it clear that references to data protection legislation have the same meaning as the definition in section 3 of the Data Protection Act 2018, which includes the general data protection regulation, the 2018 Act and any regulations made under it. Members may recall that part 3 of the 2018 Act includes specific rules for the processing of data for criminal law enforcement purposes and implements the law enforcement directive.

In practice, the amendments to clause 6 clarify that a communications service provider against whom an overseas production order is made is under no obligation—taking into account the existence of the order—to comply in any way that would contravene the requirements of the data protection legislation, as defined in the 2018 Act. The amendments also clarify that, where UK law enforcement agencies receive electronic data from a communications service provider following a court-approved order, they must process the data in accordance with part 3 of the 2018 Act. That responds to important

questions about clause 10 raised by peers during the Bill's passage in the other place. I hope my clarification of those points will be welcomed by hon. Members and will reassure peers. I therefore ask hon. Members to accept and support these clarifying amendments.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Bexhill and Battle for his contributions in Committee on the protection of journalists under the Bill. He performs an important role as chair of the all-party BBC group, and in that capacity he has played a valuable role in discussions on the provisions relating to journalistic data. I listened carefully to his arguments and to the arguments of other hon. Members on both sides of the House.

I agree that the Bill should include appropriate safeguards for legitimate journalism, and I have listened carefully to the arguments as to what form those safeguards should take, while preventing those who might falsely pose as a journalist from hiding behind protections to which they are not entitled. The Government therefore tabled amendments 19 to 23, which my hon. Friend suggested, to ensure that, when journalistic data is sought, the journalist is notified of the application. This will give journalists and media outlets the opportunity, should they want to, to make representations to the court about whether an application for an overseas production order should be granted. That was always the Government's intention, but our proposal was that the process be provided for in the criminal procedure rules—the relevant rules of court for production orders. Amendments 19 to 23 will now make these notice requirements explicit in the Bill so that there can be no doubt about the requirement to notify journalists of a relevant application.

Huw Merriman (Bexhill and Battle) (Con): I thank the Minister for listening to those representations. As he says, I declare an interest as chairman of the all-party BBC group.

The representations from the BBC show that the amendments will make the Bill completely consistent with the provisions under PACE and will help the administration of justice, as they may mean that many applications do not need to be spoken against. I am incredibly grateful to the Minister for listening to us, for working very closely with all of us and for filtering in our ideas.

Mr Wallace: I am incredibly grateful to my hon. Friend for that. I am not a journalist by background; I think he is—

Huw Merriman: I'm a lawyer.

Mr Wallace: A lawyer—oh.

All Members have raised the importance of protecting journalistic freedom, and I think we have struck the right balance between not excluding their material entirely—because I do not believe that anyone should be above the law, no matter what their profession—and giving them notice that other people would not be given, to allow them to make representations. All the way through this process, even in considering the controversial part of the Bill, we should not forget that this is done before a judge. It is not done between officials in two Administrations: these orders will be applied for in front of a court and granted by a judge. It will be for the law enforcement agencies to satisfy the

range of tests and for journalists to make their representations. That will safeguard the process while at the same ensuring that we get data if it is needed to keep us safe.

Huw Merriman: I should point out that unlike the Opposition amendment—I think the shadow Front-Bench team largely supported the same change—the amendment that I tabled was realistic about the point that if the journalist could not be contacted, that would not mean that we would end the process. Ultimately, what is important is the protection of victims of appalling offences. My amendment will make sure that we strike that balance between the protection of journalists and the protection of victims, which is at the core of this excellent Bill.

Mr Wallace: Yes, my hon. Friend makes a true point. We have put in a carve-out for some very urgent situations, including if there is a threat to life or, indeed, if the journalist is impossible to track down and may in fact be a front for a foreign state, for example, in a fake news scenario or something else. All Members have had genuine views and made their points well. I am happy to accept my hon. Friend's amendment, but there were many good parts of the amendments tabled by the Labour party, too. This is not a party political point. The exemptions get the right balance and we will be able to protect journalists, so I hope I will have the support of the whole House in asking that the relevant amendments not be pressed.

Before I finish, I should apologise for the length of my opening address. There were originally two groups of amendments, but that was changed to one group, so I needed to deal with everyone's amendments in one go.

I think we have struck the right balance. The Bill reflects some of the day-to-day challenges that we face in keeping us safe. I urge Members not to support amendments 12 and 18, and some of the others tabled by the Opposition Front-Bench team. As I indicated at the start, throughout the passage of this Bill and other Bills, I have accepted a number of amendments from Government and Opposition Members. That is the spirit in which I have tried to conclude the passage of this Bill, and in which I hope to do so.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): Order. Before we continue with the debate, the House has the exciting prospect of the results of the deferred Divisions.

In respect of the question relating to consumer protection, the Ayes were 309 and the Noes were 268, so the Ayes have it.

In respect of the question relating to financial services and markets, the Ayes were 309 and the Noes were 261, so the Ayes have it.

In respect of the question relating to floods and water, the Ayes were 310 and the Noes were 267, so the Ayes have it.

In respect of the question relating to radioactive substances, the Ayes were 309 and the Noes were 265, so the Ayes have it.

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

Nick Thomas-Symonds: The first thing I should point out is that everyone in the House wants to see a way in which the mutual legal assistance treaty system is speeded. I do not think there is any issue with that in any part of this House. The issues to which I shall come in a moment in essence fall into two categories: first, the issue of death penalty assurances; and secondly, protections for journalistic data.

In respect of the intervention from the hon. Member for Bexhill and Battle (Huw Merriman), he has tabled an amendment that is essentially the same as the one that I pursued in Committee. I do not accept in any sense the difference that he suggests there is between the two. I am pleased that his amendment has been accepted and adopted by the Government.

Huw Merriman: I apologise if I have got this wrong, but my understanding is that the hon. Gentleman's amendment would not have included circumstances in which the journalist could not be traced, whereas the amendment I have tabled takes that into account, meaning that it would not be a blocker. It is in that limited aspect that our amendments differ.

Nick Thomas-Symonds: All I will say is that I had discussions about that amendment and others with the Minister, and they were things on which we were able to compromise. I am trying to assure the hon. Gentleman that the idea that I was trying to do something to scupper the treaty is completely wrong. I am sure he would accept that that was the case, whatever the differences between us on the detail.

Huw Merriman: I absolutely accept that. The hon. Gentleman will know that he and I worked closely throughout the Committee proceedings to make sure that the intent behind what we have now was in the Bill. I give credit to him for that assistance.

Nick Thomas-Symonds: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for acknowledging that.

Let me turn to the issue of death penalty assurances, which has clearly aroused a great deal of controversy, and explain our position. I should say to the Security Minister that I totally accept that new clause 1 is an improvement. The position the Opposition have ended up in today is a procedural one: unfortunately, because new clause 1 is the lead provision in the group and is therefore at the head of the list to be voted on, the only way that the Opposition can secure a vote on our own amendment is by voting against new clause 1. That is just the procedural position we have ended up in, but accept that it is a step forward and make that entirely clear from the Dispatch Box at the outset.

Mr Gavin Shuker (Luton South) (Lab/Co-op): Just to be clear on the procedure, my hon. Friend's direction to Labour MPs will be to vote against new clause 1, although he accepts it to be an improvement; were he successful in stripping out new clause 1 and unsuccessful in passing his own amendment, would that not put us back to a worse position?

Nick Thomas-Symonds: I accept that there is always a danger that when we vote on a number of new clauses and amendments in a row, the order matters and what happens on them matters, as we have seen in recent days. Let me reassure my hon. Friend: what I am trying

to say is that although I do accept that new clause 1, with its duty to seek assurances, is certainly an improvement on the case we had in the summer, when no assurances were sought at all, it does not match the position of the Labour Front-Bench team, which is that if there are circumstances—they will be rare—in which assurances are sought but not given, the data should not be handed over. That is the difference between myself and the Minister. The Minister accepts that we should be getting assurances. That is the difference: new clause 1 is an improvement, but it does not match our position.

Dr Caroline Johnson (Sleaford and North Hykeham) (Con): As a children's doctor, I have looked after a number of children who have been sexually abused, and they have sometimes horrific physical injuries and, as we know, physical and mental scars. The mental scars in particular can last a lifetime. The House is united in wanting to be able to prevent that. Am I misunderstanding the hon. Gentleman when he says that seeking assurances is not adequate, and that if faced with a real situation in which a child is in imminent danger and those assurances cannot be got, that child should remain in danger and in a situation in which he or she is being abused, to avoid the theoretical risk of something that has not happened in 20 years?

Nick Thomas-Symonds: I just do not accept that conception of how this works or, indeed, how the MLAT treaty would work. I am afraid it would not work in the way the hon. Lady suggests. The point I am making is about cases in which assurances were not secured. By the way, I totally agree with the Minister that the United States looms into view because of this treaty, but this is a framework for other treaties with countries all around the world, and the Opposition are simply saying that we should be embedding into it the idea that, in the event that those assurances are not forthcoming from whichever country it is—rare though those circumstances are—the data should not be handed over. It is as simple as that. By the way, that has been the position for decades.

3 pm

Dr Johnson *rose—*

Nick Thomas-Symonds: I will give once more, but then I need to make some progress.

Dr Johnson: Does the hon. Gentleman not accept that, in this situation, which is not perfect, what he is having to do is weigh up the risk of an actual child to whom abuse can clearly be seen to be happening or at risk of happening, with a theoretical possibility, which the Minister has said has not happened in 20 years, and that such evidence can potentially, theoretically, possibly, at some point in the future, be used to convict somebody in a way that may or may not ultimately end in the death penalty? Meanwhile that real child will end up being further abused while this data is waited for.

Nick Thomas-Symonds: I do not accept that at all. The hon. Lady talks about theoretical possibilities, but these will be actual cases—actual cases, not theoretical cases.

Mark Pritchard (The Wrekin) (Con) *rose—*

Nick Thomas-Symonds: I will give way once more.

Mark Pritchard: I am grateful to the shadow Minister for giving way. Despite the fact that this is about not extradition, but data exchange and that it is heinous crimes that will incorporate this provision, does he accept that the threshold for the death penalty, both at state and federal level, is actually far higher—the bar is higher?

Nick Thomas-Symonds: Yes, it is significantly higher, and the cases will be extraordinarily rare. That is what everybody who has looked at this says.

Mark Pritchard *rose*—

Nick Thomas-Symonds: This is genuinely the last time that I give way.

Mark Pritchard: I am very grateful. The hon. Gentleman is being more than generous. On the issue of assurances, does he also accept—I know that he thinks logically—that if those assurances were given and were not actually fulfilled, future assurances would obviously not carry the same weight as previous assurances that were carried through?

Nick Thomas-Symonds: I honestly cannot imagine a situation where a country that gave those assurances did not stand by them. That would undermine the whole system if that were the case. I do need to make some progress now. I hope that the House will realise that I have been generous in giving way to Government Members.

We absolutely agree, as I have said, with speeding up the mechanism, but we believe that in this framework, which will be a framework which many reciprocal treaties will be plugged into in the years to come, we should make clear our opposition to the death penalty in all circumstances. The Security Minister has spoken about the United States. I appreciate that that is where much data is held. I also appreciate that that is the treaty that is being negotiated at the moment. First, let us look at what the practice is at the moment. It is obvious that the United States would expect us to require full death penalty assurances prior to sharing this information. It routinely complies with that requirement. It has long been the case, under the 1944 treaty on mutual legal assistance in criminal matters that now exists, that the seeking and securing of assurances is commonplace. What the Opposition are trying to put into law is what has been the norm for decades.

The Minister makes the point about his judgment as to whether or not the US would wish to conclude a treaty in those circumstances—in the circumstances that the House passed the amendment that the Opposition have proposed. I just want to examine this because the recent High Court judgment in *El Gizouli*, which has been published in recent days, is instructive in this regard. It is very rare that we see Government papers in the public domain so soon after a particular decision is taken. That is because in July last year the House became aware of correspondence between the Home Secretary and the then United States Attorney General that the Government had not sought death penalty assurances at all. Let me be clear that we on these Benches absolutely condemn the actions of the so-called foreign fighters, which is why I have worked with the Minister to put the designated areas offence on to the statute book—it is not quite on our statute book

yet, but it will be in due course. I made various suggestions about that matter, as the Minister knows, that were eventually incorporated into the Bill. We supported that principle and it will be on the statute book. However, the fact is that that matter did lead to a court case, which is instructive about Minister's decision making.

I go back to one of the earlier interventions. This is not about naked partisan politics. These are very serious issues on which Members from all parts of the House have very strongly held opinions, and I respect whatever those perspectives are. A number of things came forward from that case in the summer. The UK embassy in Washington was asked what was the likely response from the US Administration if the UK were to seek full or partial assurances on the death penalty. The response was that

“parts of the US machinery—notably career DOJ officials—would not be surprised if we asked for death penalty assurances. It is what they expect of us.”

That, I suggest, is what I said a moment or two ago. It then added:

“But that doesn't go for the senior political levels of this administration...At best they will think we have tin ears. At worst, they will wind the President up to complain to the PM and, potentially, to hold a grudge.”

That is worrying to see, and it would not be a way to run any negotiation. It is no surprise really that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office gave strong advice to seek an assurance. This was cited as the Government's consistent policy over many years, which has been maintained without exception—I appreciate the one point that was made in an intervention by the Minister that there may be an exception to that. I accept that, but this is what the advice says—and without difficulty in co-operating with allies such as the US. It agreed that a sole exception would undermine the UK's consistent and total opposition. This is what the Foreign and Commonwealth Office said about this in the summer:

“Her Majesty's Government seeks a comprehensive assurance that the suspects will not be subject to the death penalty. This is critical to the consistency with which we apply HMG's policy on Overseas Security and Justice Assistance...Were we not to apply this practice to this case, it could undermine all future efforts to secure effective written death penalty assurances from the US authorities for future UK security and justice assistance. The exception made for the US in this case could also undermine future attempts to secure similar assurances from other countries with which we have a security relationship... particularly if it seems likely that there is litigation which leads to the disclosure of the level of assurance. It could leave HMG open to accusations of western hypocrisy and double standards which would undermine HMG's Death Penalty Policy globally, including in the US.”

Mr Wallace *rose*—

Nick Thomas-Symonds: Let me finish this point and then I will give way.

The Foreign Office officials were correct, and I wish that the Ministers had listened in the summer. As the Security Minister knows, this was the subject of an urgent question some months ago to which, I think, he responded.

Mr Wallace: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. I wonder whether he will quote at length my response in that court case, the response of the Home Secretary, and, indeed, the other parts of the correspondence. He makes the point about the embassy.

The embassy in the United States is the other part of the Foreign Office. He may like to reflect on the fact that, first, we won on all five counts, so he has picked out a few parts of the case, but not the full case. He will also know that, under this and the previous policy, one cannot seek assurances under strong reasons. He talks about hypocrisy. One of the strong reasons—a bit like some of the challenges around data, but he is referring to an MLAT case—is that the alternatives for these individuals for their rights—*[Interruption.]* No, I get that. The alternatives for those individuals were very much less about their rights—potentially extrajudicial killing in the back of the head and potentially being shipped to Guantanamo, to which we fundamentally object and oppose and, as that case highlighted, something in which we would not assist. The alternative for their human rights was far, far worse than a lawful trial in the United States.

Nick Thomas-Symonds: I am not disputing the outcome of the case; that is very clear. This goes back to the earlier point that I was making about new clause 1. It is clearly not currently set out in primary legislation that there is a duty to seek assurances. I am not questioning the genuine nature of what the Minister does or his decision making, but in that case and against that backdrop, no assurances were sought at all. The Minister has set out the reasons for that, but that is the brutal reality of what happened in that case, against the backdrop of the advice that I have read to the House.

More widely, Governments across the piece—this Government, the coalition Government and previous Labour Governments—have, on numerous occasions, sought to promote the UK's opposition to the use of the death penalty around the world. There are multiple examples where Governments of all colours have sought to avoid any complicity with the use of capital punishment and have argued around the world for its abolition. In fact, the Prime Minister herself said in the House on 31 October last year:

“Our long-standing position on the death penalty is well known: we call for its abolition globally.”—*[Official Report, 31 October 2018; Vol. 648, c. 911.]*

And the Opposition say the same.

There are a number of examples where this country has agreed that it is highly undesirable that drugs used by some states in the United States for the purposes of execution could have been sourced here. We have decided not to fund counter-narcotics operations in Iran because of the risk that they could lead to the use of the death penalty. When the Prime Minister was Home Secretary, she triggered a review of all security engagement when Pakistan resumed executions after a long moratorium. Back in October 2016 the Government withdrew a bid to provide offender management services to Saudi Arabian prisons, again over the issue around the death penalty. And of course the UK will not export products for use in capital punishment. That is the well-established position, as is the seeking and securing of assurances.

Mark Pritchard: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Nick Thomas-Symonds: I will make some progress; I did give way to the hon. Gentleman about three times earlier.

What I am simply saying is that we should not move away from that norm and send any kind of signal because, in any event, this Bill goes far beyond America. I appreciate the Minister's point about data and where it is held at present, but as the internet continues to evolve, other countries will hold more data as well. The Security Minister often said in Committee that he would only negotiate treaties with countries that shared our respect for the rule of law. I do not disbelieve him for a moment, but of course he is not going to be the Security Minister forever. Therefore, in those circumstances, we have to put the assurance in this framework now.

Opposition to the death penalty has been a bipartisan UK Government position for over half a century. Since 1965 when the work of many across this House—including the remarkable Sydney Silverman—came to fruition, this Parliament has stood as a beacon of common human values, promoting the abolition of the death penalty across the globe. For this country to continue to stand tall in the world and to use our considerable soft power, which we must, we always have to hold ourselves to the highest standards. Put very simply, for us to credibly argue for the abolition of the death penalty in other countries, we cannot be complicit in its application ourselves, and I ask that we send that strong moral signal to the world today.

It seems an odd move to now start talking about these technical issues of confidential journalistic data, important though they are. But that is of course where we are because this whole set of amendments have been grouped together. I therefore want to deal with the matter now, as well as some of the issues raised by the hon. Member for Bexhill and Battle.

In general terms, I am pleased with the Government's direction of travel on these issues, but there are still some real causes of concern. I am pleased with the movement on Government amendments 19 and 20, which were mentioned earlier. The notification requirement now extends to all journalistic data. There was a concern that, if we were distinguishing between confidential data and non-confidential data, some would not be covered. This move is therefore to be welcomed, as is the genuine notification requirement that specifically includes the journalist, which I believe is included in Government amendment 20.

There are still some concerns that I hope the Security Minister will take on board and listen to, although I do broadly welcome the measures. In proposed clause 12(2)(b), there is an override of this requirement where it would prejudice investigations into indictable offences and terrorism investigations. Now, I accept that emergency overrides are necessary, and I would expect to see them in this Bill and other similar types of Bill. There is, however, quite a low threshold in this measure. I totally accept that prejudicing a terrorism investigation may well constitute an emergency, but prejudicing an investigation into an indictable offence is extremely broad, because indictable offences are a huge category. Indicating that they can only be tried on indictment draws the provision extremely widely.

3.15 pm

I think that there is a path by which the police could access confidential data still without notifying the journalist. The Minister has openly said that a number of provisions in this legislation are drawn from the Terrorism Act 2000

and the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002. Under the Terrorism Act, this can happen, although there is a concern about some of this most sensitive data being accessed without notice. It is not my intention to push amendment 10 to a vote today, but in that amendment I have raised the issue of at least some confidential journalistic data simply being beyond the reach of the police. I appreciate the Government's position, but the breadth of this measure to cover all indictable offences is a concern, and we need to give deep consideration as to how that might work in practice. I know that the hon. Member for Bexhill and Battle genuinely intends to produce safeguards in the Bill, but we would not want to construct a path that somehow becomes the norm, as opposed to something that is meant actually to be the exception.

On amendment 18, I part company with the Minister. It is an important amendment that would attain guarantees for freedom of expression in reciprocal treaties. I draw on what the Foreign Secretary wrote in the *Evening Standard* on 1 November:

"Defending a free media must therefore be a central element of British foreign policy, in keeping with our country's role as an invisible chain linking the nations that share our values."

The Minister made a technical point about incoming and outgoing data, but this system of overseas production orders is meant to work together with treaties with countries that will, in themselves, be reciprocal. Amendment 18 would be totally in line with what the Foreign Secretary said; it would really push our position as a beacon in the world of press freedom, saying that we would not be able to countenance a treaty with a country that did not have those similar levels of press freedoms, nor would we wish to have a situation where another country without the same level of press freedom as us somehow has this back door to access our data.

Although I differ with the Minister on amendment 18 and on the emotive issues that we discussed earlier, I want to finish on a more consensual note. I appreciate the Minister's move on relevant evidence, which is to be praised. I also welcome the clear introduction in the Bill of the data protection regulation, which provides an important safeguard. On the issue of confidential journalistic data, I welcome the progress that has been made and say to the Minister that I hope that, throughout the passage of the Bill, we have shared aims and tried to work towards them.

Gavin Newlands (Paisley and Renfrewshire North) (SNP): Throughout the passage of this Bill and other Bills where we have engaged with the Security Minister and the hon. Member for Torfaen (Nick Thomas-Symonds), there has been a collaborative approach. That is again the case on Report. As the Minister said, we have had a constructive relationship with him, which is why I was quite disappointed with the change in tone this afternoon—questioning the Opposition's motives and accusing us of essentially protecting paedophiles. Every Member, as has been said, would like to see these despicable criminals convicted, but we have to ensure that legislation is passed with adequate protections for the human rights that we are obligated to protect under the ECHR. I hope that the Minister will perhaps reflect on that.

Amendment 12, as the hon. Member for Torfaen set out in granular detail—for the sake of the House, I will not seek to repeat that process—seeks to avoid the UK

being complicit in allowing for the death penalty to be practised abroad using data provided by us. We have previously heard from the Government that this would amount to driving a horse and cart through the Bill, but this is a matter of principle that the SNP will simply never compromise on. We are obviously a signatory to the European convention on human rights, article 2 and protocol 139 of which provide for the complete abolition of the death penalty.

As I have said in the past, I deeply regret that the Government resisted this amendment from the Lords and took it out in Committee, but I am pleased that we have another opportunity to put this anti-death penalty provision back into the Bill today. In opposing the amendment, the Government are setting themselves not just against our responsibilities under the convention but against their own policy of opposing the death penalty in all circumstances as a matter of principle.

In response to a written question, Baroness Anelay said:

"There has been no change in the British Government's policy of working towards global abolition of the death penalty."

This Government pursues human rights in their universality—a more ambitious and coherent approach than focusing on a small number of single issues. Our commitment to the Rules Based International Order underpins this work, including through bilateral and multilateral support to global efforts to abolish the death penalty."

As a signatory to the convention, we really should do everything in our power to avoid compliance in uses of the death penalty abroad. The UK at least claims to be a modern liberal democracy and a champion of human rights the world over. Opposing this amendment is entirely contradictory to those claims.

The Government have frequently refused to provide countries with aid and assistance where it is judged that that assistance could result in the use of capital punishment by the recipient party—for example, the review of UK security engagement when Pakistan resumed use of the death penalty, and declining to assist with services in Saudi Arabian prisons where juveniles were sentenced to the death penalty. Alongside this, as we have heard, the UK will not export products for use in capital punishment—for instance, medicines for use in lethal injections in the US. It would be inconsistent, not to mention a grave disregard for human rights, for the Government to refuse to supply the drugs for US executions, while providing the very information that made that execution possible.

Furthermore, the US already expects the UK to require full death penalty assurances prior to the sharing of information, and it routinely complies with this requirement—for example, in the recent "ISIS Beatles" case, when the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's strong advice was to seek a full death penalty assurance. This was cited at the time as the Government's consistent policy, which has been maintained without exception and without difficulty in co-operating with allies such as the US. The FCO agreed that a sole exception would undermine the UK's consistent and total opposition. No evidence has been presented on unwillingness from the US to engage in data-sharing arrangements where death penalty assurances are required. Without clear evidence to this effect, it is difficult to accept the Government's proposition that the US would walk away from the negotiating table for that reason.

On new clause 1, while we welcome it as an improvement, it simply does not go far enough. It is restricted to a requirement for assurances in the context of section 52 of the Investigatory Powers Act 2016. However, data could be requested by another state through a different route that does not require active interception on the part of the UK. In those circumstances, our concern would be that these protections would not operate.

Mark Pritchard: The shadow Minister, rightly, gave a litany of examples where the Government have set out to abolish the death penalty worldwide. The SNP spokesman has referred to assurances on ISIS cases and other assurances. Given that we heard from the shadow Minister that assurances have been sought previously, I am a little puzzled about why that should change.

Gavin Newlands: Words are great but it is deeds that are important, and we think that this should be in this Bill. As the Bill is, to use the Minister's term, the docking station for future agreements, we think that this should be in the Bill, which sets the tone of the regulations for future agreements.

Mark Pritchard: To help the House and to help me—I need all the help I can get—could the hon. Gentleman perhaps give an example of where assurances have not been sought in such cases?

Gavin Newlands: That is not the point—it is about the principles. We have spoken at length about this and listed some of them. It is about the principles, and we are signatories to the ECHR as well. We should ensure that these principles and obligations are in this Bill; otherwise, in my view, we are not following those obligations.

Amendment 1, tabled by the Liberal Democrats, is an improvement on new clause 1, but my only small concern—the right hon. Member for Kingston and Surbiton (Sir Edward Davey) may address this in his speech—is that it might not cover instances where data could be requested by another state through a different route, similarly to the issues that I set out with regard to new clause 1.

Amendment 12 simply refers to
“where the treaty provides for requests”

and therefore provides the most comprehensive level of protection. I urge Members from across the House to back this amendment, as our international reputation may well be degraded even further—if that were possible given the Brexit situation at the moment—if we enable this barbaric practice anywhere else in the world.

On journalistic protections, I very much welcome the amendments tabled by the Government and by the hon. Member for Bexhill and Battle (Huw Merriman), but they still do not go far enough. They are fine in and of themselves, but other areas of journalistic protection still need to be looked at.

Mr Wallace: If the hon. Gentleman was sitting where I am and he had a choice before him where the United States Administration was saying, “Look, here's the deal—we've got 99% of the data and you've got 1%. We haven't got equality of arms. This is the deal—you either take it without strings attached or you do not,” and if there were no deals and no treaty, as the amendment would provide, what would he do?

Gavin Newlands: That is almost a false choice. The Minister is painting it as a black-and-white issue. At the end of the day, on an issue of such grave importance as the death penalty, I would bring it to the House and seek the House's view. It would not be for me to try to override our principles as set in the ECHR. The USA might well hold all the data, but if we do not hold to our principles, then what is the point? That is our view.

Clause 12 provides for a journalist to be given notice of and made a party to an application that pertains to their confidential journalistic material, but this does not apply to non-confidential but none the less extremely sensitive journalistic material. As I said in Committee, that is at odds with the domestic situation as outlined in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. The system proposed in the Bill will allow for a significantly reduced opportunity for journalists to engage in arguments about what is, and is not, suitable for disclosure, removing the opportunity for a journalist to make submissions on the issues that this gives rise to in the context of their work.

We believe that the Bill does not provide adequate protection of confidential journalistic material. This could seriously threaten journalistic inquiry and prevent a free press from doing its job, and the implications for our democracy are worrying. We are not alone in having those concerns; the BBC and many others have raised deep concerns about this part of the Bill. Amendment 18 is essential because it ensures that any protections afforded to our journalists in this Bill are not simply domestic but that other states that the Government enter into an agreement with must mirror the UK's press safeguards.

Amendments 19 to 23, tabled by the Home Secretary and the hon. Member for Bexhill and Battle, would introduce a requirement that notice must be given for all applications for journalistic material. It is vital that journalists can operate freely in the knowledge that Government cannot just seize their information on a whim. As I said, we very much welcome those amendments. However, I echo the concerns aired by the hon. Member for Torfaen about proposed new subsection (2B) and in particular the indictable offence override. I hope that the Minister can give us some comfort on that. Under the Bill, journalists would have a significantly reduced ability to engage in arguments about what is and is not suitable for disclosure, removing the opportunity for them to make submissions on the issues that give rise to that.

In conclusion, there have been clear improvements to the Bill, and we very much welcome those concessions. However, new clause 1 and the journalistic protections simply do not go far enough, and that is why we will back the amendments tabled by the hon. Member for Torfaen.

3.30 pm

Sir Edward Davey: This is a very good Bill overall. It is much needed, and it is not controversial, which is why we will not vote against its Third Reading. However, our debates have shown that there is a chance to improve the Bill. Back Benchers have been able to improve the Bill, as we have seen with the amendments tabled by the hon. Member for Bexhill and Battle (Huw Merriman). I strongly support his amendments, which are well judged, and I know that the BBC supports them, too. I also support Labour's amendment 18. It is not unreasonable

[*Sir Edward Davey*]

to expect Government to try to ensure that there are protections for journalism and free expression in these treaties, and the world would expect Britain to uphold that. We hope to get agreement across the House on those amendments.

It is a shame that there is disagreement on the death penalty assurances. The Minister has been trying to reach out, but he will know that new clause 1 is only about seeking assurance, not receiving assurances, which is the issue at the heart of this disagreement. I intervened on the Minister earlier to ask whether there had been discussions about a carve-out for the types of offence that we are worried out. I would have thought that that would be incredibly easy, because the number of death penalty executions and cases that will result in it is tiny. I therefore would have thought that the US—a very practical people—would accept a treaty with that carve-out. The amendments tabled by my party and the Labour party would enable such a carve-out to be pushed forward. That is not unreasonable.

The Minister talks about the inequality of arms, and I get that—America is rather bigger than we are—but this is not about the Americans doing us a favour. We have data to offer them, too. It may only be 1%, but they want it. They want to catch their criminals—they want to catch the bad guys, too. We have a great record of working with them, and we should continue that. It is not as one-sided as he portrayed.

Let us remember what we are trying to achieve. A huge number of people in Congress and across America are campaigning to get rid of the death penalty. Nineteen US states no longer have the death penalty, and six of those have changed their laws since 2007 because of successful campaigning. That is one reason why we should stand up for this principle. This debate is live in the US, and it is important for not only the people we are talking about but US citizens that we send this signal. In addition to the states that have got rid of the death penalty, 11 states have not executed anyone for 10 years—it is de facto not used—so that makes 30 states. The federal Government have not executed anyone since 2003. The facts do not bear out the idea that we are pushing at a closed door and that there is massive opposition in the US political system.

Mr Wallace: The right hon. Gentleman makes a valid point. He also highlights how very rare this is, which goes to the point about balance. This is not just about death penalty assurances. This is about the United States Administration saying, “You can’t have your cake and eat it. You want all this help and all this data, and you want us to take back foreign fighters and try them, but no sooner do we say yes than you start telling us how to do it and giving us conditions.” That is part of the overall assessment that the Government made in some other cases. In this case, the data has never been an issue in the past 20 years. That is why our judgment and the clear message from the United States Administration is that that would jeopardise the treaty.

Sir Edward Davey: I hear what the Minister says, and I know that he knows there is not a lot between us on this, because we are all trying to get to the same objectives. However, the points he makes could be argued against the US position, and because we are close allies, we

could close that gap. It would not be terribly great for Senators to oppose this Bill—they have Senate ratification—as they would be held to account by their citizens for getting in the way of sharing information to catch paedophiles.

As British politicians here, from all sides and including the Minister, we should stand up for British principles. Yes, we want to catch these appalling criminals, but we must make sure that we advance justice and human rights. I do not think we should see these things as separate and deal with them separately—we can bring them together. It would be a good step for this House to stand up for this principle, which we all share and which is and has for a long time been Government policy, and say to our close friends in the US that we believe we can come to some agreement.

The Minister made it clear in his response that the treaty is still in development. The hon. Member for Torfaen (Nick Thomas-Symonds) talked about how a lot of people in the US, particularly in the State Department, are expecting us to do this, so it is not unreasonable that we do, and I hope that the Minister, who is highly respected across this House and whose Bill we utterly support, can understand why we are trying to make this extra push. We are doing this to help him in his negotiations.

John Woodcock: Listening to this debate, I found myself nodding along with the shadow Minister, as often I do. He made a well-honed speech about the bipartisan approach that has long been taken on the death penalty and the UK’s opposition to it on both sides. I tried to reconcile that with his party’s position, which is to oppose new clause 1. I was agreeing with what he was saying and I have some sympathy because the reasoned approach that he characteristically takes at the Front Bench is not matched by the diktat that comes down from the shadow Home Secretary and the leader of his party.

I have to say to the shadow Home Secretary: for the second time this week, she has ended up in a position where I and others are further to the left than her on a key issue. I sat behind her on Monday night, when she was explaining to the House why it was right to abstain on the Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill. The Lords have rightly, and in a way that is welcome, forced a concession from the Government—to me, new clause 1 seems substantive in writing into the Bill the requirement for this and any future Government to seek assurances on the death penalty. As has been rightly said, that approach has long been practice but it was, in terms of extradition, in a way that was quite troubling, disregarded in the instance of Mohammed Emwazi and others.

New clause 1 has been tabled after pressure from the Lords. It is a step forward in legally codifying opposition to the death penalty. As I understand it, the Labour party is going to try to force its Members of Parliament to vote against it, in the hope that they will then get to an amendment which would be unworkable and would indeed wreck the chances of a treaty, as the Minister has convincingly set out. Assuming that new clause 1 goes through—I will certainly be voting for it and I am encouraging many Labour colleagues to vote for it or abstain—we are not, as I understand it, going to get to the Labour amendment, by which they appear to be setting store. I am afraid that that epitomises the deep

oppositional politics that has always been a hallmark of the shadow Home Secretary and the Leader of the Opposition. It is an example, I am afraid, of why it would be so deeply troubling for the nation if they were given the chance to stand at the other Dispatch Box and have the authority to act as Home Secretary and Prime Minister.

This seems to have been another week when precedents are changing in this House. As I understand it, the Labour Whip is no longer binding on either Back-Bench or Front-Bench MPs, and it seems to be possible for Labour Front-Bench MPs to break their own Whip and remain on the Front Bench. I do not know if there is a requirement to go and sit in the Smoking Room to be exempt from what would otherwise be the strictures of the Front Bench.

This means that Labour MPs are being forced into making a false choice on human rights. We have to uphold human rights as a country. If we do not uphold them, the law will bring the Government into line, as it may yet do in the case of the so-called “ISIS Beatles”. The Labour leadership are forcing a choice on this incredibly important action to gain the treaty to speed up action against paedophiles, and on action to be able to convict British terrorists. They are forcing their MPs to choose one or the other. It is a false choice and one that I hope MPs will reject. I hope they will vote for new clause 1, so that we can go ahead with a strengthened Bill, which the country needs.

Mr Wallace: With the leave of the House, let me say that the amendments have been well heard and well argued. Following what the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (John Woodcock) has said, it is true that this is a false choice. This is real: it is about giving power to our law enforcement agencies to get data—data only; not the wider MLAT evidential packages, which are already covered by the overseas security and justice assistance guidance. Nor is it about extradition. It is simply about recognising the 21st century we live in, where the data is stored and the vital need for us to get it.

It is just wrong to tie this up with Trumpian ideology or anything else. It is not true. The shadow Home Secretary may like to note that it started under President Obama. We are not kowtowing to President Trump at all. This suggestion from our allies will help us to cut the time—from years and months to months and days—to get the vital data we need to protect our children and to protect us from terrorism.

Mark Pritchard: May I reach out to the Opposition? As the joint chairman of the all-party group on the abolition of the death penalty, I, like the shadow Minister, the hon. Member for Torfaen (Nick Thomas-Symonds), did have some concerns. However, I have addressed them with the Minister, who has listened. I think the Government have listened and I appeal to the shadow Minister and the Opposition Front-Bench team to think again in the national interest and in the interests of victims.

Mr Wallace: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who has campaigned against the death penalty for very many years and who, as co-chair of the all-party group, knows a thing or two about it. I do not think he would say that lightly if he did not feel it.

My shadow made some points about the judgment in the “Beatles” case, which is not of course related specifically to this data, but makes the point about exceptional circumstances. I urge him to read the judgment in full.

Nick Thomas-Symonds: I have.

Mr Wallace: Then the hon. Gentleman has quoted so selectively. If he has read it in full, he will know that all five points of allegation—

Nick Thomas-Symonds: I said that.

Mr Wallace: Yes, but the hon. Gentleman did not expand on them. If he had, he would have said, for example, that the Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales made it very clear that

“the Government recognises and responds to the realities of political life in the state concerned, whether or not it likes those realities. It would be very odd indeed to ignore them. Ministers, diplomats and other officials are engaged in a constant process of evaluation, making judgements about the differences between what is said and what is meant; between what is threatened, explicitly or implicitly, and what is likely to happen; about the impact of action of the UK. That is what was done here. The Home Secretary had the advice of the British Ambassador... The suggestion that he was not entitled to take it into account and rely on that expert assessment when making his own judgement is misconceived.” The Lord Chief Justice recognises the political realities within which we operate in the course of trying to keep people safe in this nation. It is a great shame that the shadow Home Secretary cannot manage to recognise those realities when the Lord Chief Justice can.

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

The House divided: Ayes 310, Noes 257.

Division No. 318]

[3.45 pm]

AYES

Adams, Nigel	Bruce, Fiona
Afolami, Bim	Buckland, Robert
Afriyie, Adam	Burghart, Alex
Aldous, Peter	Burns, Conor
Allan, Lucy	Burt, rh Alistair
Amess, Sir David	Cairns, rh Alun
Andrew, Stuart	Campbell, Mr Gregory
Argar, Edward	Cartlidge, James
Atkins, Victoria	Cash, Sir William
Bacon, Mr Richard	Caulfield, Maria
Badenoch, Mrs Kemi	Chalk, Alex
Baker, Mr Steve	Chishti, Rehman
Baldwin, Harriett	Chope, Sir Christopher
Barclay, rh Stephen	Churchill, Jo
Bebb, Guto	Clark, Colin
Bellingham, Sir Henry	Clark, rh Greg
Benyon, rh Richard	Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth
Beresford, Sir Paul	Clarke, Mr Simon
Berger, Luciana	Cleverly, James
Berry, Jake	Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
Blackman, Bob	Coffey, Ann
Blunt, Crispin	Coffey, Dr Thérèse
Boles, Nick	Collins, Damian
Bone, Mr Peter	Courts, Robert
Bottomley, Sir Peter	Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey
Bowie, Andrew	Crabb, rh Stephen
Bradley, Ben	Crouch, Tracey
Braverman, Suella	Davies, Chris
Brereton, Jack	Davies, David T. C.
Bridgen, Andrew	Davies, Glyn
Brine, Steve	Davies, Mims
Brokenshire, rh James	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
 Evennett, rh Sir David
 Fabricant, Michael
 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
 Gapes, Mike
 Garnier, Mark
 Gauke, rh Mr David
 Ghani, Ms Nusrat
 Gibb, rh Nick
 Girvan, Paul
 Glen, John
 Goldsmith, Zac
 Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
 Gove, rh Michael
 Graham, Luke
 Grant, Bill
 Grant, Mrs Helen
 Gray, James
 Grayling, rh Chris
 Green, Chris
 Green, rh Damian
 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
 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
 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
 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
 Latham, Mrs Pauline
 Leadsom, rh Andrea
 Lee, Dr Phillip
 Lefroy, Jeremy
 Leigh, rh Sir Edward
 Leslie, Mr Chris
 Letwin, rh Sir Oliver
 Lewer, Andrew
 Lewis, rh Brandon
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Lidington, rh Mr David
 Little Pengelly, Emma
 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
 Mills, Nigel
 Milton, rh Anne
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Moore, Damien
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morgan, rh Nicky
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Morton, Wendy
 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
 Philp, Chris
 Pincher, rh Christopher
 Poulter, Dr Dan
 Pow, Rebecca
 Prentis, Victoria
 Pritchard, Mark
 Purslove, 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
 Shuker, Mr Gavin
 Simpson, David
 Simpson, rh Mr Keith
 Skidmore, Chris
 Smith, Angela
 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, Iain
 Stewart, Rory
 Streeter, Sir Gary
 Stride, rh Mel
 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
 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
 Woodcock, John
 Wragg, Mr William
 Wright, rh Jeremy
 Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Amanda Milling and
Rebecca Harris

NOES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
 Ali, Rushanara
 Amesbury, Mike
 Antoniazzi, Tonia
 Ashworth, Jonathan
 Bailey, Mr Adrian
 Bardell, Hannah
 Barron, rh Sir Kevin
 Beckett, rh Margaret
 Benn, rh Hilary
 Betts, Mr Clive
 Black, Mhairi
 Blackman, Kirsty
 Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta
 Brabin, Tracy
 Brake, rh Tom

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
 Campbell, Mr Ronnie
 Carden, Dan

Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Champion, Sarah
 Chapman, Douglas
 Cherry, Joanna
 Clwyd, rh Ann
 Coaker, Vernon
 Cooper, Julie
 Cooper, Rosie
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy
 Cowan, Ronnie
 Crausby, Sir David
 Crawley, Angela
 Creagh, Mary
 Creasy, Stella
 Cruddas, Jon
 Cryer, John
 Cummins, Judith
 Cunningham, Alex
 Cunningham, Mr Jim
 Daby, Janet
 Dakin, Nic
 Davey, rh Sir Edward
 David, Wayne
 Davies, Geraint
 Day, Martyn
 De Cordova, Marsha
 De Piero, Gloria
 Debbonaire, Thangam
 Dent Coad, Emma
 Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
 Docherty-Hughes, Martin
 Dodds, Anneliese
 Doughty, Stephen
 Dowd, Peter
 Drew, Dr David
 Duffield, Rosie
 Eagle, Ms Angela
 Eagle, Maria
 Edwards, Jonathan
 Efford, Clive
 Elliott, Julie
 Ellman, Dame Louise
 Elmore, Chris
 Evans, Chris
 Farrelly, Paul
 Farron, Tim
 Fellows, Marion
 Fitzpatrick, Jim
 Fletcher, Colleen
 Flint, rh Caroline
 Fovargue, Yvonne
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Frith, James
 Furniss, Gill
 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
 Hermon, Lady
 Hill, Mike
 Hillier, Meg
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hoey, Kate
 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, Sarah
 Jones, Susan Elan
 Kane, Mike
 Keeley, Barbara
 Khan, Afzal
 Killen, Ged
 Kinnock, Stephen
 Kyle, Peter
 Laird, Lesley
 Lake, Ben
 Lammy, rh Mr David
 Lavery, Ian
 Law, Chris
 Lee, Karen
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Lewis, Clive
 Linden, David
 Lloyd, Stephen
 Lloyd, Tony
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lucas, Ian C.
 Lynch, Holly (*Proxy vote cast by Mark Tami*)
 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, Stewart Malcolm
 McDonald, Stuart C.
 McDonnell, rh John
 McGinn, Conor
 McGovern, Alison
 McInnes, Liz

McMahon, Jim
 McMorris, Anna
 Mearns, Ian
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Moran, Layla
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, Grahame
 Nandy, Lisa
 Newlands, Gavin
 Norris, Alex
 O'Hara, Brendan
 Onn, Melanie
 Onwurah, Chi
 Osamor, Kate
 Owen, Albert
 Peacock, Stephanie
 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
 Rimmer, Ms Marie
 Rodda, Matt
 Rowley, Danielle
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
 Saville Roberts, Liz
 Shah, Naz
 Sharma, Mr Virendra
 Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Sheppard, Tommy
 Siddiq, Tulip (*Proxy vote cast by Vicky Foxcroft*)
 Skinner, Mr Dennis
 Slaughter, Andy
 Smeeth, Ruth
 Smith, Cat
 Smith, Eleanor
 Smith, Laura
 Smith, Nick
 Smith, Owen
 Smyth, Karin
 Snell, Gareth
 Sobel, Alex
 Starmer, rh Keir
 Stephens, Chris
 Stevens, Jo
 Stone, Jamie
 Sweeney, Mr Paul
 Swinson, Jo
 Tami, rh Mark
 Thewliss, Alison
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick
 Thornberry, rh Emily
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Trickett, Jon
 Turley, Anna
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Stephen
 Twist, Liz
 Vaz, Valerie
 Walker, Thelma
 West, Catherine
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whitfield, Martin
 Whitford, Dr Philippa
 Williams, Hywel
 Williams, Dr Paul
 Williamson, Chris
 Wishart, Pete
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zeichner, Daniel
Tellers for the Noes:
Jeff Smith and
Bambos Charalambous

Question accordingly agreed to.

New clause 1 read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

Clause 1

MAKING OF OVERSEAS PRODUCTION ORDER ON APPLICATION

Amendment proposed: 18, page 2, line 3, at end insert—

“(5A) The Secretary of State may only make regulations designating an international agreement under subsection (5) where that agreement—

- (a) provides for safeguards and special procedures in respect of applications by competent authorities of a country or territory other than the United Kingdom for orders in respect of journalistic data and confidential journalistic data that are equivalent to those in this Act, and
- (b) provides for at least as much protection for freedom of expression and the protection of journalists’ rights sources as Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights and section 10 of the Contempt of Court Act 1981.” —(*Nick Thomas-Symonds.*)

This amendment would seek to ensure that the terms on which other states may access electronic data held in the UK mirror the UK’s own safeguards for press freedom.

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The House divided: Ayes 276, Noes 297.

Division No. 319]

[4.03 pm

AYES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
Ali, Rushanara
Amesbury, Mike
Antoniazzi, Tonia
Ashworth, Jonathan
Austin, Ian
Bailey, Mr Adrian
Bardell, Hannah
Barron, rh Sir Kevin
Beckett, rh Margaret
Benn, rh Hilary
Berger, Luciana
Betts, Mr Clive
Black, Mhairi
Blackford, rh
Ian
Blackman, Kirsty
Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta
Brabin, Tracy
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
Brake, rh Tom
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
Campbell, Mr Ronnie
Carden, Dan
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Champion, Sarah
Chapman, Douglas
Cherry, Joanna
Clwyd, rh Ann
Coaker, Vernon
Coffey, Ann
Cooper, Julie
Cooper, Rosie
Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Cowan, Ronnie
Crausby, Sir David
Crawley, Angela
Creagh, Mary
Creasy, Stella
Cruddas, Jon
Cryer, John
Cummins, Judith
Cunningham, Alex
Cunningham, Mr
Jim
Daby, Janet
Dakin, Nic
Davey, rh Sir Edward
David, Wayne
Davies, Geraint
Day, Martyn
De Cordova, Marsha
De Piero, Gloria
Debbonaire, Thangam
Dent Coad, Emma
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet
Singh
Docherty-Hughes, Martin
Dodds, Anneliese
Doughty, Stephen
Dowd, Peter
Drew, Dr David
Dromey, Jack
Duffield, Rosie
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eagle, Maria
Edwards, Jonathan
Efford, Clive
Elliott, Julie
Ellman, Dame Louise
Elmore, Chris
Esterson, Bill
Evans, Chris
Farrelly, Paul
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
Glendon, 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
Hermon, Lady
Hill, Mike
Hillier, Meg
Hobhouse, Wera
Hodge, rh Dame Margaret

Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Hoey, Kate
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, Sarah
Jones, Susan Elan
Kane, Mike
Keeley, Barbara
Kendall, Liz
Khan, Afzal
Killen, Ged
Kinnock, Stephen
Kyle, Peter
Laird, Lesley
Lake, Ben
Lammy, rh Mr David
Lavery, Ian
Law, Chris
Lee, Karen
Leslie, Mr Chris
Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
Lewis, Clive
Linden, David
Lloyd, Stephen
Lloyd, Tony
Long Bailey, Rebecca
Lucas, Caroline
Lucas, Ian C.
Lynch, Holly (*Proxy vote cast
by Mark Tami*)
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, Stewart Malcolm
McDonald, Stuart
C.
McDonnell, rh John
McFadden, rh Mr Pat
McGinn, Conor
McGovern, Alison
McInnes, Liz
McKinnell, Catherine
McMahon, Jim
McMorrin, Anna
Mearns, Ian
Miliband, rh Edward
Moran, Layla
Morden, Jessica
Morgan, Stephen
Morris, Grahame
Murray, Ian
Nandy, Lisa

Newlands, Gavin
Norris, Alex
O'Hara, Brendan
Onn, Melanie
Onwurah, Chi
Osamor, Kate
Owen, Albert
Peacock, Stephanie
Pennycook, Matthew
Perkins, Toby
Phillips, Jess
Phillipson, Bridget
Pidcock, Laura
Platt, Jo
Pollard, Luke
Pound, Stephen
Powell, Lucy
Qureshi, Yasmin
Rayner, Angela
Reed, Mr Steve
Rees, Christina
Reeves, Ellie
Reeves, Rachel
Rimmer, Ms Marie
Rodda, Matt
Rowley, Danielle
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
Saville Roberts, Liz
Shah, Naz
Sharma, Mr Virendra
Sheerman, Mr Barry
Sheppard, Tommy
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, Laura
Smith, Nick
Smith, Owen
Smyth, Karin
Snell, Gareth
Sobel, Alex
Spellar, rh John
Starmer, rh Keir
Stephens, Chris
Stevens, Jo
Stone, Jamie
Streeter, Wes
Sweeney, Mr Paul
Swinson, Jo
Tami, rh Mark
Thewliss, Alison
Thomas-Symonds, Nick
Thornberry, rh Emily
Timms, rh Stephen
Trickett, Jon
Turley, Anna
Turner, Karl
Twigg, Stephen
Twist, Liz
Umunna, Chuka
Vaz, Valerie
Walker, Thelma
West, Catherine
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Whitfield, Martin
Whitford, Dr Philippa

Williams, Hywel
 Williams, Dr Paul
 Williamson, Chris
 Wishart, Pete
 Woodcock, John

Yasin, Mohammad
 Zeichner, Daniel
Tellers for the Ayes:
Bambos Charalambous and
Jeff Smith

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
 Barclay, rh Stephen
 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
 Brady, Sir Graham
 Braverman, Suella
 Brereton, Jack
 Bridgen, Andrew
 Brine, Steve
 Brokenshire, rh James
 Bruce, Fiona
 Buckland, Robert
 Burghart, Alex
 Burns, Conor
 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
 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 Smith, rh Mr Iain
 Dunne, rh Mr Philip
 Ellis, Michael
 Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
 Elphicke, Charlie
 Eustice, George
 Evennett, rh Sir David
 Fabricant, Michael
 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
 Girvan, Paul
 Glen, John
 Goldsmith, Zac
 Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
 Gove, rh Michael
 Grant, Bill
 Grant, Mrs Helen
 Gray, James
 Grayling, rh Chris
 Green, Chris
 Green, rh Damian
 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
 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
 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
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard
 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
 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
 Liddington, rh Mr David
 Little Pengelly, Emma
 Lord, Mr Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Mackinlay, Craig
 Maclean, Rachel
 Main, Mrs Anne
 Mak, Alan
 Malthouse, Kit
 Mann, Scott
 Masterton, Paul
 Maynard, Paul
 McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick
 McPartland, Stephen
 McVey, rh Ms Esther
 Menzies, Mark
 Mercer, Johnny
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria
 Mills, Nigel
 Milton, rh Anne
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Moore, Damien
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morgan, rh Nicky
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Morton, Wendy
 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
 Philp, Chris
 Pincher, rh Christopher
 Poulter, Dr Dan
 Pow, Rebecca
 Prentis, Victoria
 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
 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, Iain
 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
 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
 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:
 Amanda Milling and
 Rebecca Harris

Question accordingly negated.

Clause 4

REQUIREMENTS FOR MAKING OF ORDER

Amendments made: 2, page 5, line 17, at end insert—

‘(5A) The judge must be satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for believing that all or part of the electronic data specified or described in the application for the order is likely to be relevant evidence in respect of the offence mentioned in subsection (3)(a).

This requirement does not apply where the order is sought for the purposes of a terrorist investigation.”

This amendment imposes an additional requirement for the making of an overseas production order relating to the admissibility in evidence of the electronic data being sought. The requirement will not apply where the order is sought for the purposes of a terrorist investigation.

Amendment 3, page 6, line 8, at end insert—

‘(9A) For the purpose of subsection (5A), “relevant evidence”, in relation to an offence, means anything that would be admissible in evidence in proceedings in respect of the offence.”—(Mr Wallace.)

This amendment defines “relevant evidence” as used in Amendment 2.

Clause 6

EFFECT OF ORDER

Amendments made: 4, page 7, line 13, at end insert—

“(ba) does not require the person to do anything that (taking into account the existence of the overseas production order) would result in the person contravening the data protection legislation, and”

This amendment makes clear that a person against whom an overseas production order is made who is subject to the data protection legislation within the meaning of the Data Protection Act 2018 (see Amendment 7) is not required to do anything by way of compliance with the order which would result in the person contravening that legislation.

Amendment 5, page 7, line 14, after “effect” insert “, subject to paragraph (ba),”—(Mr Wallace.)

This amendment is consequential on Amendment 4.

Clause 10

RETENTION OF ELECTRONIC DATA AND USE AS EVIDENCE

Amendment made: 6, page 9, line 21, at end insert—

‘(1A) Subsection (1) does not authorise the doing of anything that contravenes the data protection legislation.”—(Mr Wallace.)

Clause 10(1) of the Bill authorises the retention of electronic data produced in compliance with an overseas production order for so long as is necessary in all the circumstances. This amendment makes clear that the retention will have to be compliant with the data protection legislation within the meaning of the Data Protection Act 2018 (see Amendment 7).

Clause 12

NOTICE OF APPLICATION FOR ORDER: CONFIDENTIAL JOURNALISTIC DATA

Amendments made: 19, page 10, line 9, leave out subsection (1) and insert—

‘(1) This section applies to an application for an overseas production order if there are reasonable grounds for believing that the electronic data specified or described in the application consists of or includes journalistic data.”

See the explanatory statement for Amendment 20.

Amendment 20, page 10, line 16, at end insert—

‘(2A) Where this section applies, notice of the application must be served on—

- (a) the person against whom the overseas production order is sought, and
- (b) if different, the person by whom, or on whose behalf, the journalistic data is stored.

(2B) But a judge may direct that notice of an application need not be served on a person falling within subsection (2A)(b) if the judge is satisfied that—

- (a) serving notice on the person would prejudice the investigation of an indictable offence or a terrorist investigation, or
- (b) it is not reasonably practicable to establish the person’s identity or to make contact with the person so as to enable service to be effected.”

Clause 12 currently provides for an application for an overseas production order in respect of electronic data that consists of or includes confidential journalistic data to be on notice. As a result of this amendment, notice of an application for an order in respect of electronic data that consists of or includes journalistic data (whether or not confidential journalistic data) will have to be served on the person against whom the order is sought and, if different and unless a judge directs otherwise, the person who created or acquired the data for the purposes of journalism.

Amendment 21, page 10, line 20, leave out subsection (4)

This amendment is consequential on Amendment 19.

Amendment 22, page 10, line 39, at end insert—

‘(7) Subsections (8) and (9) of section 4 apply for the purposes of subsection (2B) of this section as they apply for the purposes of subsection (3)(a) of that section.

(8) In this section, “terrorist investigation” has the same meaning as in the Terrorism Act 2000 (see section 32 of that Act).”—(Mr Wallace.)

This amendment is consequential on Amendment 20.

Clause 15

APPLICATION OF ACT TO SERVICE POLICE

Amendment made: 23, page 13, line 10, leave out “section 4(3)(a)” and insert “sections 4(3)(a) and 12(2B)(a).”—(Mr Wallace.)

This amendment is consequential on Amendment 20.

Clause 17

INTERPRETATION

Amendment made: 7, page 14, line 20, at end insert—

““the data protection legislation” has the same meaning as in the Data Protection Act 2018 (see section 3 of that Act);”—(Mr Wallace.)

This amendment inserts a definition of “the data protection legislation” into the Bill. Reference is made to “the data protection legislation” in the provisions inserted into the Bill by Amendments 4 and 6.

Title

Amendment made: 8, in title, line 1, at end insert—

“and about the designation of international agreements for the purposes of section 52 of the Investigatory Powers Act 2016”—
(*Mr Wallace.*)

This amendment of the long title of the Bill is consequential on NC1.

Alan Brown (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. It came to my attention earlier on that the Secretary of State for Scotland is visiting my constituency tomorrow. I first became aware of the visit via lines in the local press about an announcement of funding for the Ayrshire growth deal. I have since received a ministerial notification, but it contains no details whatsoever. The information even has the wrong name for the venue—imagine that. My office has since asked the Scotland Office for more information, and we are still being told that it is just a simple visit to a local college, but that is completely contrary to the details in the press.

Of course, I welcome the potential announcement of £100 million for the Ayrshire growth deal. It has cross-party support, and everybody has worked hard to get it over the finishing line. However, it would be more appropriate to maintain such cross-party co-operation and, at the very least, to show due respect to me as the constituency MP by sharing the information that the Scotland Office has shared with the press. I am looking to you for guidance on the matter, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): I thank the hon. Gentleman for his point of order and for giving me prior notice of it. I understand that he has also informed the Secretary of State for Scotland that he would be making it. I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's annoyance at not being properly informed regarding the details of the visit, because that is what is expected. However, having raised the matter, I hope that he will get further clarification. I am sure that those on the Treasury Bench have noted what he said and will ensure that the proper information is sent to him.

Third Reading

4.21 pm

Mr Wallace: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

Throughout the process, the Bill has been about giving our law enforcement agencies a step change in capability to access the vital data needed to investigate some of the worst crimes perpetrated against our constituents. The House has spoken. We examined the Opposition's amendment 18 and the amendments that mirrored those attempted in the House of Lords. A majority of 53 in rejecting amendment 18 sends a clear notice that Members in this House have considered the delicate balance between obligations and security and have favoured that we should send the Bill back to the Lords with the amendment rejected. I hope that their lordships will reflect on that.

This Bill is about the security of our children and our constituents and about taking up an offer made by President Obama's Administration to help us with vital investigations where time is of the essence, so that we do not have to go down the long bureaucratic route of the MLAT process, which can take months or years. Indeed, I meet police officers who tell me that they cannot

actually progress investigations as a result. When that process of obtaining vital data is turned into days and weeks, this House should be proud not only of our special relationship with the United States that has enabled this to happen, but of the fact that our police will be able to get the necessary data.

Members from across the House often quite rightly complain that data from faraway CSPs, such as Facebook and Google—data that is corrupting the internet and radicalising our families and our children—is being used to prosecute cybercrime and that we need to do more about that. We need to take action to stop such things happening. This Bill contains a strong measure offered by the US Administration, and it means that we will be able to do much more to keep our citizens safe. It is the responsible thing to do.

I have listened to suggestions throughout the Bill's progress and have taken them into the Bill where and as much as possible, including on the protection and notification of journalists. I hope that the other place recognises the consensual way in which we have made progress on 90% of the Bill. We will be the first nation to have such an arrangement, although there is more work to be done around the treaty.

I do not know whether the Lords will send the Bill back—I pray that they do not—so I will say a grateful thanks to my Parliamentary Private Secretary, my hon. Friend the Member for North Dorset (Simon Hoare), who has done great work; to the usual channels; and to the Labour and SNP Front-Bench spokespeople, the Democratic Unionist party and the Liberal Democrats, who have all either accommodated offers or had the time to listen to me in private to try to resolve matters. I thank my officials and the Bill manager. This is her first Bill, and she was allocated a Bill that looked so boring and innocuous that there would be no controversy. Little did she know how our friends in the upper House would behave—I can only apologise for that. I thank the team for doing a sterling job. I hope that the Bill does not return and that we can look forward to its coming into law.

4.25 pm

Nick Thomas-Symonds: I echo the Minister in saying that 90% of the Bill has been consensual, and a number of parties, including the SNP, the Liberal Democrats, Labour and others, have sought to contribute constructively throughout its passage.

The issue of death penalty assurances generated a great deal of controversy, but the Minister will have noticed that I indicated earlier that we would be supporting the Bill on Third Reading, irrespective of the outcome of previous votes. That remains our position, and I join him in his frustration with the slowness of the MLAT process. MLAT is a well-established process but, clearly, we need to look at speeding it up, and this Bill is a mechanism by which we can do that.

The Minister rightly focuses on America, partly because of the extent of the data it holds and partly because that treaty has been negotiated, and it will be a framework for other reciprocal treaties all around the world. Of course, he would expect me and the Opposition to scrutinise every single one of those treaties when they come before the House in due course. Parties on both sides of the House share the long-cherished principle of international human rights.

Mr Jim Cunningham (Coventry South) (Lab): I apologise for missing some of the debate on Report. Will my hon. Friend reassure us about the sources of intelligence information? There have been stories in the past about how our intelligence has been gained. Is he satisfied that there are enough safeguards to ensure those stories are not repeated?

Nick Thomas-Symonds: Clearly, I do think the safeguards in the Bill have been significantly improved, which is one reason why I am content to support it. Obviously that is not to say there might not be legal challenges to aspects of the Bill in due course—there may well be—but I am pleased and content with many of the improvements that have been made. Throughout my time in this role I have tried to work consensually with the Minister, as has been the case with this Bill and others, and that will continue in the years ahead.

I join the Minister in thanking the Bill team. I have spoken to different members of the team over the course of the Bill's passage. People did not necessarily expect the Bill to end up in this place when it began as a non-consensual Bill in the House of Lords. I also thank their lordships, the Minister and all the members of the Committee who contributed to the Bill. The time has come to move forward and to try to put in place this mechanism to speed up the exchange of information, with appropriate safeguards for keeping our citizens safe.

4.28 pm

Gavin Newlands: Every hon. Member would accept that the current wait times in the MLAT process are unsustainable. Notwithstanding the arguments made on Report and at earlier stages, we welcome the Bill and believe that investigations and proceedings relating to serious offences in Scotland will benefit from the use of overseas production orders as a quicker, more streamlined process for obtaining that data.

I am, of course, disappointed that we were unsuccessful in securing full death penalty and journalistic protections. The death penalty protection, at least, may come back to us. Despite the Minister's tone at the start of the debate, I thank him for his approach to this Bill and to the other Bills on which the hon. Member for Torfaen (Nick Thomas-Symonds) and I have worked.

I thank the hon. Members for Torfaen and for Scunthorpe (Nic Dakin). It has been a somewhat easier and more enjoyable—if that can be the word—experience for having worked together so well. I also thank the Clerks in the Public Bill Office and the various organisations that have provided briefings for Members.

The Minister was right—and he reiterated it—when he said that this was an important but essentially boring Bill. The Minister, the shadow Minister and I find ourselves in a lot of Committees considering Bills that could easily be described as boring, and I am sure that after last night's vote that may well be the case again very soon. So I shall see them soon, I imagine.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time and passed, with amendments.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE (TODAY)

Ordered,

That, at today's sitting, the Speaker shall put the questions necessary to dispose of the motion in the name of Andrea Leadsom relating to Private Members' Bills not later than one hour after the start of proceedings on this motion; such questions shall include the questions on any amendments selected by the Speaker which may then be moved; proceedings may continue, though opposed, after the moment of interruption; and Standing Order No. 41A (Deferred divisions) shall not apply.—(*Andrea Leadsom.*)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): I should inform the House that the Speaker has not selected any of the amendments.

Ordered,

Notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 14(8), Private Members' bills shall have precedence over government business on 8 February 2019, 15 March 2019 and 22 March 2019.—(*Andrea Leadsom.*)

SITTINGS IN WESTMINSTER HALL (31 JANUARY)

Ordered,

That, on Thursday 31 January, there shall be no sitting in Westminster Hall.—(*Rebecca Harris.*)

Business without Debate

DELEGATED LEGISLATION

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

EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION (FISHERIES)

That the draft Fisheries (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, which were laid before this House on 4 December 2018, be approved.—(*Rebecca Harris.*)

Question agreed to.

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

EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION (ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION)

That the draft Invasive Non-native Species (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, which were laid before this House on 6 December 2018, be approved.—(*Rebecca Harris.*)

Question agreed to.

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

EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION (BROADCASTING)

That the draft Broadcasting (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, which were laid before this House on 13 December 2018, be approved.—(*Rebecca Harris.*)

Question agreed to.

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

EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION (MERCHANT SHIPPING)

That the draft Maritime Transport Access to Trade and Cabotage (Revocation) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, which were laid before this House on 19 December 2018, be approved.—(*Rebecca Harris.*)

The House divided: Ayes 289, Noes 245.

Division No. 320]

[4.33 pm

AYES

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
Barclay, rh Stephen
Bebb, Guto
Bellingham, Sir Henry
Benyon, rh Richard
Berry, Jake
Blackman, Bob
Blunt, Crispin
Bone, Mr Peter
Bottomley, Sir Peter
Bowie, Andrew
Bradley, Ben
Braverman, Suella
Brereton, Jack
Bridgen, Andrew
Brine, Steve
Brokenshire, rh James
Bruce, Fiona
Buckland, Robert
Burghart, Alex
Burns, Conor
Cairns, rh Alun
Campbell, Mr Gregory
Cartlidge, James
Cash, Sir William
Caulfield, Maria
Chalk, Alex
Chishti, Rehman
Chope, Sir Christopher
Churchill, Jo
Clark, Colin
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
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 Smith, rh Mr
Iain
Dunne, rh Mr Philip
Ellis, Michael
Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
Elphicke, Charlie
Eustice, George
Evennett, rh Sir David
Fabricant, Michael
Fallon, rh Sir Michael
Ford, Vicky
Foster, Kevin
Fox, rh Dr Liam
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
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
Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
Griffiths, Andrew
Gyimah, Mr Sam
Hair, Kirstene
Hall, Luke
Hammond, Stephen
Hancock, rh Matt
Hands, rh Greg
Harper, rh Mr Mark
Harrington, Richard
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
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
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
Latham, Mrs Pauline
Leadsom, rh Andrea
Lee, Dr Phillip
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
Lord, Mr Jonathan
Loughton, Tim
Mackinlay, Craig
Macleane, Rachel
Main, Mrs Anne
Mak, Alan
Malthouse, Kit
Mann, Scott
Masterton, Paul
Maynard, Paul
McLoughlin, rh Sir
Patrick
McPartland, Stephen
McVey, rh Ms Esther
Menzies, Mark
Mercer, Johnny
Merriman, Huw
Metcalfe, Stephen
Miller, rh Mrs Maria
Mills, Nigel
Milton, rh Anne
Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
Moore, Damien
Mordaunt, rh Penny
Morgan, rh Nicky
Morris, Anne Marie
Morris, David
Morton, Wendy
Murray, Mrs Sheryll
Murrison, Dr Andrew
Neill, Robert
Newton, Sarah
Nokes, rh Caroline
Norman, Jesse
O'Brien, Neil
Offord, Dr Matthew
Opperman, Guy

Parish, Neil
Patel, rh Priti
Paterson, rh Mr Owen
Pawsey, Mark
Penning, rh Sir Mike
Penrose, John
Percy, Andrew
Philp, Chris
Pincher, rh Christopher
Poulter, Dr Dan
Pow, Rebecca
Prentis, Victoria
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
Simpson, David
Simpson, rh Mr Keith
Skidmore, Chris
Smith, Chloe
Smith, Henry
Smith, Royston
Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
Soubry, rh Anna
Spelman, rh Dame Caroline
Spencer, Mark
Stephenson, Andrew
Stevenson, John
Stewart, Bob
Stewart, Iain
Stewart, Rory
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
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

Wilson, rh Sammy
Wollaston, Dr Sarah
Wood, Mike
Wragg, Mr William
Wright, rh Jeremy
Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Amanda Milling and
Rebecca Harris

NOES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
Ali, Rushanara
Amesbury, Mike
Antoniazzi, Tonia
Austin, Ian
Bailey, Mr Adrian
Bardell, Hannah
Barron, rh Sir Kevin
Beckett, rh Margaret
Benn, rh Hilary
Betts, Mr Clive
Blackman, Kirsty
Brabin, Tracy
Brake, rh Tom
Brock, Deidre
Brown, Alan
Brown, Lyn
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
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
Campbell, Mr Ronnie
Carden, Dan
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Champion, Sarah
Cherry, Joanna
Clwyd, rh Ann
Coaker, Vernon
Cooper, Julie
Cooper, Rosie
Crausby, Sir David
Creagh, Mary
Creasy, Stella
Cruddas, Jon
Cryer, John
Cummins, Judith
Cunningham, Mr Jim
Daby, Janet
Dakin, Nic
Davey, rh Sir Edward
David, Wayne
Davies, Geraint
De Cordova, Marsha
De Piero, Gloria
Debonnaire, Thangam
Dent Coad, Emma
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Dodds, Anneliese
Doughty, Stephen
Dowd, Peter
Drew, Dr David
Duffield, Rosie

Eagle, Ms Angela
Eagle, Maria
Edwards, Jonathan
Efford, Clive
Elliott, Julie
Ellman, Dame Louise
Elmore, Chris
Esterson, Bill
Evans, Chris
Farrelly, Paul
Fellows, Marion
Fitzpatrick, Jim
Fletcher, Colleen
Flint, rh Caroline
Fovargue, Yvonne
Foxcroft, Vicky
Frith, James
Furniss, Gill
Gaffney, Hugh
Gardiner, Barry
George, Ruth
Gethins, Stephen
Gibson, Patricia
Gill, Preet Kaur
Glindon, Mary
Grady, Patrick
Grant, Peter
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
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
Howarth, rh Mr George
Huq, Dr Rupa
Hussain, Imran
Jardine, Christine
Jarvis, Dan
Johnson, Diana
Jones, Darren
Jones, Gerald

Jones, Graham P.
Jones, rh Mr Kevan
Jones, Sarah
Jones, Susan Elan
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
Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
Lewis, Clive
Linden, David
Lloyd, Stephen
Lloyd, Tony
Long Bailey, Rebecca
Lucas, Caroline
Lucas, Ian C.
Lynch, Holly (*Proxy vote cast*
by Mark Tami)
MacNeil, Angus Brendan
Madders, Justin
Mahmood, Mr Khalid
Mahmood, Shabana
Malhotra, Seema
Mann, John
Marsden, Gordon
Martin, Sandy
Maskell, Rachael
Matheson, Christian
McCabe, Steve
McCarthy, Kerry
McDonagh, Siobhain
McDonald, Stuart
C.
McDonnell, rh John
McFadden, rh Mr Pat
McGinn, Conor
McGovern, Alison
McInnes, Liz
McKinnell, Catherine
McMahon, Jim
McMorrin, Anna
Mearns, Ian
Miliband, rh Edward
Moran, Layla
Morden, Jessica
Morgan, Stephen
Morris, Grahame
Nandy, Lisa
Newlands, Gavin
Norris, Alex
O'Hara, Brendan
Onn, Melanie
Onwurah, Chi
Osamor, Kate
Owen, Albert
Peacock, Stephanie
Pennycook, Matthew

Perkins, Toby
Phillips, Jess
Phillipson, Bridget
Pidcock, Laura
Platt, Jo
Pollard, Luke
Pound, Stephen
Qureshi, Yasmin
Rayner, Angela
Reed, Mr Steve
Rees, Christina
Reeves, Ellie
Reeves, Rachel
Reynolds, Emma
Rodda, Matt
Rowley, Danielle
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
Saville Roberts, Liz
Shah, Naz
Sharma, Mr Virendra
Siddiq, Tulip (*Proxy vote cast*
by Vicky Foxcroft)
Skinner, Mr Dennis
Slaughter, Andy
Smeeth, Ruth
Smith, Angela
Smith, Cat
Smith, Eleanor
Smith, Laura
Smith, Nick
Smyth, Karin
Snell, Gareth
Sobel, Alex
Spellar, rh John
Starmer, rh Keir
Stephens, Chris
Stevens, Jo
Streeting, Wes
Sweeney, Mr Paul
Tami, rh Mark
Thewliss, Alison
Thomas-Symonds, Nick
Thornberry, rh Emily
Timms, rh Stephen
Trickett, Jon
Turley, Anna
Turner, Karl
Twigg, Stephen
Twist, Liz
Vaz, Valerie
Walker, Thelma
Watson, Tom
West, Catherine
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Whitfield, Martin
Whitford, Dr Philippa
Williams, Dr Paul
Williamson, Chris
Wishart, Pete
Woodcock, John
Yasin, Mohammad
Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Noes:
Jeff Smith and
Bambos Charalambous

Question accordingly agreed to.

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

EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION (HEALTH CARE AND
ASSOCIATED PROFESSIONS)

That the draft European Qualifications (Health and Social Care Professions) (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2018, which were laid before this House on 20 December 2018, be approved.—(*Wendy Morton.*)

Question agreed to.

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

EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION (HEALTH CARE AND
ASSOCIATED PROFESSIONS)

That the draft European Qualifications (Pharmacists) (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2018, which were laid before this House on 6 December 2018, be approved.—(*Wendy Morton.*)

Question agreed to.

Delay Repay: Great Eastern Main Line

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—(Wendy Morton.)

4.46 pm

Will Quince (Colchester) (Con): We are starting this debate somewhat early, and it happens to be a debate on rail delays. Looking at the time, I can work out that I have approximately two and a half hours, which the House will be pleased to know I have no intention of filling. Ironically, though, it does happen to be the longest delay I have ever encountered, personally, on a Greater Anglia train—and that is a fact.

I am hugely grateful for the opportunity to raise the issue of Delay Repay 15 on the great eastern main line. It is an issue that is hugely important to thousands of my Colchester constituents who are regular rail users and commuters. To set the scene, as a rail user myself, I know that sadly—as commuters regularly, in fact almost daily, remind me on Twitter and via email—our rail service is often lacking, with short forms, delays, dirty trains, poor communication, and regular line, points, overhead wire or signal faults. My constituents and I have experienced every kind of delay possible, whether it is snow, ice, leaves, rats, or being too hot or too cold. It is quite incredible to think how other countries run effective rail services.

It is hard to feel convinced, and certainly to convince constituents, that we receive good value for money when the situation appears to be getting worse while rail fares and car-parking charges increase. I would never seek to presume or know what the Minister may be thinking, but I would hazard a guess: that complaints on social media are common enough, and that very rarely will anyone tweet their local MP to say, “My train’s arrived perfectly on time—please thank the Transport Minister on my behalf.” Perhaps he is thinking that this issue, while important, may be over-inflated by grumpy rail users like myself. I find the situation to be the complete opposite. I think that people have got so fed up with complaining about rail services that they have given up complaining about rail services.

Before we get off on the wrong track—there will not be too many bad puns—let us adopt a more statistical approach. The national rail passenger survey of more than 25,000 passengers in autumn 2017 has made something clear. For the avoidance of confusion, I have stripped the dataset down to the 1,493 Greater Anglia passengers involved in the survey. It is starkly but unsurprisingly clear that we are experiencing the lowest overall satisfaction with Greater Anglia services for over five years. On delays, which is the subject of this debate, only 32% of commuters are satisfied with Greater Anglia’s track record. The punctuality and reliability of services was also consistently ranked the single most important consideration for commuters.

Things have not improved much since autumn 2017. In the past 48 hours, we have seen in the press that Greater Anglia passengers have become significantly less satisfied with their journeys over the past 12 months. According to new figures from the rail watchdog Transport Focus, only 73% of passengers were satisfied with their journeys on Greater Anglia. That figure was 81% in its survey the previous year.

James Cartlidge (South Suffolk) (Con): I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing this debate, which I welcome. He is a great campaigner on this issue. One cause of dissatisfaction among our constituents on this line is the fact that they so often have to stand. Does he agree that we should look at compensation for not only delays but standing? Is it right that someone who stands, often for two hours or more, pays the same fare as someone who has a seat?

Will Quince: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention. He is right; nobody should be standing on a train for this length of time. Nobody should be standing to get to London Liverpool Street from average commuter towns like Chelmsford or Colchester, or even as far as Norwich. The journey from Chelmsford is about 40 minutes, from Colchester it is about 55 minutes and from Norwich it is one hour and 45 minutes or even two hours; we hope to get that down to one hour and 45 minutes with the new trains. Increased capacity will come with the new trains, but there is a massive issue with standing. It is not uncommon to see people—indeed, I have done it myself—standing between Colchester and London. That is not acceptable.

Mr Jim Cunningham (Coventry South) (Lab): The west coast main line is not as bad, but we often have cancellations, and people stand at Euston waiting but are not told the reason for the cancellation. There is an argument for new rolling stock, whether on the hon. Gentleman's line or the west coast main line. I agree with his point about fares. The public have got so used to fares being increased that they feel helpless to do anything about it. Fares are far too high now.

Will Quince: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. Fares are an interesting point. Of course everyone would like to see rail fares come down, but most people say that they want their fare to represent better value for money. We are fortunate that we are getting a brand new fleet of trains, at a cost of some £1.4 billion, but to set that in context, we have waited in some cases 40 years for it. Some of our rolling stock is decades old—in fact, I think some of it even breaches standards in 2019, so it needs to be replaced in any event.

I think the public are clear about what they want: punctual services. In the unfortunate event that that is not possible, adequate compensation for the delay must be available. I would be the first to argue that we should focus our efforts on improving the reliability of the service. Rail users would rather not face delays than receive compensation.

I have raised this issue numerous times with Greater Anglia, which has assured me and colleagues that it is investing more than £20 million in improving the performance of its existing trains. As I mentioned, it is also engaged in a £1.4 billion investment programme over the next two years to replace its current models with new trains, the first of which are due to enter service on the line this year. As I said to my hon. Friend the Member for South Suffolk (James Cartlidge), that will increase capacity on our line, with 1,043 carriages available compared with 937 at the moment. That is good news. It is long overdue—sadly, like some of the trains leaving Colchester—but I welcome these announcements.

We must not forget Network Rail, as most of the delays on our line fall under its remit. Members of Parliament from across our region, ably led by my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich North (Chloe Smith) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Witham (Priti Patel), have called for repair and renewal work on our line as part of the great eastern main line taskforce. We have helped to secure £2 billion as a funding settlement for our line, and we will start to see the benefits of these works in reduced delays and disruption.

I wish to touch on the sensitive and incredibly sad issue of suicide, as I know that fatalities on the line are often the cause of the longest delays. I want to reassure rail users that Members of Parliament from across this House on our line have been working closely with Greater Anglia, Network Rail and the Department to do all we can to put measures in place to try to reduce and minimise the number of people who are, tragically, taking their own lives on our lines.

I hope I have set out why there are good reasons for optimism. I appreciate that I was relatively disparaging about our rail service to start with, but a lot of constituents would feel exactly the same.

Stephen McPartland (Stevenage) (Con): Although we are in the same region, I have a different rail line, with a huge variety of rail providers involved on that line. We have had a 100% increase in capacity, lots more seats, a huge range of wi-fi on some of the trains, yet passengers remain frustrated about value for money and the challenges on punctuality. How does my hon. Friend feel we can tackle that value for money problem?

Will Quince: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention. I used to live in his constituency, so I know that rail line well. I understand that the trains have improved somewhat since I lived there. When we ask rail users what they want, most of them say that they want reliability, a punctual service, a plug socket and to be able to get a seat. Ideally, they would also like wi-fi. So speed is important, but it is usually a factor that is further down the list. Those are basically the core component of what people want and expect in terms of value for money, and I hope the Minister will address that in a little more detail.

As I said, I hope I have set out why there are good reasons for optimism about the great eastern main line. We have an entire new fleet of trains coming, with a significant investment in rail infrastructure, which should lead to a reduction in disruption and delays. However, that cannot and must not be used as an argument against the rapid introduction of Delay Repay 15 on the great eastern main line.

On 13 October, we had some welcome news from the Department, as the Secretary of State announced an improved compensation scheme—Delay Repay 15. Under this scheme, passengers are able to claim 25% of the cost of a single fare tickets for delays of between 15 and 29 minutes. The scheme would go a long way towards incentivising improved efficiencies in the franchise and compensating commuters for the inconvenience suffered as a result of delayed services. Delay Repay 15 has already been rolled out on Thameslink, Southern and the Great Northern franchises, but not on the great eastern main line under Greater Anglia.

As I know from my own train journeys between Colchester and Liverpool Street, the smallest delay to a daily commute can cause, over time, significant disruption

to our professional lives, especially in the mornings, and significance inconveniences to our private lives in the evening—it can make the difference between being able to tuck one's kids into bed at night or not. We should not underestimate the importance of that. Ultimately, like most of my fellow rail users, I would rather the reliability of the service be vastly improved first, but I know that my constituents would also welcome the introduction of improved compensation rights.

Sandy Martin (Ipswich) (Lab): I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on securing this Adjournment debate, and I apologise for not being here for the start of his speech. I absolutely agree with the whole campaign, which is brilliant. Our passengers deserve this. Does he agree that any compensation scheme needs also to be easy to use and that Greater Anglia needs not only to introduce Delay Repay 15, but to make its current scheme more user friendly, so that when people try to claim compensation, they are not blocked from doing so?

Will Quince: I thank the hon. Gentleman for that intervention and for the role he plays on the great eastern main line taskforce. One reason why it has been so successful is that all the MPs from our region have spoken collectively with one voice, taking the politics out of the issue, and have focused on the main issues that are going to drive improvements on our line. We work closely together on that.

On the specific point about Delay Repay, the hon. Gentleman made a very good point. There is little point in having a compensation scheme if it is so hard and difficult to operate—it is not user-friendly—that people do not use it. There are of course people who will not bother with it or, for whatever reason, choose not to use it. Some choose to make a charitable donation, and the figure to date for what people across our region have chosen to donate, instead of receiving that money back, is somewhere in the region of £8,000. I agree entirely with him that it is important—in fact, imperative—that we make these Delay Repay schemes as easy and as user-friendly as possible. We should ensure people know how to do it, so it is important that the information is there in the first instance, and then make it as easy as possible for them to complete and to get the refund.

The Secretary of State rightly said back in October 2016 that when things do go wrong for commuters on our rail network

“it is vital that they are compensated fairly.”

The stated policy of the Department for Transport is to move all franchise operators to Delay Repay 15 as new franchises are let. I welcome this decision, but there is one big problem. Currently, Delay Repay 15 has been rolled out only on franchises that were let after October 2016. Herein lies our issue: the Greater Anglia franchise started in October 2016, but the franchise agreement was signed in August 2016. Eligibility for Delay Repay 15 has therefore been denied to the great eastern main line for a number of years as a consequence of a handful of weeks or even, dare I say, days. The irony is not lost on me that it is a timetabling issue that has delayed the introduction of Delay Repay 15 on our line. *[Interruption.]* That was poor, I appreciate.

Passengers on the great eastern main line are still only offered the original Delay Repay scheme, which compensates customers for the occasions on which they

are delayed for 30 minutes or more, not the improved Delay Repay scheme for delays of 15 minutes or more. I can assure you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that it is quite incredible how many journeys are 27, 28 or 29 minutes late. I have been on many of them, and 29 minutes is quite a long time to be delayed, even when it affords a good opportunity to take in some of the beautiful north Essex countryside. *[Interruption.]* And, indeed, Suffolk, which I believe is also very beautiful.

What I am concerned about—hence this debate—is that if Delay Repay 15 is rolled out if the franchise is re-let on the same timetable as its predecessor scheme, passengers on our line will not have access to the DR15 scheme until October 2025, when the current franchise ends. That would be totally unacceptable. Fortunately, in November 2016 the Government stated their intention to explore the roll-out of Delay Repay 15 during that Parliament. Subsequently, in February 2018, the former Minister of State for Transport, my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Joseph Johnson), confirmed in a written response to my right hon. Friend the Member for Witham:

“The Department has received a proposal from Greater Anglia in relation to implementing Delay Repay 15 before their present contract expires. This proposal is in the early stages of being reviewed and analysed to determine whether it is affordable and represents value for money.”

May I ask the Minister what progress has been made in these talks, which were in their early stages one year ago? I am calling on the Department for Transport to ensure that talks with Greater Anglia are fast-tracked to ensure that great eastern main line rail users have the same compensation rights as rail users in other parts of our country. The current situation only entrenches a postcode lottery in a system in which those who use the great eastern main line are less protected from delay and less entitled to compensation than users in other parts of our country.

It seems to me that it is certainly time that Delay Repay 15 was introduced on the great eastern main line. I hope to hear from the Minister that he can offer me and the many rail users on our line—the tens of thousands of rail users—some assurances on this matter and update me on the progress in the talks with Greater Anglia. I really hope that, in the next few weeks and months, we can get this nailed and make sure that our constituents and rail users have exactly the same rights as other rail users up and down our country.

5.4 pm

Vicky Ford (Chelmsford) (Con): I rise to speak in this Adjournment debate to give my extraordinarily strong support to my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester (Will Quince) and colleagues from across the east of England in the campaign to improve the Delay Repay compensation for users of the great eastern main line and specifically to ask the Minister to introduce a 15-minute Delay Repay scheme.

The price of a season ticket from Chelmsford to London is now £5,168. People are paying a huge amount of money to travel on our trains, and when they are delayed or fail to show up, people should be compensated. We must hold the train operators to account. Other parts of the country offer 15-minute Delay Repay services to commuters and rail customers. We rail users in Essex, Suffolk and throughout East Anglia should not be treated as second-class passengers.

[Vicky Ford]

This is not the first time I have spoken on Delay Repay in this House; according to *Hansard*, I have raised the issue four times in ministerial questions. I remember once running into the House from the train station because my train from Chelmsford had been so delayed that morning—I arrived only just in time to ask my question. The Secretary of State has said on the Floor of the House that he hopes that Delay Repay will be introduced this year. I hope that the Minister will be able to give further reassurance.

In Chelmsford, my constituents have faced continual delays and cancellations, especially over the past 12 months. They have also faced situations where trains that were promised to be 12 carriages long turned out to have only eight or four carriages. Chelmsford railway station is the busiest two-platform station anywhere in the country. When trains are shortened or cancelled, it becomes incredibly overcrowded very quickly, putting passengers in danger.

Sometimes passengers cannot get on to the next train. Even though they turned up and hoped to get on a train that in theory was leaving on time, they simply could not get on to it, because it was overcrowded. It has been a complete nightmare, particularly last summer in the heatwave when the air conditioning did not work on many ancient carriages, some of which are 40 years old. Many carriages were taken out of service, so we had more and more short-formed trains.

The good news is that new trains are coming. The vast amount of money—£1.4 billion—that will be spent on brand new trains and rolling stock is really welcome, but my constituents have waited a very long time for those trains. They need to get fair value for money for the service that they are receiving today.

While I have the Minister's ear, I shall refer to some other issues surrounding the rail service. The new trains will help, but as I said, we are the busiest two-platform station anywhere in the country. We have waited at least 20 years for the promised second railway station in Chelmsford. We are building tens of thousands of homes across the Chelmsford district and more widely across our neighbouring district, and a second railway station has been promised for at least 20 years.

I was delighted to hear today that plans are afoot for that railway station in north Chelmsford to become a passing loop, which will help passengers from all across the east of England. A passing loop north of Chelmsford will allow more trains to run along the whole network, so it will be a significant infrastructure improvement. However, we still have to wait many years before that promised railway station comes online, and we still do not quite have the full commitment for funding. I ask the excellent Minister to look at how we can speed up plans to get that second railway station built in Chelmsford, not just for the people of Chelmsford, but for rail passengers up and down the region.

Will Quince: My hon. Friend refers to the Beaulieu Park station, which is important not just for Chelmsford but for the whole great eastern main line, because it affords us the opportunity to create two passing loops between Chelmsford and Colchester. That will hugely increase capacity on our line.

Vicky Ford: Absolutely. I thank my hon. Friend for making that point so clearly. The passing loop will provide the incredibly overcrowded train line that goes across the east of England with more capacity, and that will enable stopping trains to be overtaken by fast trains. That will help people at Colchester and the people who then travel on from Colchester to areas such as Clacton and the stations in between. It will help the people of Norwich and Ipswich, because their trains will be able to overtake at that key point. Rail Minister, this would give us not just a train station but a passing loop—two bits of infrastructure for the price of one. We really must bring it on board.

We have waited many, many months for our 15-minute Delay Repay. As I have said, other parts of the country already have it. Let us get it in the east of England. We should not have a second-class railway service. I will continue to fight for the service my commuters deserve.

5.10 pm

James Cleverly (Braintree) (Con): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester (Will Quince) on securing this debate on a perennial concern for my constituents.

I have lost count of the number of times I have received contact, through social media, email and written correspondence, from my commuters about the Braintree branch line to Liverpool Street. Even from the start of this year, my private office has been inundated with correspondence about the service—the lack of service and the delays to services—my commuters receive. Braintree, the town after which my constituency is named, is the last station on a branch line. This debate is rightly about the introduction of Delay Repay, but my hon. Friend is completely right that ideally we want a situation where my constituents and commuters do not have to rely on repayment or compensation for delayed services. What they really want are regular and reliable services.

All of us who use the railway line understand that, as a branch line service, we have a limited number of trains at our disposal—typically about a train an hour. It is therefore so very important that reliability is at the forefront of the train operating company's priorities. If a train is delayed or cancelled, my constituents are presented with a tough choice: find some means of transporting themselves to Witham, which is where the branch line joins the main line; go into town to Chelmsford for the availability of car parking spaces; or phone work to make their apologies and excuses. That is not a decision that anyone would wish to have regularly forced upon them.

My constituents want to know that, when they turn up at the station, the train that is meant to depart at a certain time will depart at that time and get them to work on time. I have heard anecdotal reports of a number of people losing their jobs or being refused job opportunities because they are unable to get the reliability they need in their working lives—a direct result of the unreliability of the service on my branch line.

Will Quince: I have heard similar anecdotal cases. We must not forget that people do not just have issues getting to work; they need to get home, too. A lot of people have childcare providers. If parents are not back by a particular time, there is a real issue. People are in effect having to make a choice about whether they take

a job that involves commuting into London. That affects our economy, and it affects people's personal, social and family lives. Does my hon. Friend agree that that is not acceptable?

James Cleverly: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Work-life balance is very important. We recognise that commercial activity underpins the funding of public services—that is key—but life balance is also really important. My hon. Friend is the father of two lovely little girls, and I know that he is very proud of them. All of us want to be able to make a commitment to our families, but that is detrimentally affected when services are cancelled and delayed.

Giles Watling (Clacton) (Con): We suffer in Clacton, too, as we are at the end of the line, as my hon. Friend knows. I have a very large number of letters in my mailbox about cancellations and delays. That also happens at weekends—some of my constituents work at weekends—and we have many replacement bus services. That must be dealt with, too. We must have a good weekend service for people who travel not only for work but for leisure activities.

James Cleverly: My hon. Friend is absolutely right.

My hon. Friend the Member for Colchester rightly focused on Delay Repay, and I echo his calls. I will not repeat the requests he made of the Minister—from where I am standing, I can see the copious notes that the Minister has written, so I know he has made a note of that point. There are other things that I would like him to consider. I wrote to him recently about this issue, and he assured me that I will have a reply in good time. I will not chase him on that, because I know that mine is not the only correspondence he has received about this issue.

On encouraging people to use more environmentally friendly modes of transport, I find it difficult to have a meaningful conversation with my constituents about leaving their cars behind. It is very difficult for me to persuade even people who live in Braintree, who have the best opportunity to step away from the internal combustion engine, because their immediate response is, “Well, James, I have to rely on my car because I cannot rely on the trains.” The lack of reliability therefore has an impact not just on train services, but on more environmentally friendly modes of transport.

One of the issues that I brought up with Greater Anglia and that is linked to Delay Repay is the importance of speedy and accurate communications when things go wrong. Everybody is frustrated if a train is delayed or cancelled, but there is perhaps nothing more frustrating than waiting at the station not knowing whether the train is delayed and not having enough facts to make choices about credible alternative methods of transport.

When trains are delayed, my constituents must decide whether to walk back to their house to get their car to drive to another station and to park there, or whether to make alternative arrangements and change their childcare. If they decide to get in their car and move, there is little more frustrating than seeing the train that they could have been on pull out. Communication is therefore key.

Vicky Ford: I want to reinforce my hon. Friend's point. The national rail passenger survey results have just been published, and the satisfaction of our railway

users has dropped significantly. They are particularly dissatisfied with the information and complaints process. Some 48%—nearly one in every two passengers—report that they are dissatisfied with how information and complaints are dealt with. I back my hon. Friend up on this. Minister, we have to get clearer information to passengers. There is no excuse not to; that really could make a difference.

James Cleverly: My hon. Friend is absolutely right.

The final point that I want to make is that my commuters—I am sure this is true of all commuters across the region—are not unreasonable people. They are pragmatic. They understand that the rolling stock is old and is in the process of being replaced. They recognise that the route into London is going through a refurbishment and upgrade programme, which causes disruptions. Even though they pay the same amount of money for their season ticket as people on the main line, they recognise that they are on a branch line, which has certain disadvantages. They are sensible, pragmatic, reasonable people. That said, their patience is not an ever-filling well. When I hosted a public meeting last spring, the passion—I will put it no stronger than that—of my commuters and their desire to see the service and the communication improved and to see Delay Repay introduced in a timely manner cannot be overstated.

I have no doubt that the Minister has heard the concerns of colleagues representing this area, and he knows what we want first and foremost, but I hope that, if he can get a resolution on Delay Repay, he will then turn his mind to other enduring challenges, such as improving communication and wi-fi.

Giles Watling: On communication, it is all very well having Delay Repay—it is good to have it being communicated to passengers—but when Delay Repay 15 is introduced, it must be splashed widely so that everybody knows how to use it and that it is there. Surely that is the point.

James Cleverly: Yes, indeed; it would be good news, and I would strongly urge both the Department and the train operating company to be very vocal if we get it introduced in a timely manner, because it would be welcomed.

5.21 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Andrew Jones): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester (Will Quince) on securing this debate and on giving us the opportunity to discuss these issues. I thank other hon. Members for their contributions. We have had a very positive debate.

I fully recognise the importance of the rail service to the communities my hon. Friends represent. It is not just a question of access to the beautiful landscapes of north Essex or south Suffolk; the line serves areas of economic growth, where we are seeing innovative businesses, high-tech and state-of-the-art businesses, and growth in life sciences and renewable energy. The great eastern main line plays a significant role in unlocking the economic potential and improving quality of life in the areas my hon. Friends represent.

I also fully acknowledge the passion that rail can generate. As people have said, the constant struggle to know what is happening on a network and the impact

[Andrew Jones]

of delays on people's ability to make connections, get to work on time and handle childcare arrangements can be incredibly stressful and frustrating and we should be working flat out to minimise the need for any compensation to be paid at all.

I will address some of the issues raised. Obviously, we have focused today on Delay Repay, as that is the key point of the debate, but I will also touch on the issues of the performance of the network and the new trains that colleagues have raised. On Delay Repay, I recognise that, when things go wrong, we must have some means of appropriate redress. As my hon. Friend the Member for Braintree (James Cleverly) said, people are pragmatic and understand that things can go wrong; they just do not want them to go wrong regularly. Exceptional events we can understand.

These services are critical to how we run our lives. Delay Repay compensation is in place on most of our franchises. In its original form, it offered compensation for delays of 30 minutes or more, but we are improving the scheme by rolling out Delay Repay 15, under which compensation is paid for delays of 15 minutes or more, which will give passengers a better deal. It provides compensation of 25% of the ticket price for delays of 15 minutes or more and of 50% for 30 minutes or more, whatever the cause of the delay or the cancellation and whatever the ticket type.

James Cartledge: The principle underpinning Delay Repay is that people should be compensated for any inconvenience caused, which brings me back to the intervention I made on my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester (Will Quince). Given that a seat is part of a person's understanding of the contract of their ticket, if they have had to stand for the entire journey, is there not a principle that they should be entitled to recompense?

Andrew Jones: It would be very challenging to introduce that extra condition to the compensation structures. We must try to ensure that there are enough seats, but it is hard to guarantee that everyone will have a seat on every occasion. The right to a seat is not actually included in the ticket—the ticket entitles the passenger to ride and to complete the journey, but not to have a seat—although of course we want passengers to have comfortable seats, along with access to wi-fi, power sockets and so forth. I am aware of the issue that my hon. Friend has raised, and I will certainly give it further consideration.

We introduced Delay Repay 15 in Britain's largest rail franchise, Govia Thameslink, on 11 December 2016, and it was introduced in c2c in February 2018. It is also part of the new South Western and West Midlands franchises, and was introduced most recently in the Northern franchise, last December. It will be a contractual requirement for all other Department for Transport franchises when contracts come up for renewal, so it will become a regular feature of what our rail service looks like up and down the country.

Greater Anglia currently offers Delay Repay 30. We have been actively engaged with the company to secure an affordable and value-for-money scheme for the Delay Repay 15 launch, and the process of agreeing on commercial terms is at an advanced stage. We are not quite there

yet, but I can tell Members that I am confident of being able to bring them some news within weeks. I will, of course, ensure that I keep everyone informed of our progress. The Department is doing significant work in liaising with Greater Anglia. The delays in introducing the scheme in franchises are due to the complications involved in changing the nature of the contractual arrangements, and that is the only reason for the delay in this instance.

Vicky Ford: I thank my hon. Friend for telling us that he hopes we will be able to hear more news about Delay Repay within weeks. We have talked a great deal about the complaints that are received, and I receive many, but when we do positive things for our commuters, they really appreciate it. On 2 January I received this little message from one of the younger commuters in my constituency:

"I just got my millennial railcard and will be saving...£1,000 this year! All thanks to a Conservative Government!"

The introduction of this compensation scheme will be greatly appreciated.

Andrew Jones: As ever, my hon. Friend has made a very wise point. On 2 January, the industry introduced the millennial railcard for those aged up to 30, as well as a railcard for 16 and 17-year-olds. Everyone up to the age of 30 now has access to discounted fares via a railcard. We want to ensure that more people have access to our railway.

There have been a few questions about how the rail operating companies handle compensation claims. The Office of Rail Regulation recently published the figures for delay compensation claims settled within the industry target of 20 working days during rail periods 1 to 7. Greater Anglia achieved 99.7% compliance, which means that passengers are receiving their compensation in a timely manner. Figures published by the Department in October last year showed that Greater Anglia is among the leading train operating companies in terms of its passenger compensation claim rate. The research also showed that Greater Anglia is the most proactive TOC on Twitter, accounting for 72% of tweets.

Will Quince: I thank the Minister for giving way again. He is being incredibly generous. May I suggest that one of the reasons why Greater Anglia is so prolific on Twitter is the fact that it has so many rail users who tweet complaints to it, which it has to respond to?

Andrew Jones: I do not quite accept that. We can see passenger numbers. We can see when performances fall. Since taking this role 10 weeks ago, I have found my inner train spotter, and I now look at the train performance of franchise operators several times a day. So my hon. Friend's claim that Greater Anglia is among the worst performers in the country is, I am afraid, not correct.

Mr Mark Francois (Rayleigh and Wickford) (Con): I apologise for joining the debate late; my train was late. More seriously, however, I am pleased to see the Essex posse here in strength this evening, including my hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Rebecca Harris) sitting on the Treasury Bench as the Whip, who unfortunately therefore takes the vow of omertà but who I am sure is with us in spirit.

The problem on the Southend Victoria line operated by Greater Anglia is long-running engineering works, which have been running for two years. We have had some good news from Network Rail that they will now end in the spring of 2020 rather than May 2021. My constituents welcome that, but all the time they are still paying over £5,000 for a season ticket from Rayleigh when they can barely use the service at weekends because there are so many bus services. I have asked Greater Anglia repeatedly to give at least a small discount to my constituents, basically to say, "We share your pain," and I wonder whether the Minister would have any sympathy with long-suffering commuters who pay a great deal of money to Greater Anglia for what is basically essentially a glorified bus service.

Andrew Jones: I am always keen to see value delivered, and I recognise that passengers have to endure a degree of inconvenience or worse when the industry is working on maintaining the network. I am not sure whether we could go as far as to say that that should be a part of compensation, because we can see looking ahead increased investment. We are investing more in our railways than any Government in British history. We have to try to do this in a way that inconveniences as few people as possible, but at the same time recognise that the benefits will be profound and we are catching up on historical underinvestment. It is fair to say that Governments of all colours have underinvested in our transport infrastructure, but that is not an accusation that can be made against this one.

Mr Francois: I thank the Minister for giving way again; I realise that he is tight for time. We have been hearing from Greater Anglia for several years about these new trains, which are going to be the Concorde of the 21st century on rails, with wi-fi and better seats and all the rest of it. However, we can have the best train in the world, but if it is stuck in the depot because the line is closed because engineering works are going on, it is no good to us. I am just trying to convey to the Minister, who is new in the post but I know personally is an excellent Minister—I say that dead straight—the sense of genuine frustration from my constituents that they pay a lot of money for a line that they cannot use for many days of the year, even if the trains will be the best in the world.

Andrew Jones: There is no doubt whatsoever that we do sometimes test the patience of constituents who are enduring delays and constant bus replacement services beyond a pleasant and comfortable level, and the constituents of Rayleigh are well represented by my right hon. Friend.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch (Saffron Walden) (Con): Will the Minister give way?

Andrew Jones: I am more than happy to give way; I do not think we are under quite the time pressure that my right hon. Friend the Member for Rayleigh and Wickford (Mr Francois) thinks we are.

Mrs Badenoch: I thank the Minister for giving way; he is being exceedingly generous. It would not be right for me to hear about an Adjournment debate on Greater Anglia without talking about the issues in my constituency. While I am not on the great eastern main line, I am on

the west, and I cannot help but pick the Minister up on his point about how well it is doing. I want to add my voice to echo my colleagues' concerns. I get lots of letters from constituents who are dissatisfied. Is there something the Minister can do to look again at these statistics that show how well Greater Anglia is doing, because I think many of us would dispute them?

Andrew Jones: I am coming on to the performance of the company, so I will address that point, if I may, in a few moments.

First, let me pick up where we left off on communication, a key point raised by my hon. Friends the Members for Chelmsford (Vicky Ford) and for Braintree. I entirely agree that it is appropriate for the train operating companies to work extra hard to keep passengers informed when things go wrong, or when new services become available. I am not sure that this is a strength of our rail industry as a whole, but I have certainly raised it with the industry. I have talked to most of the TOCs over the past few weeks and have highlighted one thing above all, which is that I want to see a focus on operational excellence to deliver the most punctual network we can. I want them to focus their attention on customers and their communication with customers.

Stephen McPartland: I welcome the massive investment that the Government are making in our railways after many years of underinvestment. Does the Minister accept that a lot of the problems on the railways are the responsibility of Network Rail, a state-owned operator, and that local people feel that it is often unaccountable?

Andrew Jones: My hon. Friend makes an informed point. About 70% of the delays on our rail network are caused by works by Network Rail rather than by the train operating companies, so it is appropriate that we put the focus where the cause is.

I am not in any way trying to suggest that Greater Anglia is perfect; I am just trying to put this in context. The hon. Member for Ipswich (Sandy Martin) raised a point about the compensation scheme currently in place. Greater Anglia is one of the better rated companies in that regard. Contact and payment details can be stored in passengers' online accounts so that they do not have to fill in their details each time they make a claim, and delay compensation claims can be made via the Greater Anglia app. The principle of keeping things simple and easy for passengers is absolutely paramount, and I agree with his underlying point on that. We have spent a bit of time talking about Delay Repay, and I want to confirm that that is an absolute priority. Colleagues have asked for my assurance that we will be putting our energy into bringing this over the line as soon as possible, and I am happy to provide that assurance. This is work in progress, and I will ensure that everyone is kept informed of the progress being made.

I want to talk bit about some of the other issues that have been raised. My hon. Friend the Member for Colchester talked about the new trains, and they are indeed coming down the line. I am particularly keen that the current performance of Greater Anglia and Network Rail should continue to improve. Their performance is starting to improve, although there was a difficult autumn period with a mixture of infrastructure faults and train faults—as well as some fatalities; a powerful point was made about the number of suicides

[Andrew Jones]

on our lines—and that has an impact on people. Every single case is obviously an appalling personal tragedy, and that must be borne in mind in any comments that we make. It is also worth noting that the suicide rate in the UK is at a 30-year low. We have seen a fall in the suicide rate on the railways in the past year or so, but it has not been so marked as across the country as a whole.

We have a secure station scheme, which involves an accreditation run through the British Transport police. It has been running for 20 years, and it was refreshed last year to include measures to combat suicide and self-harm. I would be keen to hear from colleagues of any problem areas on the rail network, because I am keen that we should do all we can to help in this regard. That is why we have renewed the secure station scheme to include training and to focus on trying to minimise suicide and self-harm. This is an important point. It is not just about the delays, obviously; it is also about the practical nature of dealing with the intense personal tragedies involved in each case.

Sandy Martin: I believe in giving praise where it is due, and in this particular case I believe that we should give praise to Greater Anglia for the project that it is running—I believe in conjunction with Mind—to help staff to deal with these problems and to reduce the number of suicides on the railways. I really hope that that scheme will be successful as well.

Andrew Jones: That is an important point well made. Up and down the country, we see TOCs partner with either public bodies or, as in this case, successful and important charities. The British Transport Police and the secure station scheme work with the Railway Children and the Samaritans, for example, and such partnerships can make and are making a difference.

I mentioned that performance has been mixed over the autumn period, but it is starting to improve. Looking at the public performance measures, Greater Anglia's PPM for the period ending 5 January was 89.7%, which should be compared with the target in the franchise agreement of 88.7%. However, we want to go even further. We want all passengers on our network to receive the best possible service.

Giles Watling: We are at the end of the line down in Clacton and Walton-on-the-Naze, and it feels like the further away a place is, the more it gets ignored. Will the Minister please give some reassurance to my commuters that their train times will improve?

Andrew Jones: I can absolutely confirm to my hon. Friend that trains cannot go beyond the end of the line, because it then gets very wet. However, there is no way that different parts of the network are being treated disproportionately. There is an even approach, and everybody is entitled to a good service. That is what we are working towards. The Department's work with the train operating company looks at performance as a whole, not individual parts, so I assure my hon. Friend that his concerns are being addressed.

I was talking about how we want to go further. The target is to have over 92% of trains arriving on time by the end of the franchise. Together with Network Rail,

the train operating company needs to manage day-to-day performance and ensure that passengers see performance improve. It is my priority to see our trains provide an excellent service that delivers a network upon which commuters and passengers can rely every day.

Many colleagues have mentioned new trains. Greater Anglia has a great initiative, but it is part of a bigger scheme right across the country. Some 7,000 new carriages will be entering service on our network over the next two years, and the change is comparable to the UK's move from diesel to steam. It is that kind of scale of development. The new trains will deliver significant improvements for passengers. In Greater Anglia's case, the entire fleet of trains will be replaced, with over 1,000 new carriages on order. They are being built by Stadler and Bombardier, with manufacturing and construction well underway. The first five of the new Stadler trains have been delivered to Norwich Crown Point depot, where they are undergoing testing and acceptance processes.

We expect that the new trains will start to be rolled out across the network from the middle of this year, with the full roll-out completed by the end of 2020. These state-of-the-art trains will provide many more seats for busy services, which relates to points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for South Suffolk (James Cartledge) and the hon. Member for Coventry South (Mr Cunningham). The new trains will be more efficient, accelerate faster and have much better customer information. They will also provide a much-improved on-board environment with wi-fi, air conditioning and power sockets, which goes back to the contribution from my hon. Friend the Member for Braintree.

I want to inform the House that Greater Anglia has a franchise commitment to deliver two direct trains each weekday between Liverpool Street and Norwich in 90 minutes and two direct trains each weekday between Liverpool Street and Ipswich in 60 minutes. Those new services follow long-standing campaigns from both sides of the House, and they will commence in May. Since the start of the franchise, Greater Anglia has invested over £100 million at stations and depots and in ticketing initiatives. Major station upgrades have been completed at Norwich, Ipswich, Cambridge and Chelmsford, but I will have to take away the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford about the second railway station there. I will need to do a bit of research to provide the exact up-to-date position, but I will write to her with that information. I recognise the point about two for one and the passing loop, which has improved resilience across the entire network.

Vicky Ford: I thank the Minister so much for saying that he will do some up-to-date research. Will he also arrange to meet me to discuss the issue?

Andrew Jones: I would be delighted. We will get that in the diary rapidly.

Let me give the House a degree of context, because the Government are continuing record levels of spending. The budget for control period 6, which is the next period of rail investment funding starting in April 2019 and running through to 2024, is around £48 billion, the largest in British history. We are delivering the biggest rail modernisation programme in over a century, which means faster journeys, longer trains, longer platforms and more seats for passengers. We use giant numbers in

the rail sector, but it comes down to what we are delivering for the rail journeys that our constituents make every day.

I am aware of the renewal work as part of the upgrade, and I recognise that it is not possible to work on the railways without causing some degree of inconvenience, but it is all about improving the reliability of our network. In the past we saw a bias towards enhancements, new services and new infrastructure, rather than maintenance. That will change in control period 6, with a bias back towards maintaining the network to reduce things such as speed restrictions and to make services more reliable by unscrambling some of our rather ancient Victorian infrastructure.

The national rail passenger survey results have been mentioned, and they were published yesterday. Overall satisfaction with Greater Anglia has dropped by eight percentage points, compared with the same period last year, to 73%, and no company would want to go backwards. The most significant falls in satisfaction, compared with last year, are on: punctuality, down 10 percentage points; the helpfulness and attitude of staff, down nine percentage points; and connections with other services, down nine percentage points. That decline in satisfaction is disappointing, and it is for Greater Anglia to work closely with Network Rail to improve its performance and to deliver the service and punctuality its customers expect. I include communication improvements within that, as that has been mentioned by colleagues. I will be holding Greater Anglia to account for delivering it.

The Government set the maximum amount by which regulated fares can rise, and train operators can choose to raise their fares by a lower amount. There is no requirement for rail operators always to raise by the maximum. This year we have capped regulated fare rises in line with inflation for the sixth year running.

Mr Francois: I am grateful to the Minister for squeezing me in. He may be aware that Greater Anglia went right to the top of the cap by imposing an increase, from memory, of 3.1%, whereas c2c, which runs the line along the Thames coast, went for only 2.5%, or thereabouts. A lot of commuters on Greater Anglia, who have all the issues that I will not repeat, are particularly put out by the fact that Greater Anglia basically charged the full whack, whereas c2c, which runs one of the most efficient and effective services in the country, felt that it did not need to do so. Does it seem equitable that the people running the better, more punctual service had a lower increase and the people running the worse service went the whole way?

Andrew Jones: It is difficult to comment on that, because each individual company sets its own fares. Frankly, I want to see, as we all want to see, people retain more of their own money, which is why, from a broader Government perspective, we have had the increase in the personal allowance and the fuel duty freeze and why, from a rail industry perspective, we are in the sixth year of regulated fares. I want us to have lower fares all round, although I recognise that 98% of the money that comes in via the farebox is automatically reinvested in the network, so the farebox is a critical part of delivering the upgrades that we seek for passengers.

Mr Francois: There is a strong rumour among commuters in my constituency that Greater Anglia borrowed the money for the new trains in the City at something like

8% interest. If that is true, given current interest rates, it would be completely financially incompetent, and I can only imagine that Greater Anglia's finance director was educated at the shadow Home Secretary's school of mathematics. Is that true?

Andrew Jones: I do not know the commercial terms of that particular arrangement. These are private matters. The particular school to which my hon. Friend refers is, I think, mercifully not that full of students.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Lindsay Hoyle): Order. I think we are being good natured and ought not to be tempted to start scoring political points on what is an important matter to Members' constituents. I am sure the Minister got the point but did not want to answer it.

Sandy Martin: Will the Minister accept that although the regulated fares have gone up by something approaching 3%, there were unregulated fares that went up by very much more than that? Can he explain why, for instance, the Anglia rover ticket went up by something approaching 30%?

Andrew Jones: I am afraid we will have to take up that individual question with the rail operating company. The position we are taking is that we impose the cap on regulated fares, where customers do not have a choice, so that they do not become the victims of insufficient market choice. That is how the system was created and that is why we have run it for six years in a row.

We have been talking about how we can take cost out. As we look into rail inflation, we recognise the need to move away from RPI towards CPI. The Secretary of State has discussed this with rail operating companies and written to the rail trade unions to ask for their understanding and co-operation. I have also discussed the issue with the rail trade unions when I have met them, although we have not yet made quite the progress that I was hoping for.

One thing highlighted has been the nature of value, not just the absolute price. The point about value is well made, because it is a question of the absolute price for the goods and services received. I hope we will be able to demonstrate significantly greater value as some of the benefits of the investment come through. We will see those benefits in more reliable journeys, greater resilience in the network and, in particular, the new rolling stock.

I appreciate that passengers across the region, including Colchester, have not always had the service that they deserve. The maintenance of a high standard of customer service performance is the absolute priority, but I recognise that when things go wrong, passengers should receive the appropriate level of compensation. The focus of our discussions with Greater Anglia are to ensure that the key criteria we have been talking about today are satisfied and delivered, and that we reach agreement to implement Delay Repay 15. My commitment to the House is that I will focus on this over the next few weeks.

With the record level funding on our network services and new rolling stock being rolled out this year by Great Anglia, I am optimistic about anticipated improvements for constituents in Colchester and right across East Anglia.

[Andrew Jones]

I hope that, in a year's time, passengers across Colchester, and right across the east of England, will see the very real benefits of the investment that matches our railway vision—

Will Quince *rose—*

Andrew Jones: I had just one word left to go.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Lindsay Hoyle): Order. I can help the Minister. He did not have to give way. Come on, Will Quince.

Will Quince: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I was actually rising to thank the Minister for being so generous in taking so many interventions during this debate.

Andrew Jones: That is extremely kind of my hon. Friend. I have to say that I want to make absolutely sure—

Mr Deputy Speaker: One word.

Andrew Jones: I want to make absolutely sure that I answer colleagues' concerns wherever I can and keep colleagues posted. Do you want to hear a bit more about rail investment in East Anglia, Mr Deputy Speaker? [Interruption.] Well, that may have to wait for another time.

We have had a very good debate on the issues today. I just want to make sure that colleagues do not leave the House feeling that we are not bold in our ambitions. We have a plan to deliver the services that they want and expect for the constituents that they serve.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I have just one quick question for the Minister. Did you get an apology from the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon)? We have missed him tonight.

Question put and agreed to.

5.55 pm

House adjourned.

Deferred Divisions

EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION (CONSUMER PROTECTION)

That the draft Consumer Protection (Enforcement) (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2018, which were laid before this House on 4 December 2018, be approved.

The House divided: Ayes 309, Noes 268.

Division No. 314]

AYES

Adams, Nigel
Afolami, Bim
Afriyie, Adam
Aldous, Peter
Allan, Lucy
Allen, Heidi
Andrew, Stuart
Argar, Edward
Atkins, Victoria
Bacon, Mr Richard
Badenoch, Mrs Kemi
Baker, Mr Steve
Baldwin, Harriett
Barclay, rh Stephen
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
Braverman, Suella
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, 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
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 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
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
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
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
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
Lord, Mr Jonathan
Loughton, Tim
Mackinlay, Craig
Macleane, 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
Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
Moore, Damien
Mordaunt, rh Penny
Morgan, rh Nicky
Morris, Anne Marie
Morris, David
Morris, James
Morton, Wendy
Mundell, rh David
Murray, Mrs Sheryll
Murrison, Dr Andrew
Neill, Robert
Newton, Sarah
Nokes, rh Caroline
Norman, Jesse
O'Brien, Neil
Offord, Dr Matthew
Opperman, Guy
Paisley, Ian
Parish, Neil
Paterson, rh Mr Owen
Pawsey, Mark
Penning, rh Sir Mike
Penrose, John
Percy, Andrew
Philp, Chris
Pincher, rh Christopher
Poulter, Dr Dan
Pow, Rebecca
Prentis, Victoria
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
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, Iain
 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

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

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
 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, 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
 Lavery, Ian
 Law, Chris
 Lee, Karen
 Leslie, Mr Chris
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Linden, David
 Lloyd, Tony
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lucas, Ian C.
 Lynch, Holly (*Proxy vote cast
 by Mark Tami*)
 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, 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
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, Grahame
 Murray, Ian
 Nandy, Lisa
 Newlands, Gavin
 Norris, Alex
 O'Hara, Brendan
 Onn, Melanie
 Onwurah, Chi
 Osamor, Kate
 Owen, Albert
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Perkins, Toby
 Phillips, Jess
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Pidcock, Laura
 Platt, Jo
 Pollard, Luke
 Pound, Stephen
 Powell, Lucy
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Rashid, Faisal
 Rayner, Angela
 Rees, Christina
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reeves, Rachel
 Reynolds, Emma
 Rimmer, Ms Marie
 Rodda, Matt
 Rowley, Danielle
 Ruane, Chris
 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

NOES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
 Amesbury, Mike
 Antoniazzi, Tonia
 Ashworth, Jonathan
 Bailey, Mr Adrian
 Bardell, Hannah
 Barron, rh Sir Kevin
 Beckett, rh Margaret
 Benn, rh Hilary
 Berger, Luciana
 Betts, Mr Clive
 Black, Mhairi
 Blackford, rh Ian
 Blackman, Kirsty
 Brabin, Tracy
 Brake, rh Tom
 Brock, Deidre
 Brown, Alan
 Brown, Lyn
 Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
 Bryant, Chris
 Buck, Ms Karen
 Burgon, Richard
 Butler, Dawn
 Byrne, rh Liam
 Cable, rh Sir Vince
 Cadbury, Ruth
 Cameron, Dr Lisa
 Campbell, rh Sir Alan
 Campbell, Mr Ronnie
 Carden, Dan
 Champion, Sarah
 Chapman, Douglas
 Charalambous, Bambos
 Cherry, Joanna
 Clwyd, rh Ann
 Coaker, Vernon
 Coffey, Ann
 Cooper, Julie
 Cooper, Rosie
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy
 Cowan, Ronnie
 Crausby, Sir David
 Crawley, Angela
 Creagh, Mary

Creasy, Stella
 Cruddas, Jon
 Cummins, Judith
 Cunningham, Alex
 Cunningham, Mr Jim
 Daby, Janet
 Dakin, Nic
 Davey, rh Sir Edward
 David, Wayne
 Davies, Geraint
 Day, Martyn
 De Cordova, Marsha
 De Piero, Gloria
 Debbonaire, Thangam
 Dent Coad, Emma
 Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
 Docherty-Hughes, Martin
 Dodds, Anneliese
 Doughty, Stephen
 Dowd, Peter
 Drew, Dr David
 Dromey, Jack
 Duffield, Rosie
 Eagle, Ms Angela
 Eagle, Maria
 Edwards, Jonathan
 Efford, Clive
 Elliott, Julie
 Ellman, Dame Louise
 Elmore, Chris
 Esterson, Bill
 Evans, Chris
 Farron, Tim
 Fellows, Marion
 Field, rh Frank
 Fitzpatrick, Jim
 Fletcher, Colleen
 Flint, rh Caroline
 Fovargue, Yvonne
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Frith, James
 Gaffney, Hugh
 Gapes, Mike
 Gardiner, Barry
 George, Ruth

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, 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
 Lavery, Ian
 Law, Chris
 Lee, Karen
 Leslie, Mr Chris
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Linden, David
 Lloyd, Tony
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lucas, Ian C.
 Lynch, Holly (*Proxy vote cast
 by Mark Tami*)
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Mahmood, Shabana
 Malhotra, Seema
 Marsden, Gordon

Smith, Owen
 Smyth, Karin
 Snell, Gareth
 Spellar, rh John
 Stephens, Chris
 Stevens, Jo
 Stone, Jamie
 Streeting, Wes
 Swinson, Jo
 Tami, rh Mark
 Thewliss, Alison
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick
 Thornberry, rh Emily
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Trickett, Jon
 Turley, Anna
 Twigg, Derek
 Twigg, Stephen

Twist, Liz
 Umunna, Chuka
 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

Question accordingly agreed to.

EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION (FINANCIAL SERVICES AND MARKETS)

That the Draft Credit Rating Agencies (Amendment, etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, which were laid before this House on 13 December 2018, be approved.

The House divided: Ayes 309, Noes 261.

Division No. 315]

AYES

Adams, Nigel
 Afolami, Bim
 Afriyie, Adam
 Aldous, Peter
 Allan, Lucy
 Allen, Heidi
 Amess, Sir David
 Andrew, Stuart
 Argar, Edward
 Atkins, Victoria
 Bacon, Mr Richard
 Badenoch, Mrs Kemi
 Baker, Mr Steve
 Baldwin, Harriett
 Barclay, rh Stephen
 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
 Braverman, Suella
 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, 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
 Dinanage, 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 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
 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
 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
 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

Jenkins, 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
 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
 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
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Moore, Damien
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morgan, rh Nicky
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Morton, Wendy
 Mundell, rh David
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll
 Murrison, Dr Andrew
 Neill, Robert
 Newton, Sarah
 Nokes, rh Caroline
 Norman, Jesse
 O'Brien, Neil
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Opperman, Guy
 Paisley, Ian
 Parish, Neil
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen

Pawsey, Mark
 Penning, rh Sir Mike
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Philp, Chris
 Pincher, rh Christopher
 Poulter, Dr Dan
 Pow, Rebecca
 Prentis, Victoria
 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
 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, Iain
 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
 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

NOES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
 Amesbury, Mike
 Antoniazzi, Tonia
 Ashworth, Jonathan
 Bailey, Mr Adrian
 Bardell, Hannah
 Barron, rh Sir Kevin
 Beckett, rh Margaret
 Benn, rh Hilary
 Berger, Luciana
 Betts, Mr Clive
 Black, Mhairi
 Blackford, rh Ian
 Blackman, Kirsty
 Brabin, Tracy
 Brock, Deidre
 Brown, Alan
 Brown, Lyn
 Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
 Bryant, Chris
 Buck, Ms Karen
 Burgon, Richard
 Butler, Dawn
 Byrne, rh Liam
 Cable, rh Sir Vince
 Cadbury, Ruth

Cameron, Dr Lisa
 Campbell, rh Sir Alan
 Campbell, Mr Ronnie
 Carden, Dan
 Champion, Sarah
 Chapman, Douglas
 Charalambous, Bambos
 Cherry, Joanna
 Clwyd, rh Ann
 Coaker, Vernon
 Coffey, Ann
 Cooper, Julie
 Cooper, Rosie
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy
 Cowan, Ronnie
 Crausby, Sir David
 Crawley, Angela
 Creagh, Mary
 Creasy, Stella
 Cruddas, Jon
 Cummins, Judith
 Cunningham, Alex
 Cunningham, Mr Jim
 Daby, Janet
 Dakin, Nic
 David, Wayne

Davies, Geraint
 Day, Martyn
 De Cordova, Marsha
 De Piero, Gloria
 Debbonaire, Thangam
 Dent Coad, Emma
 Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
 Docherty-Hughes, Martin
 Dodds, Anneliese
 Doughty, Stephen
 Dowd, Peter
 Drew, Dr David
 Dromey, Jack
 Duffield, Rosie
 Eagle, Ms Angela
 Eagle, Maria
 Edwards, Jonathan
 Efford, Clive
 Elliott, Julie
 Ellman, Dame Louise
 Elmore, Chris
 Esterson, Bill
 Evans, Chris
 Fellows, Marion
 Field, rh Frank
 Fitzpatrick, Jim
 Fletcher, Colleen
 Flint, rh Caroline
 Fovargue, Yvonne
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Frith, James
 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
 Harris, Carolyn
 Hayes, Helen
 Hayman, Sue
 Healey, rh John
 Hendrick, Sir Mark
 Hendry, Drew
 Hepburn, Mr Stephen
 Hill, Mike
 Hillier, Meg
 Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hollern, Kate
 Hopkins, Kelvin
 Hosie, Stewart
 Howarth, rh Mr George
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Hussain, Imran
 Jarvis, Dan
 Johnson, Diana

Jones, Darren
 Jones, Gerald
 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
 Lavery, Ian
 Law, Chris
 Lee, Karen
 Leslie, Mr Chris
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Linden, David
 Lloyd, Tony
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lucas, Ian C.
 Lynch, Holly (*Proxy vote cast by Mark Tami*)
 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, 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
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, Grahame
 Murray, Ian
 Nandy, Lisa
 Newlands, Gavin
 Norris, Alex
 O'Hara, Brendan
 Onn, Melanie
 Onwurah, Chi
 Osamor, Kate
 Owen, Albert
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Perkins, Toby
 Phillips, Jess
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Pidcock, Laura
 Platt, Jo

Pollard, Luke
 Pound, Stephen
 Powell, Lucy
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Rashid, Faisal
 Rayner, Angela
 Rees, Christina
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reeves, Rachel
 Reynolds, Emma
 Rimmer, Ms Marie
 Rodda, Matt
 Rowley, Danielle
 Ruane, Chris
 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
 Spellar, rh John
 Stephens, Chris
 Stevens, Jo
 Stone, Jamie
 Streeting, Wes
 Tami, rh Mark
 Thewliss, Alison
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick
 Thornberry, rh Emily
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Trickett, Jon
 Turley, Anna
 Twigg, Derek
 Twigg, Stephen
 Twist, Liz
 Umunna, Chuka
 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

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
 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 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
 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
 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
 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
 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 Pngelly, Emma
 Lopez, Julia
 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

Question accordingly agreed to.

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.

The House divided: Ayes 310, Noes 267.

Division No. 316]

AYES

Adams, Nigel
 Afolami, Bim
 Afriyie, Adam
 Aldous, Peter
 Allan, Lucy
 Allen, Heidi
 Amess, Sir David
 Andrew, Stuart
 Argar, Edward
 Atkins, Victoria
 Bacon, Mr Richard
 Badenoch, Mrs Kemi
 Baker, Mr Steve
 Baldwin, Harriett
 Barclay, rh Stephen
 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
 Braverman, Suella
 Bridgen, Andrew
 Brine, Steve
 Brokenshire, rh James
 Bruce, Fiona
 Buckland, Robert
 Burghart, Alex
 Burns, Conor
 Burt, rh Alistair
 Cairns, rh Alun
 Campbell, Mr Gregory
 Cartlidge, James
 Cash, Sir William
 Caulfield, Maria
 Chalk, Alex
 Chishti, Rehman
 Churchill, Jo
 Clark, Colin
 Clark, rh Greg
 Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth
 Clarke, Mr Simon
 Cleverly, James

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
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Moore, Damien
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morgan, rh Nicky
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Morton, Wendy
 Mundell, rh David
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll
 Murrison, Dr Andrew
 Neill, Robert
 Newton, Sarah
 Nokes, rh Caroline
 Norman, Jesse
 O'Brien, Neil
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Opperman, Guy
 Paisley, Ian
 Parish, Neil
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Pawsey, Mark
 Penning, rh Sir Mike
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Philp, Chris
 Pincher, rh Christopher
 Poulter, Dr Dan
 Pow, Rebecca
 Prentis, Victoria
 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
 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, Iain
 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
 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

NOES

Amesbury, Mike
 Antoniazzi, Tonia
 Ashworth, Jonathan
 Bailey, Mr Adrian
 Bardell, Hannah
 Barron, rh Sir Kevin
 Beckett, rh Margaret
 Benn, rh Hilary
 Berger, Luciana
 Betts, Mr Clive

Black, Mhairi
 Blackford, rh Ian
 Blackman, Kirsty
 Brabin, Tracy
 Brake, rh Tom
 Brock, Deidre
 Brown, Alan
 Brown, Lyn
 Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
 Bryant, Chris

Buck, Ms Karen
 Burgon, Richard
 Butler, Dawn
 Byrne, rh Liam
 Cable, rh Sir Vince
 Cadbury, Ruth
 Cameron, Dr Lisa
 Campbell, rh Sir Alan
 Campbell, Mr Ronnie
 Carden, Dan
 Champion, Sarah
 Chapman, Douglas
 Charalambous, Bambos
 Cherry, Joanna
 Clwyd, rh Ann
 Coaker, Vernon
 Coffey, Ann
 Cooper, Julie
 Cooper, Rosie
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy
 Cowan, Ronnie
 Crausby, Sir David
 Crawley, Angela
 Creagh, Mary
 Creasy, Stella
 Cruddas, Jon
 Cummins, Judith
 Cunningham, Alex
 Cunningham, Mr Jim
 Daby, Janet
 Dakin, Nic
 Davey, rh Sir Edward
 David, Wayne
 Davies, Geraint
 Day, Martyn
 De Cordova, Marsha
 De Piero, Gloria
 Debbonaire, Thangam
 Dent Coad, Emma
 Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
 Docherty-Hughes, Martin
 Dodds, Anneliese
 Doughty, Stephen
 Dowd, Peter
 Drew, Dr David
 Dromey, Jack
 Duffield, Rosie
 Eagle, Ms Angela
 Eagle, Maria
 Edwards, Jonathan
 Efford, Clive
 Elliott, Julie
 Ellman, Dame Louise
 Elmore, Chris
 Esterson, Bill
 Evans, Chris
 Farron, Tim
 Fellows, Marion
 Field, rh Frank
 Fitzpatrick, Jim
 Fletcher, Colleen
 Flint, rh Caroline
 Fovargue, Yvonne
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Frith, James
 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
 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, 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
 Lavery, Ian
 Law, Chris
 Lee, Karen
 Leslie, Mr Chris
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Linden, David
 Lloyd, Tony
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lucas, Ian C.
 Lynch, Holly (*Proxy vote cast by Mark Tami*)
 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, 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
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, Grahame
 Murray, Ian
 Nandy, Lisa
 Newlands, Gavin
 Norris, Alex
 O'Hara, Brendan
 Onn, Melanie
 Onwurah, Chi
 Osamor, Kate
 Owen, Albert
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Perkins, Toby
 Phillips, Jess
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Pidcock, Laura
 Platt, Jo
 Pollard, Luke
 Pound, Stephen
 Powell, Lucy
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Rashid, Faisal
 Rayner, Angela
 Rees, Christina
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reeves, Rachel
 Reynolds, Emma
 Rimmer, Ms Marie
 Rodda, Matt
 Rowley, Danielle
 Ruane, Chris
 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
 Spellar, rh John
 Stephens, Chris
 Stevens, Jo
 Stone, Jamie
 Streeting, Wes
 Swinson, Jo
 Tami, rh Mark
 Thewliss, Alison
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick
 Thornberry, rh Emily
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Trickett, Jon
 Turley, Anna
 Twigg, Derek
 Twigg, Stephen
 Twist, Liz
 Umunna, Chuka
 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

Baker, Mr Steve
 Baldwin, Harriett
 Barclay, rh Stephen
 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
 Braverman, Suella
 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, 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
 Dinage, 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 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
 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
 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
 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

Question accordingly agreed to.

RADIOACTIVE SUBSTANCES

That the draft Carriage of Dangerous Goods (Amendment) Regulations 2019, which were laid before this House on 20 December 2018, be approved.

The House divided: Ayes 309, Noes 265.

Division No. 317]

AYES

Adams, Nigel
 Afolami, Bim
 Afriyie, Adam
 Aldous, Peter
 Allan, Lucy
 Allen, Heidi
 Amess, Sir David
 Andrew, Stuart
 Argar, Edward
 Atkins, Victoria
 Bacon, Mr Richard
 Badenoch, Mrs Kemi

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
 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
 Liddington, rh Mr David
 Little Pengelly, Emma
 Lopez, Julia
 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
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Moore, Damien
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morgan, rh Nicky
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Morton, Wendy
 Mundell, rh David
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll
 Morrison, Dr Andrew
 Neill, Robert
 Newton, Sarah
 Nokes, rh Caroline
 Norman, Jesse
 O'Brien, Neil
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Opperman, Guy
 Paisley, Ian
 Parish, Neil
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Pawsey, Mark
 Penning, rh Sir Mike
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew

Philp, Chris
 Pincher, rh Christopher
 Poulter, Dr Dan
 Pow, Rebecca
 Prentis, Victoria
 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
 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, Iain
 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
 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

NOES

Amesbury, Mike
 Antoniazzi, Tonia
 Ashworth, Jonathan
 Bardell, Hannah
 Barron, rh Sir Kevin
 Beckett, rh Margaret
 Benn, rh Hilary
 Berger, Luciana
 Betts, Mr Clive
 Black, Mhairi
 Blackford, rh Ian
 Blackman, Kirsty
 Brabin, Tracy
 Brake, rh Tom
 Brock, Deidre
 Brown, Alan
 Brown, Lyn
 Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
 Bryant, Chris
 Buck, Ms Karen
 Burgon, Richard
 Butler, Dawn
 Byrne, rh Liam
 Cable, rh Sir Vince
 Cadbury, Ruth
 Cameron, Dr Lisa
 Campbell, rh Sir Alan
 Campbell, Mr Ronnie
 Carden, Dan
 Champion, Sarah
 Chapman, Douglas
 Charalambous, Bambos
 Cherry, Joanna
 Clwyd, rh Ann
 Coaker, Vernon
 Coffey, Ann
 Cooper, Julie
 Cooper, Rosie
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy
 Cowan, Ronnie
 Crausby, Sir David
 Crawley, Angela
 Creagh, Mary
 Creasy, Stella
 Cruddas, Jon
 Cummins, Judith
 Cunningham, Alex
 Cunningham, Mr Jim
 Daby, Janet
 Dakin, Nic
 Davey, rh Sir Edward
 David, Wayne
 Davies, Geraint
 Day, Martyn
 De Cordova, Marsha
 De Piero, Gloria
 Debonnaire, Thangam
 Dent Coad, Emma
 Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
 Docherty-Hughes, Martin
 Dodds, Anneliese
 Doughty, Stephen
 Dowd, Peter
 Drew, Dr David

Dromey, Jack
 Duffield, Rosie
 Eagle, Ms Angela
 Eagle, Maria
 Edwards, Jonathan
 Efford, Clive
 Elliott, Julie
 Ellman, Dame Louise
 Elmore, Chris
 Esterson, Bill
 Evans, Chris
 Farron, Tim
 Fellows, Marion
 Field, rh Frank
 Fitzpatrick, Jim
 Fletcher, Colleen
 Flint, rh Caroline
 Fovargue, Yvonne
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Frith, James
 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
 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, 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
 Lavery, Ian
 Law, Chris
 Lee, Karen
 Leslie, Mr Chris
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Linden, David
 Lloyd, Tony
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lucas, Ian C.
 Lynch, Holly (*Proxy vote cast
 by Mark Tami*)
 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, 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
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, Grahame
 Murray, Ian
 Nandy, Lisa
 Newlands, Gavin
 Norris, Alex
 O'Hara, Brendan
 Onn, Melanie
 Onwurah, Chi
 Osamor, Kate
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Perkins, Toby
 Phillips, Jess
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Pidcock, Laura
 Platt, Jo
 Pollard, Luke
 Pound, Stephen
 Powell, Lucy

Qureshi, Yasmin
 Rashid, Faisal
 Rayner, Angela
 Rees, Christina
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reeves, Rachel
 Reynolds, Emma
 Rimmer, Ms Marie
 Rodda, Matt
 Rowley, Danielle
 Ruane, Chris
 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
 Spellar, rh John

Stephens, Chris
 Stevens, Jo
 Stone, Jamie
 Streeting, Wes
 Swinson, Jo
 Tami, rh Mark
 Thewliss, Alison
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick
 Thornberry, rh Emily
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Trickett, Jon
 Turley, Anna
 Twigg, Derek
 Twigg, Stephen
 Twist, Liz
 Umunna, Chuka
 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

Question accordingly agreed to.

Westminster Hall

Wednesday 30 January 2019

[GERAINT DAVIES *in the Chair*]

Early Parenthood: Supporting Fathers

9.30 am

Tracey Crouch (Chatham and Aylesford) (Con): I beg to move,

That this House has considered supporting fathers in early parenthood.

As always, Mr Davies, it is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship. I hope you will forgive me if I make any minor procedural errors; it has been a while since I have been on the Back Benches of the Westminster Hall Chamber, rather than closer to the wise counsel of the Chair.

I begin with two quick disclaimers. First, although my debate is about supporting fathers in early parenthood, I am extremely conscious that there is still much to do to combat inequality during maternity. I am an avid follower of Maternity Action and support many of its campaigns, some of which I know are making good progress. Secondly, this debate is not meant as a dismissal of the wonderful mums out there who are single or in same-sex couples. It is not about mums versus dads, nor am I pontificating only about married parents—not least because that would make me a hypocrite. I simply want to speak up for the many brilliant dads out there who, in an evolving society, are doing an incredible job of bringing up children. I want to highlight some of the real challenges that they too face.

Dr Rupa Huq (Ealing Central and Acton) (Lab): I am grateful to the hon. Lady for giving way so early in her speech. She is making a fantastic return to Westminster Hall from the dizzying heights; she is a principled person and we on the Opposition Benches all love her.

The hon. Lady mentions challenges. Is she aware of Dads House, which does all sorts of things to represent single dads? There are 400,000 single-parent families headed up by dads, which is 13.7% of all single-parent families. Dads House has its own food bank and does buddying, breakfast clubs and football—a sport that is close to the hon. Lady's heart. Would she be interested in meeting members of the group? In fact, everyone in this House has a good opportunity to meet them, because after Prime Minister's questions on 20 March they are coming to Speaker's House for a reception with the all-party parliamentary group on single parent families—and all hon. Members are invited. The group does great work.

Tracey Crouch: I would love to come. Single parents play an incredibly important role, but for various reasons they are often maligned. Meeting single dads who are doing their very best, in whatever circumstances they find themselves bringing up their children, is an incredibly important part of that conversation. I would be delighted to come to the event on 20 March.

I want to address three points: perinatal support, loneliness in new dads, and shared parental leave. The first comes wholly under the Department of Health and Social Care; the second does partially; the third might not, but is important to the debate because it relates to the overall wellbeing of our children.

In December, the Centre for Social Justice published a really interesting report, "Testing Times: Supporting fathers during the perinatal period and early parenthood". It looked in detail at written evidence submitted to the Select Committee on Health and Social Care inquiry into the first 1,000 days of life by the Fatherhood Institute, which described support for fathers as "toothless" and noted criticisms that within health services, "well-meaning...father-inclusive policy-making...has been more 'rhetoric than reality'".

On the back of those comments, the CSJ did some additional polling. It found that seven in 10 new fathers "were made to feel like a 'spare part'",

six in 10 said that they had

"had no conversations at all with a midwife about their role",

and nearly half said that they had

"received little or no advice at all...on their role as a dad."

However, it also found that

"more than 9 in 10 are present 'at the scans and the birth'"

and that there is

"strong correlation between active father engagement and improved childhood outcomes."

That is a recurring theme in a really interesting book on equal parenting co-authored by one of our own lobby journalists, James Millar. It includes several quotations from the 2015 UN-backed report, "State of the World's Fathers", about how engagement in the first year of a baby's life is good for the dad as well as the baby. Substantial and high-quality father involvement can encourage a child's positive social interaction and lead to higher cognitive development scores.

Tim Loughton (East Worthing and Shoreham) (Con): I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing a debate on this important issue. It is hardly surprising that so many dads feel left out when the NHS guidance refers to them not as fathers or dads but as "birthing partners". Perinatal depression in mums is linked to depression in teenagers: there is a 99% likelihood that a 16-year-old suffering from depression had a mother with perinatal mental health problems, including depression. What is overlooked is that 20% of fathers also experience perinatal mental health problems, which has a big influence on their parenting skills and on their engagement with and attachment to their own children. We need to do more about that.

Tracey Crouch: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising that point. I saw those statistics while researching my speech; perhaps the Minister's reply will describe her Department's work on post-natal depression for mums and dads. I do not have time to cover everything, but I agree that language is incredibly important. I appreciate that the term "birthing partners" is used in order not to cause offence, because our society and how we bring up children are very different now, but it is important that we think about the language and make our communication with fathers as inclusive as possible.

Michael Tomlinson (Mid Dorset and North Poole) (Con): I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing this important debate. Was she struck, as I was, by the statistic cited in the CSJ report that

“95 per cent of births in the UK are to couples...with 85 per cent of these parents living together”?

Far more needs to be done to encourage and support the family and the community at that stage, to help improve life chances.

Tracey Crouch: I did see that interesting statistic. I do not want to get into the details of family make-up in a modern society, because I do not want us to inadvertently criticise those who are not in such relationships—it is important that we respect different family make-ups. The point that I wish to raise today is about fathers and the role that they play.

The excellent book on equal parenting co-authored by James Millar notes the “State of the World’s Fathers” report’s finding that

“fathers who report close, non-violent connections with their children live longer, have fewer mental or physical health problems...and report being happier than fathers who do not report this connection”.

Given the well-understood positive outcomes of fathers’ engagement in their children’s development, it is only right that we should have the infrastructure and systems in place to support them. As the CSJ report states, we need to collect more data at the point of birth to get a better understanding of participation by fathers, but also identify “cold spots” for investment in supporting father engagement.

We definitely need to be a bit more dad-friendly in our language and correspondence about children’s healthcare. I agree with the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children that a “dad check” would be a valuable way for our health services to ensure that resources are open and accessible to new fathers. I also agree with the recommendation that NHS England should roll out schemes that increase support to fathers. That support should include either creating a new fatherhood fund or making the maternity challenge fund a general parental support fund and putting in additional investment.

The CSJ makes commendable recommendations for the Department of Health and Social Care to improve inspection frameworks, develop a dad test for the perinatal period and extend the reach of digital communications for new fathers. Those all seem sensible ideas; I accept that resources are always a challenge, but the long-term health and wellbeing outcomes must surely justify their consideration.

Chris Elmore (Ogmore) (Lab): I thank the hon. Lady for her well-informed discussion of this important issue. She may be aware of my constituent Mark Williams, who has been a campaigner for the best part of a decade on fathers’ mental health after childbirth. He has been fundamental in pushing the campaign in all nations of the UK, including in the English NHS. He tells me frequently that—as the hon. Lady says—in the services that follow a baby’s birth the father is almost forgotten.

Mark had a breakdown—I know he will not mind my saying that on the Floor of this Chamber. It took him years to understand what was wrong, but now he champions

the issue. Does the hon. Lady agree that we need more fathers like Mark to stand up and say that this is a problem? As she will be aware from her former role as a Minister, loneliness and mental health are an issue, and it is worse in men because we do not like talking about it. We need more people like Mark to speak up about what they face after having children.

Tracey Crouch: I could not agree more. It is almost as if the hon. Gentleman has seen my speech, because I am about to start talking about loneliness in new fathers. We need to talk more about men’s mental health and to look at the triggers for poor mental health. It is a well-established consideration for mothers—health visitors and other members of the health services regularly ask about the mother’s mental health after a birth. It is not necessarily the same for men’s mental health. Quite often—although as I far as I can remember, it was not the case when my son was born, nearly three years ago—mothers are asked questions by health visitors that relate to the father of the child, rather than the father being asked directly, even when they might be in the same room.

Chris Elmore: Does the hon. Lady agree that there needs to be far more training in midwifery or mental health services on focusing on the father’s mental health as well—not just asking the mother about her partner, but creating a structure from very basic training that recognises that fathers are a person, too, in this context? They need the questions put directly. Often husbands and partners will simply not tell their partner how they are feeling or how they are responding to the birth of their child, so the partner might think that everything is fine, and it is all missed. That is the important point.

Tracey Crouch: One reason why I wanted to hold this debate is that I feel it is hard for male colleagues to raise the subject. As a mother, I know that if my other half had come to me and said, “I am feeling a bit down,” I would have said, “But you didn’t give birth to the child!” For many years, we have forgotten that it is very much about a partnership. There are many issues that mothers still face—there are still huge issues around discrimination in maternity and everything else—but that must not mean that we forget the issues that fathers face, and that is why this is an important debate.

I completely understand why male colleagues might not have felt comfortable in raising this issue, because they may well feel that they would be accused of forgetting all the other issues around maternity discrimination. I feel very honoured to be raising it on behalf of all the dads out there. Perhaps I can talk about it with more ease.

The constituent of the hon. Member for Ogmore (Chris Elmore) is doing a brilliant job in raising the issue of men’s mental health, post-baby. It is important that we do that. If that equates to having more training, that is what must happen, although I am always loth to say that our hard-working health professionals need any more training than they already get. They have a very important job to do, and by and large they are all doing it brilliantly.

One aspect of parenthood that can impact on wellbeing is loneliness. When Jo Cox stood in the Chamber and spoke of her own challenges with loneliness, including the example of becoming a mother, she widened discussion

on the subject. I, too, had my own brushes with maternity-leave loneliness. While the rest of the world here was discussing the referendum campaigns, I was on maternity leave. I dealt with that by going to the supermarket every day, just for a chat.

For new fathers, it can be harder. When my other half took his three months shared parenting leave, he felt isolated from baby groups, as many were either branded “mother and baby” or were predominantly made up of mums, making him feel less inclined to go in. There are excellent apps connecting mums, such as Mush, which we profiled in the loneliness strategy, as did the CSJ in its report, but there are hardly any dad apps set up to connect full-time fathers. The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with his digital background, may be interested in upscaling that from a health perspective.

The loneliness strategy, which I was privileged to publish on behalf of the Government in October 2018, specifically, on my request, used an infographic of a dad pushing a baby to highlight becoming a parent as a trigger for loneliness while at the same time reflecting that it is not a gender issue. The more we all acknowledge loneliness as an issue, the quicker we will reduce the stigma and instead create connections that help to combat it. I was pleased that the Department of Health and Social Care was a core partner in the delivery of the strategy.

The CSJ noted that children’s centres are a key part of delivering opportunities for dads to connect, and that many were not doing so, despite its being a legal requirement. I know that children’s centres are a politically contentious issue because of funding and I would hate the debate to be bogged down by that, but the centres in my constituency, some of which have restructured, could play an enormously important role in creating support networks for dads. It is a shame that because of funding pressures, gaps in services are occurring.

Tim Loughton: My hon. Friend makes a very important point. The problem with the children’s centres—a fantastic asset—at the moment is that they are closed most of the time when dads can access them, particularly at weekends. Some of the best children’s centres are those that open at weekends, have football teams that dads and their children can come along to, and have computer-reading facilities latched on to that. It is a way of getting dads into the children’s centres. The centres need to be used much more at weekends and outside of working times when many fathers cannot access them.

Tracey Crouch: I agree with my hon. Friend, but it is very important that we do not fall into the trap of talking about dads as weekend parents. The point of the debate is to discuss how society has evolved; there is a lot more equal parenting. I completely understand his point. I shall come on to talk about shared parenting. The take-up of shared parenting is so low that many fathers can play that meaningful role in parenting only at weekends, so we would want those services to be open. Children’s centres have an incredibly important role, which is not just about creating a connection, but also about, for example, trying to break the cycle in domestic abuse. They play a fundamental role. I know that the Stefanou Foundation is doing some excellent work in supporting such initiatives.

I accept that my own experience is based on good fortune, and that it could easily be criticised as coming from a comfortably-off middle-class professional, but we need to do so much more on shared parenting than we do at the moment. We lag very far behind other countries on shared parenting, particularly Scandinavian countries.

What I see from my other half taking shared parenting is a very special bond between him and our son. Sadly, there are still a significant number of men who are ineligible for parental leave, and for those that are eligible there is a financial disincentive to take it. The Fawcett Society found that nearly seven in 10 people believed that men who took time off work to look after a baby should be entitled to the same pay and amount of leave as women. In Germany, fathers on leave are paid two thirds of their salary and in Sweden it is 80% of their income. Here it is £145 per week. We managed because I am paid well, but an average or low-income family would inevitably struggle, so while many might want to, it is unsurprising that take-up of parental leave is so low.

I know that much work is being undertaken to improve the situation. I thought the speeches in our debate on proxy voting on Monday evening encouraging male colleagues to take shared parenting leave were really helpful, and we could set an example in this place. I commented earlier on the wider societal and health benefits of a father’s meaningful engagement in the upbringing of a child. To me, doing more to improve our shared parenting policies is a no-brainer.

There is so much more I could have spoken about this morning, including the emerging organisations that help support fathers, such as workingdads.co.uk, which seeks employment with flexible, child-friendly hours, and the really funny social media accounts, such as Man vs. Baby, which might make light of some of the challenges that fathers face but also highlights that they exist in the first place. Ultimately, if we accept that meaningful fatherly engagement with their children is good for the health and wellbeing not just of the child but of the dad, making sure that we provide the infrastructure to support them, from neonatal to perinatal and beyond, is simply common sense, fair and equal—good economics but also really good politics.

Geraint Davies (in the Chair): Order. We have six speakers, which with my maths makes about six minutes each. I would like to introduce an advisory limit of six minutes. As with the EU referendum, it is not mandatory, but I strongly advise it. I invite Paul Masterton to start.

9.49 am

Paul Masterton (East Renfrewshire) (Con): Thank you, Mr Davies. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Chatham and Aylesford (Tracey Crouch) on securing this debate, and I thank her for her support for new MPs who are also fairly new dads. I very much valued the advice that she gave to me in conversations in the Tea Room in my early days here, as I tried to struggle with the largely impossible balance of being an MP and having a young family.

I will touch on a few things from my own experience as a dad of two under-fives. Both my kids were born between midnight and 2 am. It is quite difficult, about

[Paul Masterton]

90 minutes after a child is born, for a father to have his wife and child go to the maternity ward while he is simply waved off to drive home. I am lucky; I live about 20 minutes from the hospital, the roads are good, and both my kids were born in May. Lots of dads will drive home in very difficult conditions and will be mentally, physically and emotionally exhausted. Would it not be nice if dads could spend a bit more time on the maternity ward in those early days? It sets much of the tone for how dads feel in those early months—as if they are one step removed from everything that is going on around them.

After I went back to work, my two overriding emotions were guilt and jealousy, neither of which are very healthy. I felt guilty that my wife had to do all the legwork, and jealous of the fact that she was spending all the time with the kids. I really welcome all the stuff that is being introduced by NHS England—and now also up in Scotland—to try to include dads more in those early parts of the services. As my hon. Friend the Member for Chatham and Aylesford said, things are quite good on the pre-birth element. Dads go along to the scans and classes, but then they are just chucked to the side in a lot of ways. We need to involve dads much more.

A lot of the support groups are very helpful. I always used to try to get away from work as early as possible and rush home, and I wanted to do loads when I got home. My wife used to say to me, “Well, no, actually, I need you to be the best version of yourself, so don’t feel guilty about getting a good night’s sleep. Don’t feel guilty about going to the pub or seeing your friends, because if you’re in a better frame of mind and feeling better, then you’re a better support for me.” It is important to help new dads to have that confidence in what they are doing.

The last thing I want to mention is although new dads are lots of things, they are not counsellors or trained mental health professionals. It is very difficult for a dad if he is not sure whether his partner is just feeling a bit down or whether there is something that he should be more worried about. I will never forget my wife saying to me one day when she was a bit upset, “I just feel like my world is so small and I don’t know where I stand anymore.” I did not know what to do about that or whether it was something that I should be bothered about. If I am supposed to speak to somebody, who do I speak to? The health visitor comes when I am at work, and I am not going to speak to my colleagues about it. I am not going to sit at my computer at work and type in, “Is my wife depressed?” on Google.

We should not think of support for new dads as just support for them as individuals; we should think about it as supporting new dads to support their partners better. That is the best way to ensure that kids get the best possible grounding in their early years, and to keep a strong, solid functioning family unit that is needed to give children the best start in life.

9.53 am

Andrew Selous (South West Bedfordshire) (Con): It is a pleasure to speak in this debate. I begin in the same way as my hon. Friend the Member for Chatham and Aylesford (Tracey Crouch) did, by saying that we are all

here for mums as well, including single mums. In fact, the last debate of this nature that I shared with the Minister was on maternal perinatal mental health. A number of men led that debate, so it goes without saying that we are all 100% behind mums and single mums, just as we are behind dads.

Mums need support, so an important issue is involving fathers and helping them to play their role in equal parenting, which is a really important phrase—I am glad it has been introduced several times in this debate. We know from the research that we are not getting this right at the moment, because 69% of fathers feel like a spare part. If fathers are supported and helped to be involved, as the vast majority of them want to be, they have the ability to offer round-the-clock support to new mums.

There are some worrying figures on what is going on at the moment. Looking at income groups, less than 31% of people earning under £20,000 turn up to antenatal classes; among those earning more than £70,000, more than 71% turn up. We are not managing to reach really important groups of fathers who need that support. The inspection framework does not look hard enough at what areas are doing to help fathers—indeed, fathers are absent from a lot of the inspection frameworks.

From Government research in 2012, we know that if fathers are involved in the care of a young child, parents are a third less likely to split up. When the Minister was recently before the Select Committee on Health and Social Care to discuss suicide prevention, she said that debt and relationship breakdown are the two major causes of suicide. That is a really powerful reason, with a number of important outcomes, as to why we should help fathers to be involved in the care of their new-born children.

In 2016, we set up a £39 million fund at the Department for Work and Pensions to reduce parental conflict in workless families, which was an excellent initiative that I really support. We need a second fund to improve the quality of relationships between couples who are at risk of separation when they have new children. There is evidence to support that, and I think there is an overwhelming need. It would be really helpful for mothers. I ask the Minister to take it back to the Department and to the inter-ministerial working group on the first 1,000 days, with which she is fully engaged. That would be a really good development.

I want to give a plug for a little programme called “Let’s Stick Together”. I am not allowed visual aids, so I better not hold it up, but the course reading material could fit into a purse or wallet very easily. I have personally handed a copy to our last two Prime Ministers and encouraged them to take it up across Government. It contains some really simple tips to help the quality of a couple’s relationship when they have a new child. I commend the work of the charity Dads 2 Be, which is active in a number of hospitals in south London. It focuses on antenatal work for groups of dads and helps them with the changes to their life, and also focuses on improving relationship quality. My question to the Minister is very simple, and it is my overriding plea to her: given that we are doing this in some NHS hospitals, can we please do it everywhere, throughout these islands, across the whole of our United Kingdom? It is sensible and a no-brainer. Dads want it, and we know there would be better outcomes for mums and children.

I commend some quite simple changes. A health visiting team in Lincolnshire managed to increase the participation rate of fathers in the primary birth visit from 20% to 70% by addressing their letter, “Dear new mum and dad” rather than just, “Dear parent”. That is a really simple thing and did not cost any money. It said very clearly to fathers, “We want you. You’re important and welcome. We expect and want you to turn up, and we’re here to help.” We can do some simple things that do not cost a lot of money; they just cost some political will. They are really needed, and I ask the Minister to do them.

9.59 am

Fiona Bruce (Congleton) (Con): Dads are good for lads—I know, because I have two boys—if only because they can share the interest of football. More seriously, it is true that fathers are good for sons in many ways. Anything we can do to support that relationship—and by we I mean the Government—we should do. I echo the respect expressed by others, which I share, for the Herculean task that single parents—most frequently, mums—do to bring up their children. Where we can, we need to look at how we can strengthen family relationships in a society where, today, over a quarter of children live with mum but not dad. More than one in seven are born into homes where there is no dad present.

The implications of that are serious; I will share a couple of sad statistics. The lack of a good male role model in young men’s lives is helping to lure them into substitute families: gangs. Apparently, most of the 50,000 or so young people caught up in county lines activities have come from homes where there has been no good male role model. Similarly, 60% of the sons of men in prison are likely to end up in prison, too. That statistic is even worse if both the father and a brother are in prison—it is then a 90% likelihood.

Those are staggering statistics that show why it is so important that we and the Government try to support families more. That support is positive for children and for the wider community.

Eddie Hughes (Walsall North) (Con): I hope that later on in her speech my hon. Friend will refer to “A Manifesto to Strengthen Families”, which I believe has been endorsed by more than 60 MPs and has been available to Government for over a year now. It would be good to see some of its policies championed by Government.

Fiona Bruce: My hon. Friend makes an excellent point and I will indeed refer to it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chatham and Aylesford (Tracey Crouch), who introduced the debate so well, referred to a CSJ report from this year. Another CSJ report, “Every Family Matters”, which was produced as long ago as July 2009, said very similar things, such as the importance of strengthening families and of having a good, strong input into a child’s life. Yet I have here an interesting statistic: 43% of unmarried parents split up before a child’s fifth birthday, but only 8% of married parents do. That is an interesting factor for us to consider: if we are looking at strengthening family life, we should not forget that supporting marriage is part of that.

Sadly, the UK has one of the highest rates of family breakdown among the 30 OECD countries. Just two thirds of children aged nought to 14 live with both parents. In the OECD countries overall, 84% of children of those ages live with both parents. Very interesting work is being done on the link between those factors and British productivity, which is 18% below the OECD average.

Tim Loughton: I admire my hon. Friend’s determination to promote marriage, but I must give a plug for my private Member’s Bill on civil partnerships, which, if it passes through the Lords, will make civil partnerships available for opposite sex couples by the end of this year. They would be an additional incentive for those couples to stay together, as overseas statistics show, particularly for the good of the children.

Fiona Bruce: It is so important that we do what we can. In the very short time that I have left, I will touch on some of the practical policies in “A Manifesto to Strengthen Families”, which more than 60 Members of Parliament support, and express a degree of frustration that the Government have not taken them up more practically. I know that individual Cabinet Ministers are very interested, but in order to see some real progress we need a senior Cabinet-level Minister who is responsible for drawing together the manifesto’s several policies.

I will touch on some of the manifesto’s policies on fathers. Policies 8, 9 and 11 talk about promoting the importance of active fatherhood in a child’s life. Policy 8 says:

“Maternity services should maximise opportunities to draw fathers-to-be in early.”

Policy 9 proposes that, where appropriate,

“The Government should...require all fathers to be included on birth certificates.”

Policy 11 proposes that “high quality marriage preparation” should be available at a cost-effective rate for young people thinking of getting married.

Finally, one of our key policies is the promotion of family hubs. As we have heard, children’s centres are not always as effective as they need to be. Families need support bringing up children, not just aged nought to five, but nought to 19. In the teenage years particularly, the input by fathers into their sons’ lives is often critical. We believe that it would be really positive to have family hubs in each local community, to support families at every stage of a child’s development.

I am disappointed that the Government have not taken that up more strongly. We shall continue to persevere and to press them to do so. The good news is that many local authorities have taken up those ideas very strongly and family hubs are springing up across the country. I invite colleagues to a family hubs fair, which will take place on 14 February. It is convened by Westminster City Council, which is setting up its own family hubs. The fair will flagship best practice from local authorities across the country that have set up family hubs, specifically to show how we can best support families with children. I am sure that there will be many examples of how we can best support fathers to engage in their sons’ lives, which is such an important thing on which we need to focus.

10.6 am

Douglas Ross (Moray) (Con): I commend my hon. Friend the Member for Chatham and Aylesford (Tracey Crouch) for securing this debate. She showed that the role of champion that she played in ministerial office has continued into what I hope will be the short period that she is on the Back Benches. I also declare an interest: I decided to speak in the debate as a learning exercise, because I will become a father for the first time in just over five weeks.

That brings me to the point on which I want to start. This House has finally moved into the 21st century, following Monday's decision on proxy voting. It took an awful long time to get to that stage, but it was a welcome step forward. Last night, we had the first proxy vote used in Parliament. I hope to be the first male Member of Parliament to use the proxy voting system in early March.

I commend the CSJ report for a number of points that it highlighted. One of the most shocking was that only 60% of dads had no conversations at all about their role with midwives. I am one of that 60%; I have had none of those conversations at all. My wife has had excellent care with her midwife, usually when I am down in London, that I hear about on the phone or when I get home. I am one of the 60% who have had no involvement whatsoever.

I found some of the report's other findings shocking as well. Only 25% of fathers felt that there was enough support to help them play a positive role in family life, while 60% felt emotionally unsupported when they first became a father. Similar research in Scotland, by Fathers Network Scotland, concluded that NHS Scotland—this is not a critical point, but highlights feelings across the country—is failing to provide family-centred antenatal, maternity and health visitor services. Unless we accept that there is a problem, nothing will change.

The Fatherhood Institute identifies that poor relationship quality and engagement from fathers is a key driver in post-natal depression, which was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Chatham and Aylesford. That is surely another good reason for more involvement by father, to their own benefit and that of the mother and child, which is acknowledged by the Royal College of Midwives.

There is a local element to the issue. I was not in Parliament on Monday for the debate on proxy voting because I had stayed my constituency to attend an extremely important public meeting on our maternity services. They had been downgraded at Dr Gray's Hospital, and we no longer have a consultant-led maternity service. A great campaign, Keep Mum, has been running for a number of months to get that service back. Although Dr Gray's does not have a consultant-led service, a large proportion of our expectant mothers have to travel to Aberdeen to give birth—that is more than 70 miles away.

At the moment, my wife is on a green pathway, so we will not have to do that, but we might have to travel the 70 miles to Aberdeen on one of the worst roads in Scotland—the A96 across the Glens of Foudland. This morning, there is an inch of snow in Moray. As my hon. Friend the Member for East Renfrewshire (Paul Masterton) very ably put it, a father is almost dumped after his wife has given birth, and heads home, not in a correct state

of mind. What state of mind will expectant fathers be in, as they drive through snow for 70 miles to go to Aberdeen, with the mother of their child potentially giving birth in the back of their car? That is what Moray constituents have to do at the moment, which is why it is so important for us to return the Dr Gray's maternity service to a full, consultant-led one.

I will finish with a few of the important recommendations in the CSJ report. I was surprised that one even needed to be made, and it reads

“all official correspondence relating to the care and health of a child should be addressed directly to both parents”.

It is incredible that at the moment both parents are not addressed.

I was, however, reminded of a constituency case that I am dealing with at the moment, which is extremely sad and involves a child who died shortly after birth. The mother contacted me because, when she went to register the birth of their young child, who only lived for a few hours, only one parent had the opportunity to sign the register. That tends to be the mother, who has gone in to do that. She was shocked that the father, who had been so important a part of the process, was not allowed to have an acknowledgement on the death certificate that he had a part to play in the child being born and, sadly, dying. I have written about it to the registrars in Scotland.

Another recommendation was:

“NICE should review the evidence”—

the lack of evidence—

“on...the antenatal and post-natal period and produce a single set of standards for health care professionals...on the role of fathers.”

That, too, is very important.

To follow up on the point made by the previous speaker, my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Fiona Bruce), about a champion in Government, the report recommends that a Government “fatherhood champion” should be appointed. It adds that the champion should be either a “peer or senior MP”, so I am not auditioning for the role at the moment. It is, however, a very good recommendation. We see in our local authorities and the Scottish Parliament, where I used to sit, that where we have a dedicated champion, the issues are highlighted in Parliament and Members have the opportunity to express their views. A champion to drive things forward can be a positive step.

I am about to enter another exciting chapter in my family life, in five weeks' time. Looking around at all the hon. Members speaking as fathers today, I can see that it is a bright future—they are all bright eyed and bushy tailed. I look forward to it, and I greatly appreciate the time that my hon. Friend the Member for Chatham and Aylesford secured today to allow Parliament to discuss this important issue.

Geraint Davies (in the Chair): I am sure we all wish you and your wife very well.

10.12 am

Ben Bradley (Mansfield) (Con): It is a pleasure to take part in this debate, and I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Chatham and Aylesford (Tracey Crouch) on securing it.

In my constituency, many fathers are in single-parent families or play a significant role in childcare responsibilities, and it is important to recognise the invaluable role that fathers play in bringing up their children. That is not always an easy job—I apologise to my hon. Friend the Member for Moray (Douglas Ross) for saying that, but he also has a lot to look forward to. Like my hon. Friend the Member for East Renfrewshire (Paul Masterton), I have two children under five myself, two boys. Parenthood can be a huge challenge, but becoming a father is my proudest achievement—even more so than being elected to this place, if anyone can believe that—and something that has changed my life entirely.

In my experience, parenting support groups are aimed largely at mothers and in the early days, weeks and even years, some fathers struggle to find support networks and others in a similar position. My hon. Friends talked about the statistics and fathers feeling like a spare part during pre and post-natal discussions and services. That mirrors my experience. My hon. Friend the Member for East Renfrewshire talked about being sent home from hospital. My first son was born in the middle of the night, and I was out of the hospital within 45 minutes of that happening. I came back the next morning at 8 o'clock to be told that I would not be allowed in until visiting time at 10.30 am. Fortunately, in the end I managed to find my way in, but that is one example of the challenges.

Another example I remember is to do with breastfeeding. My first son was bottle-fed; I was involved in that, getting to feed him and connecting with him in that way. My second son was breastfed, and I felt thoroughly left out of that bonding process—in a way jealous, as my hon. Friend said, of that connection between my wife and son that I was not able to engage in. There are many examples of difficult and stressful circumstances that bring about emotions that are not necessarily helpful or healthy in that environment.

Young fathers need support. I represent the community of Mansfield, so I will highlight the particular challenges of working-class fathers, those on low incomes especially, who face the additional challenges of accessing housing or affording parental leave, for example. Mental health issues are not based on wealth or background, so we can all be susceptible to such difficulties. While it is widely acknowledged that working-class boys, for example, are likely to have lower educational attainment and fewer life chances, it is not acknowledged that their extra difficulties and challenges might extend to parenthood as well.

The added burden of a low income, trying to afford not only the cost of living but the additional costs of parenthood, is an extra stress that often falls on fathers in particular. We all know the shocking statistics on young men's mental health, especially suicide, and the early weeks and months of having a first child in particular can be among the most stressful times in the life of a family and of a father, and difficult to cope with for our own mental health and wellbeing.

Since becoming an MP, I have looked at the area of early intervention for families and children, and I took part in the family hubs debate in Westminster Hall not so long ago. It seems obvious that if families do not receive that early assistance when they first need it, instead being left to deal with the issues alone, that will come out in later life, as has been discussed. The early

years challenges show themselves later on, through school, when children with mental health and behavioural problems might often come at greater cost to public services than if they had received the early intervention.

The Children's Society has produced some pretty shocking statistics to show that in Nottinghamshire alone, 1,000 children are known to children's services because of abuse or neglect. That figure must be brought down, and I think that we can do that by being more proactive and by providing the intervention and support services in early parenthood, with training and help for fathers as well as mothers about their roles and responsibilities and the support available to raise children.

I strongly believe that a preventive approach is the right one. In such services, we tend to deal with crises and, increasingly, those services are built around crisis management rather than proactive and preventive support. Putting an emphasis on parenthood and establishing relationships between fathers and support services has to be a priority. Trust is hugely important.

I remember the experience of a social services visit after the birth of my elder son. They sent me out of the room to get a glass of water and asked my wife if I was abusing her. That is something that they do in all circumstances—it is the right thing to do, to check that the family environment is safe for mother and baby—but I felt pretty put out. Fortunately, my wife joked about it with me afterwards.

For a young man from a difficult background, however, someone who had problems at school or has been involved with social services historically, I imagine that that could add to the feeling of being labelled and held up as a bad person, a bad character, by the services that are meant to support parents. That can add to the challenges and the stress, and is another thing that might need to be discussed more openly in terms of the challenges that might face young, low-income working-class fathers in particular.

Nottinghamshire County Council is striving to achieve more co-ordinated and multi-agency support, which is vital. The more that we can do to reduce barriers between services the better. Across the piece, there is such a challenge of competing budgets and priorities, making services more difficult to deliver. I would welcome anything that the Minister can do to bring down the barriers between local authorities and health services that always exist. For example, co-ordination and support from the health service in particular is not always there for children's services in Nottinghamshire.

That is a particular ask I have of the Minister. Effective use of funding, catching problems early, and having early preventive services, to prevent people from spiralling into crisis—saving money on more intensive intervention later—are also vital if we are to support children, families and in particular fathers in communities such as Mansfield and throughout the country.

10.19 am

Eddie Hughes (Walsall North) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Davies.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Chatham and Aylesford (Tracey Crouch) for securing this excellent debate. As I have tweeted, what a great group of Conservative dads are supporting the debate, although I feel slightly unhappy about speaking after three people

[*Eddie Hughes*]

who are young enough to be my children. That makes me feel a little bit old. I wanted to contribute because my early career highlights the difficulty that dads can have. I thank my first wife for being kind enough to have our children on a Saturday evening, which meant I was dismissed from the hospital, and about an hour after my children were born I was in the pub with about 30 friends and family celebrating the birth. It all turned out damned convenient for me, although having heard stories from others, I appreciate it can turn out differently.

I started life as a civil engineer, working on a building site in an obviously male dominated environment. I will not make excuses for that, but construction, particularly the very large-scale construction I was involved in, has a particular nature. The idea that I might have gone to work one day and suggested to my boss that flexible working would be a good idea, and asked whether I could come in a bit later, is incredibly difficult. By the time I was 25, I was running a building site with a gang of up to 50 blokes who would have thought I was crazy. We were on site at 7 o'clock in the morning in a process that meant that if someone did not turn up and do their job at a particular time, other people would not be able to do theirs.

Fortunately for me, I decided that working outside was too cold, and joined an American company called Cartus, where I was responsible for maintenance of the properties in its portfolio nationally. I found the world to be a completely different place. It was a much more welcoming environment with regard to flexibility in the workplace, but I may not have appreciated at the time the majority female workforce. I mention that because, in preparation for this debate, I read documents and papers from around the world, and I had not realised how difficult legislation is in America. I read a paper from the National Bureau of Economic Research, published in 2015, when a form of parental leave was just being introduced in California. The early research from that paper showed that if parental leave was introduced, fathers were more likely to be engaged in parental support, and that, interestingly, fathers are more likely to take up that parental leave for their first child or if the child is a boy.

Clearly, there is some work to be done to ensure that men do not lose interest after the first child and that they take equal interest in daughters and sons. I have one of each, and I appreciate the stress that goes with having a daughter. She seemed considerably more difficult for me to manage and look after than my son did. It is interesting that research suggests that there might be a difference in the way they are treated.

Government have a role to play, and that does not always have to cost money. We need to show intent; we need to show men that they have a role to play and that it is important in the 21st century that they play it to their fullest ability. For that not to be the case seems counterintuitive. I loved my role as a dad; in fact, I told colleagues earlier that I am ready to be a grandparent and I have made sure my children are aware of that. There is no rush, but I will be ready when they come. Indeed, the hon. Member for Hampstead and Kilburn (Tulip Siddiq), who recently gave birth, sent me a photo, which made me immediately feel paternal.

We have a role to play, but what will we do to play it? Documents have been mentioned, and "A Manifesto to Strengthen Families", published more than a year ago, has some excellent ideas for Government to follow. As has been mentioned, we have a more significant male population in prison, so it is very important to ensure that men do not lose contact with their families. To reduce reoffending rates, we need to maintain that bond.

Andrew Selous: My hon. Friend may not be aware that the Ministry of Justice commissioned the Farmer review, which offered 21 recommendations to strengthen the family relationships of prisoners, because there is evidence that that leads to less reoffending and keeps us all safe. The Ministry of Justice has adopted those 21 recommendations, so there has been some progress made in that area.

Eddie Hughes: It is excellent and reassuring to hear of that progress. The point was also made about the amount of paternity pay—£145.18. When I started work on a building site, I earned £50 a day, so £250 a week. Even 30 years ago, it would have been very difficult for me, as a young man starting off with a young family, to cope on a reduced income of £145, for a couple of weeks. It is great that the opportunity is there for men to take two weeks of leave, but it is important to try to make sure that is not financially difficult.

This is a complicated area, so I conclude by referring my constituents in particular to the website of the Share the Joy campaign, where they can find more details of their rights with regard to maternity and paternity leave. They can get more details about sharing parental leave up to 50 weeks, so they can take leave together and share the parenting experience very early on in their children's lives.

10.25 am

David Linden (Glasgow East) (SNP): It is always a great pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Davies. Like other Members, I warmly congratulate the hon. Member for Chatham and Aylesford (Tracey Crouch) on an excellent debate. I find coming to Westminster Hall like seeking refugee status in this place, having come out of the Chamber where there is an incredibly volatile and divided atmosphere. This debate has probably been the highlight of my week so far. We can have a debate with such consensus, and it would be better if we could do that more often. We have had an excellent debate so far. The hon. Lady kicked off by talking about perinatal depression and tackling loneliness; she made some points about shared parental leave, which I will come back to in due course.

The hon. Member for East Renfrewshire (Paul Masterton) gave a very thoughtful and considered speech. Some of what he said resonated with me. He and I live relatively close to each other, so we share the geography of how far the hospital is. Later in my remarks I will return to the experience of having to leave the hospital very soon after the birth of a child. He spoke about the feelings of guilt and jealousy; I was walking across Westminster bridge this morning while facetimeing my wife and my four-month-old daughter. As dads we feel guilt and jealousy, and he was right to place that on the record. The hon. Member for South West Bedfordshire

(Andrew Selous) cited some statistics that hammer home the point that some income groups are not part of the antenatal experience; I certainly saw that in the last round of antenatal classes we went to.

The hon. Member for Congleton (Fiona Bruce) has a very strong record of talking about family values; I know she was trying not to go down the route of single parents, but I was reflecting as she spoke, as someone brought up by a single mum. When I came home from school for the first time, my mum asked me what I had learned. I said, “I went to the toilet and there were walls that went, ‘Whoosh!’” That had made the biggest impact on me because, having been brought up by a single mum, I had never before been in a male toilet before. Perhaps others had a more formative experience on their first day of primary 1, but that was mine. The hon. Lady made a strong case for “A Manifesto to Strengthen Families”. I have not looked at that, but after the debate I certainly will.

The hon. Member for Moray (Douglas Ross) is about to join the crazy club of fatherhood. I think I speak on behalf of everyone in the Chamber in wishing him every success in the run-up to March. It is simultaneously the most chaotic and blessed time in life. I know we all send him our good wishes. Rightly, he made criticisms of where we have not done things right in Scotland. I have been through the process of having children twice over the last three and a half years; more NHS support should be given. I would be very happy to work with him on that. He was unashamedly, as a constituency MP, talking about the situation of Dr Gray’s Hospital. I will not seek to defend that, because he made a strong point, although I suspect I will get in trouble for saying that.

I absolutely agree with the hon. Member for Mansfield (Ben Bradley) about the importance of family support networks. He also spoke about the importance of early intervention. The hon. Member for Walsall North (Eddie Hughes), in his inimitable style, spoke about his employment experience. I think we are all the richer for that, and I am sure he will become a grandparent sooner rather than later.

I hate being too personal in Westminster Hall, but I will do it anyway. I spent the weekend in Northern Ireland. I mentioned that I was brought up by a single parent. My dad spend quite a significant amount of time in prison. In November, at the age of 52, he died quite suddenly. I had been estranged from him. I have had lots of feelings as the debate has gone on—I have been thinking about prison and about being a single parent. I went to Northern Ireland to go to my dad’s grave and to meet my younger sister, who is only seven years old. Since I returned on Sunday night, I have been reflecting on the difference between me and my sister. I did not have that relationship with my dad—perhaps he did not get the support he needed when I was born—but I have taken great comfort since he passed away from the fact that my sister had such a good relationship with him. To spend that weekend with her and to see that he had made amends and moved on in life was incredibly comforting.

I want also to talk about my experience of becoming a dad. I think people know from my last question at Prime Minister’s questions that both my children were born prematurely and spent several weeks on the neonatal intensive care unit. One of the things I am trying to

push in this place is an extension of paternity leave, particularly when a child is born prematurely. That relates to the point by the hon. Member for East Renfrewshire that, whether their partner is in hospital with their child for a day or for two weeks, the fact that we just send dads home as if they were the cleaner or the cook has a massive impact on their mental health.

I experienced the same situation when my son was born three and a half years ago. He was born and whipped away to neonatal intensive care, and I was left like a spare part. The only difference this time around, when my daughter was born and we went through exactly the same thing, was that about 10 days in we had the opportunity to see a psychiatrist, or a psychologist, to have a bit of counselling. That struck me as a very good thing. I certainly got more out of it than my wife did; she is one of those typical Hebridean women who is very strong—much stronger than me. It struck me as a bit unusual that we were offered that experience; it is only now, after a few months have passed, that I think it was really healthy to be able to sit down and talk about my feelings as a dad. Talking about our experiences is not something we do very well.

Finally, I want to touch on shared parental leave and the paternity leave we offer fathers. I have a degree of frustration about shared parental leave. I do not like the idea that we say, “You’ve got a certain amount of time, and the dad takes time at the expense of the mum.” I would like dads to get a bit longer for paternity leave. My experience of those first two weeks was different, since both my periods of paternity leave were spent on a neonatal ward. In any case, those two weeks tend to be full of family, with the mother-in-law visiting and the house going like an absolute fair. I would like the statutory paternity leave allowance to be doubled to four weeks. I know the Labour party and the Liberal Democrats committed to doing that in their 2017 manifestos. I just have a degree of concern that we provide shared parental leave at the expense of the other parent. It is equally important that mothers, particularly those who are breastfeeding, get that time.

This has been an excellent opportunity for us to come together to look at an area of policy where I think there is a degree of consensus. I very much look forward to hearing what the Minister has to say, because I think we can move this agenda forward. For that reason, I am very grateful to the hon. Member for Chatham and Aylesford for initiating the debate.

10.34 am

Justin Madders (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Davies. I congratulate the hon. Member for Chatham and Aylesford (Tracey Crouch) on securing the debate and on her excellent introduction. As the hon. Member for Glasgow East (David Linden) just said, it has been a very good and well-informed debate, and it has struck the right tone. Perhaps we should take that into other arenas.

The hon. Lady raised three main issues. She referred to the important work of the Centre for Social Justice and mentioned interesting survey statistics—for example, that seven out of 10 fathers said they felt like a spare part, and that six out of 10 had no conversations with their midwife. I think a lot of us would recognise that territory. I remember being on holiday with my wife

[Justin Madders]

and her going up to talk to a woman I had never seen before, who turned out to be her midwife. That shows how difficult it is to engage both parents. I know that the Government are pushing for greater consistency, with the same midwife throughout the journey, but the fact that we have 3,500 midwife vacancies makes that a challenge.

The hon. Lady raised the subject of loneliness, too. I thank her for her work to introduce the Government's loneliness strategy in 2018, building on the Jo Cox Commission, which is led by my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds West (Rachel Reeves) and the hon. Member for South Ribble (Seema Kennedy). That is a hugely important part of Jo's legacy, and I am sure that Members across the House recognise the excellent contribution that the hon. Member for Chatham and Aylesford has made to drawing attention to that issue. There are, of course, many triggers for loneliness, one of which is being a new parent.

The hon. Lady also raised the important role that children's centres can play. Several Members raised concerns about whether they are well enough used. Cuts of 60% to local government funding in recent years have led to the closure of 1,000 children's centres, which provide support to both mothers and fathers in those early years. There is no doubt that that has had an impact.

The hon. Lady is right that we have a long way to go to reach true equality, with shared parenting. Shared parental leave legislation, which has been about since 2015, enables employed couples to split 50 weeks' time off work after the birth of their child. The Government originally estimated that 8% of parents would take up the option of shared leave. However, disappointingly, take-up at the moment is only about 1% or 2%. A recent freedom of information request showed that take-up is particularly low among new parents, with only eight out of every 1,000 eligible people taking up the option. Some 8,700 new parents took up shared leave in 2016-17, and that increased by only 500 the following year.

The Women and Equalities Committee highlighted a number of problems with shared parental leave, including the complexity of the system, low uptake and low pay, and fathers' fears about taking leave because of its perceived negative effect on their careers. There is a cultural issue here, so will the Minister say what can be done to address that?

Shared parental leave does not extend to self-employed parents. At present, self-employed mothers are entitled to statutory maternity pay of £140 per week, but they must take all that in one go and they risk losing their payments if they undertake work outside their 10 allotted "keeping in touch" days. Self-employed fathers do not have access to that at all. I hope that hon. Members will support the Shared Parental Leave and Pay (Extension) Bill promoted by my hon. Friend the Member for Batley and Spen (Tracy Brabin), which would enable self-employed parents to split parental leave and pay between them. Given that the ranks of the self-employed seem to increase every year, will the Minister say whether the Government have any plans to legislate in this area?

Better pay and the option of part-time take-up of shared parental leave would improve access to leave for fathers, particularly those from lower-income groups.

There is strong evidence of the effectiveness of non-transferable paternal leave as a lever for encouraging shared care and reducing the gender pay gap. We know that fathers want to play an active role in their children's lives and families want to spend more time together with a new baby. That is why, as the hon. Member for Glasgow East said, we made a manifesto commitment to double paid paternity leave to four weeks. Fathers are parents too and they deserve to spend as much time as possible with their family.

The hon. Member for East Renfrewshire (Paul Masterton) gave a personal and touching account of his own experiences and set out well how fathers are almost removed from the scene shortly after birth, which is an experience that most of us who have been through that will recognise. Unfortunately, I think that sets a tone for the rest of the early years, if not the whole life.

The hon. Member for South West Bedfordshire (Andrew Selous) drew an interesting and important link between income and antenatal group attendance. He is right that fathers are not included as much as they could be in many of the inspection frameworks. His central point—this is something that we see across a lot of the NHS—is that the best practice is only in pockets, and does not always disseminate out into the whole of the system.

The hon. Member for Congleton (Fiona Bruce) spoke about the importance of families and said that there can sometimes be a cycle of negative experiences throughout the generations.

The hon. Member for Moray (Douglas Ross) gave us the good news about his impending fatherhood, and he raised an important issue about the proximity of maternity services. That does not just relate to the reorganisation of services, as in his case; it is a sad fact that last year, about half of all maternity units had to close their doors temporarily at some point, which meant that someone who was in the process of labour would have to find somewhere else pretty quickly, which can be distressing and inconvenient.

The hon. Member for Mansfield (Ben Bradley) gave a thoughtful and personal account of his experiences of fatherhood; we will all recognise many of things he described. He is right that parenthood is expensive, and that can add to the strain that young families experience. He made an important point about the silo-working that we often see across public sector agencies—a situation that we all want improved.

Finally, the hon. Member for Walsall North (Eddie Hughes) gave some contrasting examples of approaches to flexibility in the workplace and spoke of some of the cultural issues that we have already discussed. There is a need for a more consistent approach across workplaces.

As a father myself, I would like to spend more time with my children—or I certainly did until they became truculent teenagers; things got a little less pleasant then. Seriously, every parent wants to play as much of a role as they can in creating a safe, loving and stable environment for their children, so that they grow up into happy and healthy adults. We know that long working hours and the inflexible working approaches of some organisations make shared parenting duties a challenge. If we are to support men in taking a greater role in the family unit, we need to support men and women having a real and meaningful choice about how they organise their lives; that means family-friendly employment, applied equally to both parents.

It is a well-known fact that the gender pay gap is still here in 2019. The impact of women's being more likely to be in part-time, low-paid or non-paid caring roles has implications for fathers in the workplace. We committed to tackling the gender pay gap and have pledged that in addition to reporting gender pay gap figures, companies will be required to demonstrate how they plan to close their gender pay gap, by producing action plans and taking steps to address the factors that contribute to the pay gap. That will include tackling unequal pay and discrimination and improving access to flexible working and take-up of shared parental leave, to ensure that all employees have a better work-life balance.

I note with interest the proposal from the hon. Member for Chatham and Aylesford for a dad test, which would be applied to the relevant commissioning and inspection frameworks for the perinatal period. We know that this country offers some of the best neonatal care in the world, along with some exemplary psychological and bereavement services. However, as we have already touched on, there is an unacceptable variability across the country. As many as 41% of neonatal units have no access to a trained mental health worker. As has been highlighted in the past few years in our debates about baby loss, that has been an unfortunate experience for some constituents, while others have had access to the very best services. I am sure that we want greater consistency across the board.

I welcome the commitment in the NHS long-term plan to enhanced support for perinatal mental health services, including assessment and signposting to professional supports for fathers and partners. The question—which is the same for a lot of the long-term plan—is, are the resources and staff there to deliver on those important aims?

In conclusion, we are on a journey—we are not there yet—towards a greater understanding and facilitation of the father's role. Every day of a child's early years is hugely important. The more we can do to encourage more and better-quality support during those earlier years, the better.

10.45 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Jackie Doyle-Price): I have enjoyed listening to everyone's contributions this morning. It is often said that MPs do not live in the real world, but we have heard some frank accounts this morning that very much prove that we do; we do share those experiences. I am proud of my hon. Friends who have been raw in their accounts of fatherhood. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Moray (Douglas Ross) has not been put off by any of the things he has heard today.

The tone for the honest and frank accounts was set by the opening comments by my hon. Friend the Member for Chatham and Aylesford (Tracey Crouch), who was characteristically honest in her expositions. I am grateful to her for obtaining this debate. It is time that we gave a big shout-out to dads.

The hon. Member for Ealing Central and Acton (Dr Huq), who is no longer in her place, mentioned the 400,000 single-parent families headed by dads. My partner was one of those 400,000; he raised his son alone for the first 10 years of his son's life. It is often challenging for single dads, as things are focused on the mums. When he first started taking George to primary school, he was viewed as a bit of a curiosity by the mums and the teachers. A lot of low-level discrimination takes place

towards dads in those circumstances, which we ought to be more alive to. That is probably symptomatic of discrimination towards dads. We have heard frankly today that it is all about the mum and the baby, and that the dad is a spare part. My hon. Friend the Member for East Renfrewshire (Paul Masterton) described driving home, having gone through the trauma of childbirth, and asking, "What happens now?", then not being able to visit mum the next morning. Collectively, society needs to be a lot more understanding and welcoming of the father's role in those early days, weeks and months, not least because it gives children the best possible start in life if dad is fully engaged.

We know that now, more than ever. My hon. Friend the Member for South West Bedfordshire (Andrew Selous) is my conscience on these issues. He constantly emphasises to me that good-quality relationships are critical for every member of the family. He is absolutely right. Where society can bolster that, obviously we should take those steps. He has highlighted some things for me to look at, and I assure him that I will.

Childbirth and parenthood is life-changing and my hon. Friends have shared their experiences to illuminate that. Having support from a father as well as a mother is extremely important. We know that there are very real barriers to that involvement, including the pressures of work, which a number of colleagues have alluded to, particularly where employers in particular fields of employment are less than understanding about the fact that family is dad's work as well as mum's. That is something that we need to tackle. We have mentioned that services are not always tailored to dad's needs as well as those of mums.

There is a general lack of information. A life-changing thing happens, and people are kind of expected just to suck it up and go along with it. It can be extremely challenging and scary, so we need to be more understanding of that. We also need to be cognisant of the fact that it is the time of most acute stress and strain on relationships. It is probably the riskiest time for relationship breakdown. We need to make sure that wraparound support is available to dads who need it.

I would like to say that I was satisfied with progress. It is true that progress is being made, but the debate, and the research that has been mentioned, show that we need to do more. Among the things that we are putting in place and expect to deliver, our first steps clearly need to be in maternity services. We believe that they should do more to maximise fathers' involvement, at a time that clearly offers the most important opportunity to engage them in the care of their partner and the upbringing of their children. I can tell my hon. Friends who did not have that experience that we have invested £37 million to support the involvement of fathers in labour and post-natal units, including en suite rooms and double beds adjacent to maternity wards. Clearly, that would be a much better experience for new fathers, and we will make sure that that arrangement is rolled out more and more. National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidance states that women, their partners and their families should always be treated with kindness, respect and dignity. We need to make sure that that is done properly. Scrutiny will be through Care Quality Commission inspections, which will be designed to ensure that maternity services deliver what we expect.

[Jackie Doyle-Price]

Interestingly, according to CQC's survey of women's experience of maternity care, 96% of women said that their partner was able to be involved as much as they wanted during labour and birth. Clearly that is not consistent with the figures that we heard today, but the explanation is probably that the question was asked of mums rather than dads. It illustrates what has been said about feeling like a spare part. My hon. Friends have been honest about their emotions at the time in question, and we know that men are not always frank in exposing their emotions. What the survey tells me is that a mum does not always know that the dad feels completely useless and like a spare part. That tells us that we have an issue to tackle. Seventy-one per cent. of women said that their partner or companion was able to stay in hospital with them as much as they wanted, but that is not borne out by the feedback today. My message going out to the health services is that in addition to inspections and standards there needs to be much more sensitivity and leadership, to make sure that dads are properly considered during such an important period.

I constantly challenge the instinctive prejudice within the system to spend the considerable amount of resource that the Government make available to the NHS on clinicians and clinical support, when we know that wraparound services, as often provided by the voluntary sector, are complementary to the services given by health professionals. When we are talking about supporting families and giving children the best start in life, the voluntary sector can obviously play a part. We have heard good examples of that today.

To move the subject on from birth to early parenthood, children clearly do better when both their parents are involved in their life. Where relationships are less strong, there is a risk of poorer outcomes in the long run, as we have heard today. The quality of fathers' involvement matters more than the quantity of time they spend with their children and partner. We need to champion those who support their partners, which is facilitated by a father's bonding with their baby or young child. When a father is an active parent, the secure attachment that is built as a consequence makes a big difference to the child as they develop their own relationships and resilience; it leads to better outcomes in life. For fathers it can be a positive experience, often helping them to re-engage with education, employment or training, and altering their outlook on life. My hon. Friend the Member for Chatham and Aylesford shared the experience of her partner's doing exactly that.

How can we best support fathers in doing what I have described and exploring how to have the most satisfactory parenting experience? I see health visitors as our army in doing that. We have clear expectations about their work with new families. They keep an eye on them, with a view to getting the best outcomes for children and making sure that the family environment is secure. I see health visitors in that way because they often build a less formal and deferential, and more trusting, relationship with the new family. Often they are the only person who interacts with the dad. We shall be expecting health visitors to do much more to support fathers in the early months and years of a child's life. We expect them to work to ensure that fathers are part of the holistic assessment of family fitness.

Where possible, both parents should be included in health reviews. I have heard the messages from various Members who said that that was not their experience, and we shall give a clear set of messages to the system about addressing that. Such an approach can only boost the chances of intervening early and getting proper support for the mother, the child and the father when it is needed. In doing my job I have been moved by health visitors' accounts. We know that post-birth is a challenging time for mums, when they are most at risk of poor mental health. The feelings of isolation and helplessness on dads' part in those circumstances are extremely difficult, and health visitors are incredibly well placed to provide support then, and steer them towards additional help.

Fiona Bruce: Will that encouragement of fathers include the time before the birth? As I understand matters—this is from CSJ—only about a third of fathers with a household income below £20,000 attend antenatal classes, compared with two thirds of those who are better off. One inhibiting factor is that if people cannot get a free antenatal class, a three-day course costs about £350. That is a lot of money for those who are already financially stretched.

Jackie Doyle-Price: The package of support that we are putting together, in terms of the continuity of carer, starts before birth and is designed to involve both parents. We are aware that there will be constraints on individuals' ability to participate, and we need to make sure that the system is cognisant and respectful of that, and that it can make the relevant changes. My hon. Friend's point is well made.

We need to promote initiatives such as Offload—a Warrington project for men aged 18 and over, in collaboration with rugby league. It helps men to learn the mental fitness techniques of professional sports players, to understand their own needs and help them cope. Such initiatives will enable new dads—because there is an issue with men facing up to mental health challenges—to reach out and get support from their peers.

The hon. Member for Ogmores (Chris Elmore), who is no longer in his place, raised the issue of loneliness, and my hon. Friend the Member for Chatham and Aylesford has done a great deal of work on that. Every father and family will have their own individual story. There is nothing like a life-changing experience to make one feel lonely, because all the familiar support networks are thrown in the air. We will expand social prescribing across healthcare services, so that all GPs can refer lonely patients to voluntary and community organisations. I reiterate that there is a role for the commissioning of the voluntary sector to do important work leading to better health outcomes. We will support spaces for community use, working with local groups to pilot ways to use space, to test how that can improve social connections. We need to make sure that we are keeping our eyes open for signs of loneliness, so that trusted support is given early.

In the short time I have left, I want to go further into the topic of mental health. Colleagues mentioned that 10% of fathers suffer mental ill health at the time of a child's birth. We need to do more to support them. The "DadPack" used in Cornwall to help young fathers is a

great development, and I want to champion all such models. I thank colleagues for the examples they have given.

We have had an excellent debate. It is only the start of our trying to do better at supporting dads and young families. I look forward to engaging with hon. Members on this important issue.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House has considered supporting fathers in early parenthood.

School Funding: Gloucestershire

11 am

Dr David Drew (Stroud) (Lab/Co-op): I beg to move, That this House has considered school funding in Gloucestershire.

I am delighted to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Davies. I welcome the Minister to his place, and I welcome my Gloucestershire colleagues; I am sure they will have things to say, but I know they will be very brief, because I want to make some points.

I will start with the caveat that this debate is about schools funding. There was an excellent debate on a petition on college funding a couple of weeks ago, so I have restricted my remarks to schools funding, but many of them also apply to the college situation in our county. I will begin with four quick quotes:

“We are no longer at the ‘reduce your photocopying stage, provide your own pens and pencils’ stage in Gloucestershire. We are at the ‘don’t expect a TA but do expect a class size of 35 and certainly don’t expect a payrise’ stage.”

Secondly:

“Inclusive schools like ours have to use 85% of the money intended to support vulnerable children with additional needs, to top up the Per Pupil Funding just to reach the same level as local selective schools. This is resulting in a two-tier education system where inclusive schools receive less money.”

Thirdly:

“One of the more tragic results of the cuts for our more vulnerable pupils will be the financial disincentive to give these children places. In an increasingly ‘competitive’ climate there will, sadly, be schools actively finding ways to turn these children away so they become someone else’s problem.”

Finally:

“Like many schools, we have had to set a deficit budget to protect the education of the children in our school. We are finding more children with significant complex educational needs are being placed with us who must be supported from existing budgets with a knock-on effect for the rest of the children within school.”

Those quotes were from a teacher in Gloucestershire, a headteacher of a comprehensive in Gloucestershire, a headteacher of a village primary school and, lastly, a governor.

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (The Cotswolds) (Con): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, my neighbour, for giving way, and I have a lot of sympathy with the people he is quoting. Does he agree that we are spending a record amount on education, but the distribution system is totally unfair, and the difference between the highest-spending local authority and one of the lower-spending local authorities, such as Gloucestershire, is completely unfair?

Dr Drew: It is unfair. I will outline my own views on that; as someone who supported the f40 group for a long time, as did the hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members, I think we have a distribution problem as well as a problem of how much money is in the pot.

The national background is a lack of funding. The Minister might have something to say about the 3.5% pay award, which is having a dramatic impact in all our schools. Staffing costs are rising, and we have faced particular downward pressure on pupils aged 16 to 18, with a 20% cut since 2010-11. I emphasise the cuts to special educational needs and disabilities provision, which mean that it has in no way kept pace with rising demand.

Alex Chalk (Cheltenham) (Con): Does the hon. Gentleman share the experience I have encountered in schools such as the Ridge Academy, Belmont School and Bettridge School? Those schools have to deal with a cohort of pupils whose needs are far more complex than ever before, and that underlies part of the increased demand on their resources.

Dr Drew: That is a very fair point and I concur, but of course those other pupils who might have gone to Belmont and so on are now in mainstream schools, which is causing additional pressures on schools across the board. The Institute for Fiscal Studies has estimated that there was something like an 8% cut in real terms between 2009-10 and 2017-18. Although the Chancellor's little extra might go some way, in reality it is only £50,000 per secondary school.

Let us come on to what we are really interested in: Gloucestershire and the national funding formula. In Gloucestershire, the national funding formula is still not producing a fairer redistribution of funds, as my neighbour the hon. Member for The Cotswolds (Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown) pointed out. Gloucestershire secondary schools remain near the bottom in league tables of school funding, ranked 130th out of 149 on schools block funding. According to the House of Commons Library, Gloucestershire secondary schools received £4,886 per pupil compared with the English average of £5,229, and primary schools received £3,949 compared with the average in England of £4,059.

Alex Chalk: Does the hon. Gentleman share my concern that some hon. Members in this House whose schools get far more than £5,200—some of them, I am afraid to say, Labour Members—were very indignant at the idea that schools in places such as Gloucestershire should get a bit more?

Dr Drew: There is a need to raise this issue for all our colleagues, which is what I am trying to do. I agree; it is not a party political issue, but crosses the spectrum, and we must all work together to do something. I am sure the Minister will have something to say about that in a minute.

Mr Laurence Robertson (Tewkesbury) (Con): The hon. Gentleman is being very generous in giving way. Is not one of the problems the fact that Gloucestershire is viewed as being a very rich county, but, although there certainly are areas of affluence, there are many that have special needs and deprivation? We need only look at the very different reading levels between schools even within one constituency. It seems to me that the current formulas do not take that properly into account.

Dr Drew: I agree; we know our county has areas of deprivation, which I will touch on. The new national funding formula suggests that about half of Gloucestershire's 40 secondary schools will receive the minimum per pupil spend of £4,600 in 2019-20 and then £4,800 in 2020-21. We are not really catching up. That does not take into account the broad spectrum of need across our county.

I will move on to the acute problem of SEND. Gloucestershire has a special needs crisis; I do not use that word in anything other than its genuine definition. Gloucestershire's predicted overspend on SEND is now set to be £4.7 million, up from £3.3 million last year.

The number of children with education, health and care plans in Gloucestershire has almost doubled since 2015. The Government's announcement in December of extra funding for SEND resulted in £1.35 million for Gloucestershire and led the council to withdraw its request to transfer funds from the schools block into high needs, which had led to some controversy, as my Conservative colleagues will know.

However, that was only a sticking-plaster; it is not a long-term strategy for addressing high needs overspend. As Gloucestershire County Council's lead education officer, Stewart King, told the schools forum in January, the overspend puts Gloucestershire in "a very serious and challenging position".

GCC has also now reduced the financial support it provides for individual children with SEND. Schools are forced to pick up the financial burden of SEND support and are using general funds to meet additional needs, or are unable to meet the need of individual children. Even the Conservative-run county council has identified the problem. Councillor Richard Boyles, in letters that I have now received, identifies how much of a problem this is, and the council continues to ask us as MPs to lobby for a fairer funding formula. The impact of this funding crisis is clear: increased class sizes; a reduction in the number of teaching assistants; less support for SEND students; and a reduced curriculum. Many schools will also not be able to implement the full 3.5% pay rise, or if they are able to, they will have to make redundancies.

The pressure on places and rising class sizes, particularly in special schools, is where the acute need is most felt, as the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Alex Chalk) said. We have to be sympathetic to that. However, there is also an issue with inclusivity, with schools that have taken the most vulnerable children facing the most difficult consequences, because we do not fund those children. High numbers of SEND children are hidden in the system.

The reality, as we now know, is that the majority of our primary schools are likely to face an in-year deficit. Quite simply, Minister, the schools do not have enough money. We can argue about the distribution issue, but at the moment the acute problem is that we need more money, particularly for SEND education.

Richard Graham (Gloucester) (Con): The hon. Gentleman makes several good points. We would all like to see more money for schools in Gloucestershire, and he is right that secondary schools have faced considerable pressures. He is also correct to mention the £1.35 million SEND funding that the Government have given for both this year and next year. Those two years are guaranteed, and the Minister will no doubt want to say more on that. However, I am a bit puzzled by my distinguished constituency neighbour's occasionally rather strong language. He referred in a tweet to deep, unjustified and ongoing cuts. That is not actually true, is it? The amount of money per primary and secondary school pupil in Gloucestershire has gone up and will go up further. Would he like to comment on the language we use as we lobby for more money?

Dr Drew: I will comment on that. I disagree with the hon. Gentleman. Although Brexit has completely overwhelmed Parliament, I have been inundated with

comments from headteachers, teachers, teaching unions, parents and even some pupils. Their message is that they face cuts. We can argue about how much those cuts are and how they came about, but the reality is that they face cuts. That is what they say. I have another page of quotes that I could read out that say what the situation is like.

I hope the Minister does not feel that we disagree in any way generally. We are saying that, specifically because of the SEND situation, we now face a very difficult problem in Gloucestershire, which is having an impact across all schools. We need to do something about it, and I hope that the Government are sympathetic.

I disagree with the hon. Member for Gloucester (Richard Graham) about those people's feelings. I suggest he talks to people from schools in his constituency, whom I presume feel very much the same as those in schools in my constituency: that is, that they have faced a lot of pressure, which is now beginning to feed into the system with dire consequences.

Richard Graham: The point is not what our constituents tell us. It is understandable that every parent, teacher and school should ask for more. The point is the language that we use. When the amount of money is actually going up, to talk about deep, unjustified and ongoing cuts is surely wrong. In a sense, the hon. Gentleman has confirmed that himself, because he removed that tweet within about four hours of posting it. Will he confirm, for the record, so that all our teachers and parents are clear, that there are not ongoing per-pupil funding cuts in Gloucestershire? That money is going up and will continue to do so, on which the Minister will no doubt tell us more.

Dr Drew: I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman. There are cuts. He should go into schools in his constituency and see what is happening. I have now received hundreds of responses from people at the sharp end who believe, maybe wrongly, that there are cuts. We can argue about the figures—the absolute figures may look better than the reality—but the situation is that the schools that I represent face some dire situations. That is why I am here today.

The hon. Gentleman can secure his own Adjournment debate and defend what is happening. However, I think I have more of the moral high ground, and I defend what I say because I believe that there are cuts. I do not think that it is in any way justifiable to conclude anything other than that we face a very difficult situation. I came here to pinpoint a particular problem—SEND funding—but within the wider environment of a difficult funding outlook for our county.

I intend to give the Minister plenty of time to respond, so I will not say much more. I will make three points in conclusion. First—the point I have really concentrated on—increasing SEND need has demanded a funding response that Gloucestershire has not been able to meet. That is why, despite what the hon. Gentleman says, our SEND funding will still be in deficit. That may be because more people are applying for EHCPs, but the reality is that they have to be able to meet the genuine demands of people who see their children suffer.

Secondly, this is not about scaremongering but about the reality of the impact of what has happened over a long period. The unfairness of the system dates back to the previous Labour Government, which is why I have

always supported the national funding formula. The difficulty is that we are not there yet, and we will not get there for some considerable time. The reality is that the differential is getting worse in the short run, and we stand to be worse off. The hon. Member for The Cotswolds is nodding. I hope the Minister will do something about that.

Thirdly, I have just come from a drop-in session on children's mental health. Children's mental health is having a real impact on what we need to meet additional needs in our schools. These issues are having a real impact on our children at the moment, whether on their mental health or through our inability to deal with their special needs.

I hope the Minister is listening and that we can move forward on this. Even though we might disagree on certain aspects, five MPs from the county are here to say that the funding situation is not right and that it is affecting our pupils, staff, and parents and so on. I hope that the Minister will pay some urgent attention to us, so that we can begin to deal with this. I hope he will give me some good news.

11.17 am

The Minister for School Standards (Nick Gibb): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Davies; I look forward to the 10 or 15 minutes ahead of us. I congratulate the hon. Member for Stroud (Dr Drew) on securing this important debate and on his introduction of it. I also thank my hon. Friends the Members for The Cotswolds (Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown), for Tewkesbury (Mr Robertson), for Gloucester (Richard Graham) and for Cheltenham (Alex Chalk) for their important contributions. All of them continue to make strong representations to the Government about school funding in their area.

The Government are determined to create an education system that offers opportunity to everyone, no matter their circumstances or where they live. Schools must have the resources they need to make that happen. That is why we are investing more money in our schools, helping them to make the most out of every pound they receive, and delivering on our promise to make funding fairer through the introduction of the national funding formula. In 2017-18, funding was for the first time distributed to local areas based on the individual needs and characteristics of every school in the country. That will also happen in 2018-19, for the second year running. This historic reform is the biggest improvement to how we allocate school funding for a decade and directs resources where they are needed most.

We all want to ensure that all children, regardless of where they live, receive a world-class education. We have made significant progress on that, thanks in part to our reforms. The attainment gap between rich and poor children is shrinking, the proportion of pupils in good or outstanding schools has increased from 66% in 2010 to 84%, and primary school children have achieved their highest ever score on international reading tests.

While more money is going into schools than ever before, we recognise the budgeting challenges that schools face and that we are asking them to do more. Because of that, and because children only get one chance to have a great education, the Government have prioritised school spending, even while having to take difficult public spending decisions in other areas.

[Nick Gibb]

In total, across the country, core funding for schools and high needs will rise from almost £41 billion in 2017-18 to £43.5 billion in 2019-20. Figures from the Institute for Fiscal Studies show that real-terms per-pupil funding for five to 16-year-olds in 2020 will be more than 50% higher than it was in 2000. We can compare ourselves favourably to other countries. The UK spends as much per pupil on primary and secondary state education as any major G7 economy in the world, apart from the United States of America.

As well as providing additional funding for schools, we have made funding fairer by introducing the national funding formula. Under the previous system, schools with similar pupil characteristics received significantly different levels of funding for no good reason, meaning that some schools were not getting the resources that they needed. That is why it is so important that we have delivered on our promise to reform the unfair school and high-needs funding systems and introduce a national funding formula. Government Members have been particularly active over the years, through the f40 group, in ensuring that we have a fairer funding system.

Schools are already benefiting from the gains delivered by the national funding formula. Since 2017, we have given every local authority more money for every pupil in every school, while allocating the biggest increases to the schools that have been most underfunded. The underfunded schools will attract up to 6% more per pupil by 2019-20, compared with 2017-18. My hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester is absolutely right to insist on care in how we use language. He will be aware that the School Cuts website has been criticised by the UK Statistics Authority for some of the things stated on that website.

Gloucestershire schools will receive gains of 3.1% per pupil by next year, compared with 2017-18. That will mean an extra £19 million in total when rising pupil numbers are also factored in. On high needs, we have recently announced that we will provide £250 million of extra funding across England over this financial year and the next. In Gloucestershire, that means that the local authority will receive an additional £2.7 million across this year and the next, on top of the increases that were already promised.

It is important to keep it in mind that the purpose of the national funding formula is not to give every school the same level of per-pupil funding. Although that would be simple, it would not be fair. It is right that schools that have pupils with additional needs, such as those indicated by measures of deprivation or low prior attainment, should get extra funding to help those pupils. In addition, schools in more expensive areas, such as London, require higher funding per pupil to reflect the higher costs that they face. That extra funding is vital to support children who face greater barriers in education, be that because they come from a disadvantaged background, have low prior attainment or speak English as an additional language. Every child deserves to get the help that they need to reach their full potential, and that is why the national funding formula has protected the £5.9 billion of funding for additional needs across the system.

We do recognise the challenges faced by the lowest funded schools. In the national funding formula, we have included minimum per-pupil funding levels to guarantee

that every school will attract a minimum amount of funding for every pupil. In 2019-20, the formula will provide at least £4,800 per pupil for every secondary school and £3,500 for every primary school. In Gloucestershire, secondary schools in particular benefit from that measure, with about half of secondary schools attracting extra funding as a result. We have not limited gains for schools benefiting from the minimum amounts, so the very lowest funded schools will see their funding increase fastest, and some schools will attract gains of 10% or more by 2019-20.

Alex Chalk: Does my right hon. Friend the Minister agree that it is very important that we look into the causes of why high needs provision, in particular, is coming under the pressure that it now is? We have the Milestone School, the Ridge Academy, Belmont School and Bettridge School—so many excellent special schools—but the reality is that they face such huge demands now and we have not really got to the bottom of the reason for that. Is it issues in childbirth? Whatever it is, we need to get to the bottom of it.

Nick Gibb: My hon. Friend raises a very important point. That is something that the Department is looking at very carefully. There are reasons for it, and we know what they are. They are to do with medical advances, the use of private schools—private special schools—and so on. We are providing capital funding to help particular local authorities that have much higher high needs expenditure to address those issues. There is a capital pot and also a development fund, to help them to make those important decisions.

We acknowledge that the national funding formula represents a big change to the funding system. We understand the importance of stability to schools and we want to ensure that there is a smooth transition. We have therefore confirmed that for the next two years, local authorities will continue to be responsible for setting school budgets at local level. I may have got my years wrong at the beginning of this contribution: 2018-19 is of course the first year of the funding formula and 2019-20 is the second year. We have also confirmed that, in 2020-21, we will allow local authorities to use their local funding formula to allocate the funds. But we will allocate the funds to local authorities on the basis of the national funding formula.

We are pleased to see significant progress across the system in moving towards the national funding formula in its first year. Many local authorities have chosen to move towards the national funding formula locally, with 73 local authorities moving all their factor values towards the NFF, and 41 matching the NFF factor values almost exactly. It is the case that 112 authorities, including Gloucestershire, have introduced a minimum per-pupil funding level factor in their local formula. I am very pleased that so many authorities across the country are showing such strong support for our national formula.

Alongside the local flexibility, we recognise that there needs to be a degree of discretion locally to change the balance between schools and high needs funding. Although we want schools to benefit from all the gains and protections afforded by the national funding formula, it will take time for spending to be aligned to the allocations calculated at national level. The ongoing flexibility will

help to ensure that the transition to the formula takes place in a way that best meets the needs of local schools and pupils.

We are committed to supporting children with special educational needs and disabilities to reach their full potential, and we expect all schools to play their part. That is why we have reformed the funding system to take particular account of children and young people with additional needs, and introduced a new formula allocation to make the funding for those with high needs fairer. As mentioned previously, we have recently announced that we will provide £250 million of additional funding for high needs throughout England over this financial year and the next. We recognise that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Cheltenham has said, the high needs budget faces significant pressures, and that additional investment will help local authorities to manage them.

Of course, the response to pressures on high needs budgets cannot just be additional funding. That is why we have also set out plans to support local authorities in their role of providing strategic leadership and oversight of the provision for children and young people with SEND. We have announced other measures to support local authorities: a £100 million top-up to the special provision capital fund for local authorities in 2019-20 for new places and improved facilities; the removal of the cap on the number of special and alternative provision free school bids that we approve in the current wave; reviewing current SEND content in initial teacher training provision; and ensuring a sufficient supply of educational psychologists to carry out the statutory functions in relation to the EHCP process, and to support teachers and families. We will continue to engage with local authorities, health providers, families, schools and colleges to work together to manage the cost pressures on high needs budgets and ensure that children with special educational needs and disabilities get the support that they need and deserve.

We recognise that schools have faced cost pressures in recent years. That is why we have announced a strategy setting out the support that we will provide—current and planned—to help schools to make savings on the more than £10 billion of non-staff expenditure across England.

Richard Graham: Does the Minister agree that the key thing is not that funding has been cut but that costs have increased and therefore the issue is how we can share best practice among schools in order to make savings that will help to reduce any deficit that they might have?

Nick Gibb: My hon. Friend is right. We do want to spread best practice. We have a cadre of school resource managers to help schools that are particularly struggling with their budgets to find savings. Other measures are national buying schemes for things such as printers and photocopiers and the roll-out of a free teacher vacancy listing website to help schools to find teachers and drive down recruitment costs, which are a big burden on schools at the moment. We have created a benchmarking website for schools that allows them to compare their costs with those of other schools.

I again thank hon. Members for their contributions to the debate. I reiterate our commitment to providing every child with the opportunity to reach their potential. The extra investment that we are making in our schools, the fairer distribution of school funding, and support to use those resources to best effect, will help us to make that a reality.

Question put and agreed to.

11.30 am

Sitting suspended.

Zimbabwe

[MRS ANNE MAIN *in the Chair*]

2.30 pm

Kate Hoey (Vauxhall) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House has considered the situation in Zimbabwe.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mrs Main. May I say how pleased I was to secure the debate at this particular time? I welcome the fact that the present Minister for Africa, the hon. Member for West Worcestershire (Harriett Baldwin); the shadow Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Heywood and Middleton (Liz McInnes); and a former Minister for Africa, the hon. Member for Rochford and Southend East (James Duddridge) are here.

Most people will remember the euphoria—we saw it—in Zimbabwe just over a year ago, in 2017, when the long-serving President Mugabe was ousted in what can only be called a form of military coup. There was such hope then that after the years of oppression, unemployment and fear, real change was coming. At the time, some of us did point out that Mnangagwa had been very much part of the Mugabe regime and, indeed, had played quite a sinister role in the horrendous slaughter of thousands of people in Matabeleland back in the period from 1983 to 1987. Of course, he was joined by Chiwenga as vice-president. He had been the head of the combined defence forces and also played a very important role in the terrible situation in Matabeleland. But all of us who love Zimbabwe and know the potential of that beautiful country still hoped that change was going to happen.

The elections held last summer were another crucial milestone. It is worth remembering that elections in Zimbabwe since 2002 had been both violent and rigged. In 2008, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission took more than five weeks to declare the result, and more than 270 activists, almost all belonging to the opposition Movement for Democratic Change, were killed. The polls in 2013 were relatively peaceful, but regarded internationally as rigged. The electoral voting rolls were grossly manipulated in favour of voters in rural areas, where ZANU-PF had the greatest support.

Shortly before last year's elections, the hon. Member for Bournemouth West (Conor Burns) and I visited Zimbabwe to get a feeling for what was happening there before the elections and to report back to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association on the possibilities of a free and fair election and how, if there were free and fair elections, we in this Parliament might engage with Zimbabwe's Parliament. We met a whole range of people, from Government, political parties, business and civil society.

We reported back on the very different atmosphere—certainly compared with what I had seen on my many visits during the worst of the troubles in Zimbabwe—the open presence of troops, police having disappeared from the streets, and the roadblocks where police used to demand money having disappeared. We did query a number of issues that were seen during the electoral process and particularly the fact that the new constitution that had been signed up to was not being adhered to. Access to the media was not being honoured. There were still problems with the electoral rolls. And we felt

that the electoral commission was not showing a strong enough and openly transparent view that it was determined to have free elections. We warned in our report that although there would not be the violence around the election that there had been in the past, there was a real danger of its being another stolen election, and that the bar for a free and fair election was actually set very low.

Mr Gregory Campbell (East Londonderry) (DUP): I commend the hon. Lady not just for securing this debate, but for her courage and tenacity in pursuing the issues that she has. Does she agree that because there is no violence in situations such as the one that she describes, there is very often an assumption in the international consciousness that elections have been free and fair when in fact, on many occasions, including the one that she is outlining, they are anything but?

Kate Hoey: Yes; the hon. Gentleman is right. The absence of violence specifically at the polling stations and so on was remarkable—there was not any—but that does not mean that the election was free and fair. Very often elections are rigged before election day, and then there is what happens afterwards. Of course, it was what happened after the election that night, literally, that made people feel that it was not free and fair.

Mnangagwa was declared the winner by the electoral commission, which was severely criticised for its way of dealing with the count and the delay, again, in making the announcement of the presidential result. We had in the country two Members of the House of Lords, Baroness Jay and Lord Hayward, who I am very pleased is here observing today's debate. They went to the elections formally, to represent the Commonwealth—as part of the Commonwealth delegation—because of course Zimbabwe has applied to be a member of the Commonwealth again. It was very important that the Commonwealth was there. In fact, both Lord Hayward and Baroness Jay saw some of the trouble that happened immediately afterwards. Baroness Jay was in the hotel when the soldiers came in to stop an MDC press conference. Later, some totally innocent Zimbabweans were gunned down in the street by the army—some people were shot in the back. The international community, on the whole—I think that this applies to all the observers—made the point that the election was slightly freer and fairer, but there was not an overwhelming feeling that it was a wonderful Zimbabwean election and democracy was really back at its best.

Of course, since the election, the economy has got even worse. Mnangagwa made a great issue of the fact that Zimbabwe was open for business—the world could come and invest again; there was going to be this absolute change. That did not actually happen. There are huge shortages of food and other important goods. More recently, on 12 January this year, Mnangagwa announced a huge—200%—increase in the price of fuel. That was in a country in which very few people could afford the fuel price as it was, and it led to Zimbabwe, of all countries in the world, having the highest fuel prices. It was just not tenable, and people reacted. The trade unions, which have shown great courage throughout all of this, called for a countrywide “stay away” in protest, and there were demonstrations. There is no doubt that some of the younger people, unemployed people, were very angry, and probably some looting did go on in parts of Bulawayo and

Harare, but what the army and the Government did was to respond immediately with huge, excessive force, which left 12 people dead and up to 100 with gunshot wounds, and hundreds of people were lifted in the middle of the night, imprisoned and denied bail.

Over the last couple of weeks, we have seen pretty horrific images showing what has been happening to people on the ground: not just MDC activists, although that is bad enough—it is shocking that many of them have been lifted in the middle of the night, taken away and still are not getting legal representation or any support—but “ordinary” Zimbabweans who were seen to be in areas where there was support for the opposition.

What was also done—it was a very clever move, because all of us know just how much social media has changed the nature of reporting in Africa—was that the internet was closed down, shut down, and was out of action for some three days. That made a huge difference because, as is shown in all the letters that have come out and the reports that we have seen, people felt absolutely isolated in their homes. They were in the dark; there was no electricity. Roads were closed, transport had stopped, schools were closed—everything was closed—and there was no social media, no way to contact people. That was, I believe, a deliberate strategy to cut down the information getting out of the country, and of course that leads to more worry, more concern, and a feeling that everybody has abandoned them. We saw the numbers involved.

Sky News had a very good film, which again showed the army acting, in uniform and with absolute impunity, against innocent passers-by.

Sir Nicholas Soames (Mid Sussex) (Con): I have already asked the hon. Lady to forgive me for having to leave before the end of this important debate. She has consistently done wonderful work with her group. I thank the Minister of State, who, when I returned from Zimbabwe, calmed some of my enthusiasm regarding Mr Mnangagwa and the situation there, about which she and the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Kate Hoey) have proved to be dramatically right.

Does the hon. Lady agree with me that this pattern of behaviour during this period was clearly planned beforehand, and that it looks very much like the President left the country in order to come back and criticise it when he got home, and that this is part of a pattern that is totally unacceptable? Does she also agree that we must make the strongest possible representations to the Zimbabwean Government on behalf of the British Government?

Kate Hoey: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his years of support and work. I know how much he cares for Zimbabwe. He is absolutely right. There was this idea that Mnangagwa left the country as soon as the fuel price rose, to go to Russia and begin a tour of different countries—not countries that we would necessarily see as our best friends—to try to bring in some investment. I think that was absolutely deliberate, because he could then say that he had nothing to do with what was happening. Chiwenga, who is seen as the person who wants to eventually take over, was very much in charge.

The systematic abuse and actual torture of individuals continues as we speak. The women who have been raped by soldiers have nowhere to report these crimes,

because the rule of law in Zimbabwe has broken down. The Law Society of Zimbabwe has issued a statement raising its concerns about how all the legal cases of the people who were arrested have been conducted. It is a shocking indictment of what used to be a really good legal system. Zimbabwe was way ahead of most of the rest of Africa, in terms of rights and its attitude to the law.

People have said how they felt in the middle of this. People were too afraid to move around, because of the burning of vehicles. They knew that many of the soldiers were doing this, but not in uniform. The Zimbabwean Government had the audacity to think that people would believe their story that these people had gone to army barracks or police stations, stolen the uniforms and then taken part in this activity. Of course, that was complete nonsense. I could go on for a long time about all the terrible things that have happened, but there is no doubt that Mnangagwa knew what was going on. Whatever he has said about what he will do, nothing has happened—none of the responsible people have been prosecuted.

For me, one of the most dangerous things is how the constitution is being completely ignored and the level to which the rule of law has been trampled on by the Executive, the army, the police, the National Prosecuting Authority and some elements of the judiciary. One eminent politician, Innocent Gonese, who is the secretary for justice and legal affairs in the opposition party, said in a letter:

“I never thought I would ever live long enough to witness levels of such depravity, cruelty, callousness and downright disdain and contempt of the right of the citizens as enshrined in our Constitution and our statutes. While our country has had a history of serious violations of human rights starting from the years of colonial rule and repression and the epochs of *gukurahundi*, *murambatsvina* and the dark days of June 2008, the people thought that we had turned a corner in November 2017 with the demise of the former strongman Robert Mugabe.

Sadly it has turned out to be a false dawn. The actors may have changed with the removal of Robert Mugabe and some of his henchmen, but the script has remained the same if not worse.”

I find that pretty horrific, because we saw such dreadful things and now it seems that it is all happening again.

What can we do? First, we cannot ignore what is happening. I am pleased that the Minister called in the Zimbabwean ambassador. I am sure she will tell us more about that. We have to use our position where we can to influence and work with the South African Government and the Botswana Government. I know there is an Africa conference coming up in the next week or two; I do not know whether the Minister is going. We have to be clear that we are calling for the end of the deployment of the military. They have to go back into their barracks. We have to get the United Nations to say that and to make a strong statement on the rule of law.

We need a complete, absolute condemnation of the way that citizens' internet access was closed down. We need to call for an independent investigation of the human rights violations, to be led by the African Union or the United Nations. We have to find out who gave the orders. It was the same with the people who were killed just after the election—we never really got to the bottom of who had given the orders. The investigation ended up

[Kate Hoey]

being a whitewash. We need to investigate that, because the commission of inquiry in the post-2018 elections did not get to the bottom of it.

We have to be very clear—the United Kingdom Government have to be very clear—that the international community should completely suspend any initiatives related to re-engaging with the Zimbabwean Government. It is unacceptable, in my view, even to be talking about debt restructuring and private sector investment while so many Zimbabwean civilians are being assaulted and killed.

Ultimately, the sanctions we have now are very low. I am not suggesting that we go back to sanctions, because after the feeling that there was some hope for change, sanctions gave the Zimbabwean Government the opportunity to say, “The world doesn’t like us. It is only these sanctions that are causing all the difficulties.” Of course, there are no sanctions now, so they cannot say that. However, we may have to look at reviewing sanctions, particularly regarding travel. Mnangagwa got—I am not into aircraft—one of the top planes that can be hired, to go off on his trip. It cost thousands and thousands of dollars, while there are no medicines in the hospitals. Mnangagwa did not actually go to Davos. He left, because I think he knew that if he had gone to Davos, he would have received huge criticism, even there.

We are seeing crimes against humanity. Senator David Coltart, who many hon. Members will know, has made it very clear that crimes against humanity are still being committed. We have to engage very strongly with South Africa and Botswana, as I said. We have to ask the South African Government to really engage. We have not seen the criticism that could have come from South Africa.

Sir Nicholas Soames: Does the hon. Lady agree that, very unfortunately, this is a part of the South Africans’ failure to take seriously what is happening in Zimbabwe, and their failure on earlier occasions to criticise? They claim it is a reluctance to do so. It is a long-standing reluctance, which has been in place for many years. If they wish to be considered as a leading player in Africa on the diplomatic front, they need to exercise their will and their considerable power.

Kate Hoey: The right hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. The South African Government need to realise—I cannot believe they do not—just how important they could be in this. They could be a real beacon, acting in the interests of the people of Zimbabwe, rather than standing back and saying virtually nothing.

I want to pay tribute to the opposition in Zimbabwe. I have known Nelson Chamisa for a long time. When I first went undercover, he was one of the people who helped to show us around in very difficult circumstances. He is incredibly brave and very charismatic. He did an enormously powerful job in getting people involved in huge rallies, including young people and people who had never been politically involved before. Despite some people, perhaps even in his own party, he has continued to talk clearly about a peaceful future and a peaceful role. Despite his being accused of all sorts of things by the Government, we should give him huge credit for his role.

I have a couple of questions to ask the Minister. Although it is clear that Zimbabwe’s application for readmission to the Commonwealth has been seriously set back, there are aspects of the Commonwealth process and engagement, particularly with the people of Zimbabwe, that deserve support. We need to remind people that it is not the United Kingdom that decides whether Zimbabwe will go back into the Commonwealth, but the Commonwealth. Perhaps we have a bit more influence, but we certainly do not make that decision on our own. Are Her Majesty’s Government ensuring that the excellent work of the Commonwealth Local Government Forum on strengthening democracy at a local level is well funded and supported by the UK and other Commonwealth countries? Local democracy is an important building block at the grassroots level.

Is the Minister still engaged in helping to support charities such as ZANE—Zimbabwe a National Emergency, which has done so much to help older people who have been left destitute? The pension issue has still not been sorted. One or two hon. Members have made that a big issue. I await the Minister’s view on that.

There has been a worrying trend recently, which may stop again now, of some of the Zimbabwean diaspora being sent back as part of the euphoria about the supposedly new regime. The Zimbabwe Vigil, which carries out a vigil on Saturday afternoons outside the Zimbabwean embassy and has maintained its solidarity and support for people in Zimbabwe, is worried that the Home Office is perhaps being too quick off the mark to send people back there where they could be taken into custody.

Will the Minister confirm that the Her Majesty’s Government, and particularly the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, have learned a lesson from what I would call the ill-advised cosyng-up to the Zimbabwean leadership, which owed its position, power and loyalty to the military and political machine that manoeuvred to install it and not to the people of Zimbabwe through a free and fair electoral process? I will not go into more detail; the Minister knows what I am talking about. There is no doubt that our embassy in Zimbabwe had become too identified, rightly or wrongly—I think wrongly—with ZANU-PF. A new ambassador, Melanie Robinson, has just started in Zimbabwe and there are good reports about how she is settling in. On behalf of all hon. Members present and the all-party group, I wish her the very best in that difficult job.

I want to make sure that the Minister realises that those of us who urged caution, particularly Zimbabweans who have long had to cope with the machinations of ZANU-PF brutality and the manipulation of international opinion, were rebuffed by some officials in our embassy who thought that they knew better. I hope that we have learned that lesson. I pay tribute to all the people in Zimbabwe who have continued to work for democracy, and all the members of the all-party group and everyone in this House who will not let Zimbabwe be forgotten.

2.53 pm

James Duddridge (Rochford and Southend East) (Con): I draw hon. Members’ attention to my entry in the Register of Members’ Financial Interests. I praise the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Kate Hoey) for securing the debate and for the tireless work she does through

the all-party group, which is one of the most exceptional groups in the House, among many candidates. She spoke of how members of the Zimbabwean opposition have been fearless, but she has been pretty fearless over the years in going to Zimbabwe. As she noted, her most recent trip was funded by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, which I chair. I encourage other hon. Members with specific interests in countries to come to us if they want funding for that type of trip.

In private, I have occasionally accused the hon. Member for Vauxhall of being a bit pessimistic. I was always more optimistic about Zimbabwe as Minister for Africa and, subsequently, through the Commonwealth. Sadly, again, she has been proven right and a realist about the situation—the reality held up. That is a lesson not just for our ambassadors but for many others who go into Zimbabwe but perhaps do not have the decades of experience that the hon. Member for Vauxhall has.

Although I do not have the same experience, I have a long-standing interest in Zimbabwe. When I worked for Barclays in Africa, when things were doing well, all the pan-African IT for Barclays was run out of Harare—as, in fact, were all the IT systems for the whole Caribbean. That seems somewhat ridiculous, given the current situation.

Like many, I want Zimbabwe to return to being a prosperous nation state with proper elections, and I want it back as part of the Commonwealth family. Prior to the elections, however, I was premature in calling for it to be brought back into the family in a less conditional environment. I am still a bit more optimistic than the hon. Member for Vauxhall about keeping up engagement—what was called incremental engagement—which revolved around trying to move forward a little when there were some changes on the other side.

The news coming out of Zim is not only disturbing but wholly unacceptable. In the wake of peaceful civilian protests, the security forces launched brutal crackdowns across Harare and the country. Excess force and brutality, arrests and detentions are being used by the police and soldiers—and they are arbitrary arrests, because there is no law enforcement. That needs to stop.

In Rochford and Southend East, there are 889 people of Zimbabwean heritage, which is about 1% of my constituents. I have heard directly from them horrific tales and allegations about the systemic use of violence and torture by the armed and uniformed members of the Zimbabwe National Army and the Zimbabwe Republic Police, particularly in high-density areas outside Harare and in the suburbs.

One story recounted to me relates to a young man who lives in Budiro, a high-density suburb in the south-west of Harare. He was rounded up with his neighbours and brutally set upon by police. His only crime appeared to be that he lived in the wrong street. Groups of young men had been setting up roadblocks on neighbouring streets and stopping and throwing stones at a few of the cars that remained despite the high petrol prices. The police were sent in and, instead of investigating the complaints, went round to all the homes near the roadblocks and dragged out and beat all the young men who were there, regardless of whether they were involved or not—collective punishment of the community for what had been done by a few. Some of those men are being held without charges or representation, and with no food or water. We cannot condone or accept that behaviour.

John Howell (Henley) (Con): That story is horrific, but the problem lies subsequent to that, as they have no legal remedy because the judiciary is not independent. A number of lawyers have been protesting in the streets in the last few months. What should we be doing to support those lawyers who are trying to get an independent judiciary?

James Duddridge: There is lots that we can do. The hon. Member for Vauxhall talked about the problems of the legal service. It is worse—the Government are directing the courts as to what to do. There is a series of long-term actions, such as working through the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and other Commonwealth countries, but at the moment, the Government in Zimbabwe are simply not listening.

My hon. Friend the Member for Henley (John Howell) describes the situation as terrible, but unfortunately, I have not got to some of the worst bits, which gives me no pleasure to say. There have been several reports about the use of sexual violence, in particular. On 23 January, ITV reported rape claims against soldiers during the unrest. It is my understanding that ITV has met 11 women, all of whom said they were sexually assaulted—that is to say, raped—and that their attackers were members of the Zimbabwean army. This appears to have been systemic and organised use of sexual violence, which should concern us even more than isolated cases of sexual violence.

The reports of death tolls have been varied and, I suspect, understated. Amnesty said that eight people were killed when police and military fired on crowds, while the Zimbabwean Government said only three people were killed, including a policeman who was stoned to death by an angry crowd. The Zimbabwe Association of Doctors for Human Rights has said that doctors had treated 68 cases of gunshot wounds and more than 100 other cases of

“assaults with sharp objects, baton sticks”,

and they had seen people left with marks on their bodies after being kicked or stamped on with boots.

Notwithstanding the statement on Zimbabwe by my hon. Friend the Minister for Africa on 17 January and the representations that were made by the Secretary of State on 22 January, we need to ramp up our representations to our Zimbabwean counterparts. We need to remind them of their international obligations on human rights and freedom of opinion and expression, and about the results of the use of excessive force, as evidenced by the injuries that were documented in medical records; those are not just vague accusations.

President Emmerson Mnangagwa cut short his foreign trip, which had been largely aimed at raising foreign exchange and returning investment. He returned to Zimbabwe to stabilise the situation. Well, I have not seen any stabilisation of the situation. I listened very carefully to my right hon. Friend the Member for Mid Sussex (Sir Nicholas Soames) and the hon. Member for Vauxhall, who felt that the situation had been pre-prepared: petrol prices were put up; then, the President removed himself from the country; and there was a purge. I suspect that they are probably right.

Earlier, I had wondered whether there might be something else going on, namely that the military were taking greater control, as they did when there was the

[James Duddridge]

earlier coup that led to Mugabe being ousted. I wondered who really is in control of the country; is it the President or is it his Vice-President, the former army general, Constantino Chiwenga? Chiwenga was the muscle behind the November 2017 push that forced Mugabe to resign and I just wonder what is going on behind the scenes. The President is clearly responsible, whether or not he directed or planned the violence; he is the President of the country.

I support the points made by a number of people about getting South Africa involved and I urge that we try to get South Africa involved at both a Government level and an African National Congress level; the ANC contacts with ZANU-PF are even more credible than the normal channels. More broadly, there is a role for the Southern African Development Community, although Botswana, Zimbabwe's neighbour, is particularly influential.

I am not a great fan of sending great missives from the UN, which feels very distant from African countries when they have problems. However, if the UN can do something in co-ordination with the African Union, led by Zimbabwe's near-neighbours, such as South Africa and Botswana, through SADC, that would probably complete the loop and it would give the authority and voice of the UN to Zimbabwe's local peers when they criticise the country.

I fear that the perpetrators and masterminds behind the systematic violence will be emboldened, not by our indifference or by what we say, but by what we do. We are very limited in what we can do, but we must try to do more. I also fear that there will be an increased open militarisation of the country, with further disregard for civil law and further unrest. In all conscience, we cannot allow that to happen.

Before the elections, I had hoped to welcome Zimbabwe back to the Commonwealth; I had hoped that more investment would come in; and I welcomed the CDC investment in Zimbabwe. I still think that that is the right route for the country to take ultimately. However, it seems less and less credible for us to support investment in Zimbabwe while the atrocities take place, although I am mindful that if British money does not come in, then Israeli, Russian or Chinese money, which would be less conditional money, will come in. I do not worry about that happening from the perspective of investment returns or British national interest; I worry about it because doing business in countries such as Zimbabwe allows us to leverage our influence within them. So, there is a fine balance to be struck.

I hope that I am proved right in my long-term optimism and I hope that the hon. Member for Vauxhall is wrong in her sometimes pessimistic attitude. However, I fear that yet again she is right. She is being a friend of Zimbabwe, but also a realist, and I thank her again for making an enormous contribution and for securing this debate.

3.5 pm

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): It is a pleasure to speak in this debate under your chairmanship, Mrs Main.

First of all, I thank and congratulate the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Kate Hoey) on bringing this issue forward for consideration. I will place it on the record that she is undoubtedly a true democrat—the honour that she has shown this country by honouring the referendum vote

is something that I sincerely wish was emulated by others in her party. She has done that very well, I congratulate her on it and we look forward to working with her on many other issues as we move forward.

Over the years, I have had a particular interest in Zimbabwe—or Rhodesia, as it was formerly—because I have a number of Zimbabweans who have come to live in my constituency who have lost their farms, their property and in some cases everything they had bar the clothes on their back. They fled the lovely country of Zimbabwe.

When I was a young man starting off on life's road, the Prime Minister of Rhodesia was Ian Smith; those of us who are of a certain vintage will recall him. I always remember his saying, because I have used those words myself many times, when he made a unilateral declaration of independence and separated himself from the United Kingdom and from the Commonwealth: "This is not the end. It's not even the beginning of the end. It is perhaps the end of the beginning."

If only Zimbabwe was at the beginning of a process. We had hoped that, with the election of President Emmerson Mnangagwa, there would be a normalisation of the economy and a repairing of relations with multilateral institutions. We had hoped that his election would bring a new beginning, but unfortunately it has not. Indeed, the most recent clashes in Zimbabwe earlier this month were prompted in part by a sharp hike in fuel prices, which has made petrol and diesel in the country the most expensive in the world. So we can understand why people are up in arms.

Inflation in Zimbabwe is very high. Probably the only country that beats Zimbabwe for inflation is Venezuela, where inflation is running at 1 million per cent. and is predicted to be 10 million per cent. by the end of the year—unless, of course, there are new elections and Venezuela's Opposition leader is elevated to the position of President.

What has happened in Zimbabwe has been the first glimmer of democracy in many years and yet it is clear that there is not democracy there just yet; there can be no true democracy without fear-free elections.

In my constituency, I have a number of churches that do missionary work in Swaziland and Zimbabwe. They are very active in education. They are the Elim Missions, whose headquarters is in Newtownards, in my constituency. There are very active Elim churches in my constituency, and indeed in nearby constituencies. I see that the hon. Member for North Down (Lady Hermon) is here in the Public Gallery today; there is a very active Elim church in her constituency, and there is also one in Belfast East. Collectively, they do some fantastic work in education, health and helping young people. There is also the issue of medication and HIV/AIDS, which is very prevalent in Zimbabwe.

I am well known as someone who believes in foreign aid. I believe that we should provide help in a sustainable manner to those who cannot help themselves: rather than giving them a fish, we should give them a net; and rather than have a farming show, we should show people how to farm. The ways in which we can help go on and on.

For Zimbabwe to have gone from being the breadbasket of Africa—as it was once, in its heyday, and continued to be even when Mugabe first took over—to the poverty-stricken nation that it is now is simply heartbreaking,

and I sincerely believe that Zimbabweans must be helped. In this debate, we are very conscious of how we can help the ordinary Zimbabwean people.

Successful farmers helped the economy by creating jobs and wealth, but their land and farms were seized. There has been murder, destruction, the stealing of land and, as referred to by the hon. Members for Vauxhall and for Rochford and Southend East (James Duddridge), sexual violence and the rape of women, who have been violated. It is totally wrong that those involved in the Zimbabwe army are those who are responsible for the bestiality that we have seen in recent days.

However, it is also clear that Zimbabweans need more than simply our help in the form of foreign aid funding. The Library briefing makes something abundantly clear:

“In 2018 the UK government gave support to international and local election monitoring initiatives, including £5 million specifically to support election-related work.”

There was an onus on, and perhaps a need for us in this country to ensure that the elections were free and not corrupt, so that any illegalities did not take place. Unfortunately, it was not shown that the election was entirely fair. There were many violations and concerns were expressed. As a Christian, I pray for many countries in the world, including Zimbabwe, because we hope it can reach the democratic process, and also because I have many brothers and sisters in that country who are also Christians, and I am very conscious of that.

UK-Zimbabwe trade and investment has been at low levels over the past decade and sensitive to political and economic uncertainty. In May 2018, the CDC Group, the UK Government's development finance institution, announced an investment facility, in partnership with Standard Chartered Bank, that would lend some US \$100 million to growing businesses in Zimbabwe—a really good idea. It was reportedly the first commercial loan by a British entity to Zimbabwe in over 20 years. Again, we as a country were trying to help Zimbabwe in the new democracy that was hopefully going to unfold, and we hoped that they would do better. In 2017, Zimbabwe was the UK's 14th-largest export market in Africa, accounting for 2% of UK exports to Africa, and the 13th-largest source of imports from Africa, accounting for 1% of UK imports from Africa. So there were key economic links going out and coming in. Globally, Zimbabwe was the UK's 91st-largest export market and the 108th-largest source of imports. We want to trade with Zimbabwe, but we also have to ensure that Zimbabwe has a democratic process and democratic institutions that work.

Let us look at what has happened recently. The hon. Members for Vauxhall and for Rochford and Southend East have already referred to this. The internet was deliberately stopped by the Government for three days; roads, schools and banks are closed; the very fabric of society has broken down; hundreds of people have been arrested simply because they were protesting about the hike in the price of fuel and food. If people and their families are starving and the new President has told them there will be a brand-new beginning, no wonder they ask, “Where is this new beginning?” People were unable to communicate for the most basic of reasons, all to ensure that no message could be spread other than the ZANU-PF propaganda.

The hon. Member for Vauxhall mentioned some of the reports on TV, which I have seen as well. The TVs did not lie. Behind the army trucks in Zimbabwe were

soldiers kicking, beating and taking violent action against innocents on the street. So I ask this question: whenever the evidential base is there, how come action is not taken?

Kate Hoey: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but he has mentioned the media and television; I want to praise Christina Lamb, *The Sunday Times* international reporter, for her work and the reports that she has brought back, which graphically describe some of the abuses that the hon. Gentleman talks about.

Jim Shannon: I thank the hon. Lady for her intervention. She reiterates the facts of the case that we all know of. There is evidence of violence, corruption, attacks on women, and the stealing of property. I do not say that everyone is innocent; some looting has taken place, but that does not take away from the overall corruption within the new Government. Such attacks are not the actions of a democratic Government. They are the actions displayed by Mugabe during his dictatorship, which we thought we had got rid of. Very little has changed, which is so sad, but it must change if we are to continue working so closely with the Government.

It is believed that Zimbabwe's application to rejoin the Commonwealth, submitted in May 2018, having withdrawn from the organisation in 2003, is being considered, and the Government said in April 2018 that they would

“strongly support Zimbabwe's re-entry”.

To me, Zimbabwe has done little to engender that level of support and we need to be very careful about what we do. Membership of the Commonwealth has many facets: respect for the Queen, respect for others, and dedication to running a country in a democratic way. So are we really supporting Zimbabwe by bringing it back into the Commonwealth, which I would love to see, but with conditions that have to be met? We cannot expect it to come in willy-nilly and continue what it is doing. Should we really support that at this time? Should we be willing to observe, monitor and regulate what is happening? I understand that membership of the Commonwealth allows us perhaps to have a greater influence that we can use for the good of some countries, but if the millions that we pour in are not influencing—this is the question I ask—I fail to see how our support of membership will influence.

In conclusion, I understand that changes are not made overnight, but there has been time and there has been no improvement for the people on the farms—the breadbaskets of Zimbabwe. There has been time, but no improvement for schoolchildren and teachers who have small wages and not even books in schools; no improvement for patients and doctors, so money needs to be spent there; and no sign of change. We must make it clear that giving time is not the answer. Action is the only answer, and we must see it now.

3.17 pm

Peter Grant (Glenrothes) (SNP): I am grateful for the opportunity to begin the summing up in this debate, Mrs Main. I commend the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Kate Hoey) for securing the debate and thank her for a very informative summary of where Zimbabwe has been in the recent past. She put into context what has been happening there in the past few weeks. The hon.

[Peter Grant]

Members for Rochford and Southend East (James Duddridge) and for Strangford (Jim Shannon) have contributed their own knowledge, highlighting the underlying problems that have to be addressed before Zimbabwe can be returned to its people. Truly fundamental in the governance of any country is that the people should be allowed to govern themselves. The country should be governed in the interests of the people and not only in the interests of those who govern.

In any debate about alleged human rights abuses in another country there are two principles that we have to observe. First, we have to recognise the rights of nations to govern themselves. We have no right to interfere in the internal affairs of another country in normal circumstances. What is happening in Zimbabwe now cannot be allowed to become normal circumstances, because the sovereignty of individual nations has to be tempered by the fact that there are standards of behaviour and fundamental human rights that transcend all national borders. Where there is evidence that the power of the state is being abused to deny fundamental human rights, the international community, countries individually and collectively, have not only a right but a duty to intervene to set things right, initially through political and diplomatic efforts, but if necessary by the use of economic influence as well. I certainly take on board the caution advised by the hon. Member for Vauxhall about using economic sanctions, because too often the sanctions punish the victims without having any impact on the perpetrators.

There are obvious difficulties in knowing what exactly has been happening in Zimbabwe, but some things are clear and unambiguous, giving grounds for serious concern among the international community. I think they add up to overwhelming evidence that the international community has got to intervene.

There were large-scale protests after massive price increases left millions of Zimbabweans unable to afford the basic essentials of life. There were people with jobs who could not get to work because the bus fare was more than they would be paid. The police and army intervened in the protests and there has been significant loss of life, and significant numbers of people have been injured. Reliable reports are that at least 12 people have been killed, and 78 others were treated for gunshot wounds. A significant number were treated for other injuries. The Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission, a body appointed by the Zimbabwean Government, has identified at least 240 cases of assault and torture. We should commend the commission for having the courage to speak out. Many institutions in Zimbabwe, even if they are not put under the cosh by the Government, sometimes think that they are there to do the Government's bidding. It is all the more remarkable that the human rights commission is publishing such specific, utterly damning indictments of the country's Government.

More than 700 people have been arrested. Often, as the hon. Member for Rochford and Southend East said, there are wholesale arrests, when anyone who happens to be in a house close to an alleged incident is arrested, usually with extreme violence. People are often viciously beaten before being dragged away. Boys as young as 11 have been seen being beaten by gangs of uniformed police officers in the street. There has also been clear targeting of anyone seen as a political opponent of the

Government. In one case, a councillor—not even an MP or shadow Minister—was dragged from his house, beaten almost to death and arrested, in front of his three-year-old daughter. Remarkably, that wee girl was able, despite the trauma she experienced, to give a detailed account of what happened. Hopefully one day soon her evidence will help to make sure that those responsible are brought to justice.

There have been numerous allegations—and numbers are increasing—of women being gang-raped by uniformed soldiers. It is all very well for Ministers in the Zimbabwean Government to say, “If this has happened to you, come forward and make a complaint, and we will deal with it.” It is difficult in western European democracies for women to have the confidence to come forward and report that they have been raped or sexually abused. It must be difficult to the point of impossibility for a woman in Zimbabwe to report such a vicious assault to the authorities whose very people are responsible in the first place.

The changing response from the authorities is notable and revealing. Initially, as always happens in such cases, they tried to deny anything had happened. They denied that there had been violence and said that such violence as there was had somehow been the responsibility of the protestors. Then they admitted that the police and army had used force, but claimed that it had been proportionate. A Government spokesman told the BBC,

“When things get out of hand, a bit of firmness is needed”.

It was only when there was incontrovertible video evidence that could not be claimed to be fake, making it clear that police and army officers were involved in assaults, that the authorities finally accepted it had been happening. Chillingly, the President's own spokesperson said the crackdown was

“just a foretaste of things to come”.

We have to wonder whether the few police and army officers who have been arrested are being used as examples. Their cases seem to be the ones where the evidence is so overwhelming that no one can deny what happened. We must wonder whether a cynical attempt is being made by Mnangagwa and his colleagues to look as if they are on the side of justice, when all the evidence points to their being at least complacent about, and possibly actively complicit in, the brutality.

It is clear that the vast majority of Zimbabwean citizens have no confidence in the Government's ability or even willingness to enforce the rule of law on its own law enforcers. The Government may blame rogue elements in the security forces, but they have a responsibility to control the behaviour of everyone they put into uniform in those forces, and the international community must take steps to ensure that they carry out that responsibility. If President Mnangagwa wants to be accepted as President he has to start accepting his responsibilities as President. Being the President, Prime Minister or monarch of any country is not a way for someone to enrich themselves and their pals at everyone else's expense.

I want briefly to share the experiences of two of my constituents who were forced to flee from Zimbabwe during the regime of Robert Mugabe. Although in some ways their experiences may not seem directly relevant to what has happened recently, they illustrate

many of the fundamental problems continuing to affect the country, which make it more difficult now for justice to be done, and be seen to be done. Paul and Brenda-Lee Westwood ran a successful business in Zimbabwe in partnership with a local businessman. Their share of the business was seized by someone who at that time was an MP in Mugabe's ZANU-PF party. The seizure was illegal even under the so-called indigenisation policies of the Government of the day. Those responsible were put on trial for a fraud valued at more than \$1 million but the case collapsed in circumstances that remain unclear. After Mr Westwood lodged an appeal the prosecutor died in mysterious circumstances and several of the accused and key witnesses disappeared and, as far as I know, have never been seen again.

The Westwoods then experienced months of intense intimidation with increasingly violent and explicit threats against them and their children. Eventually in 2012 after enduring that for several years, they abandoned the life they had built together and fled the country. Since then they have been trying to have their case heard in the Zimbabwean courts but, like the victims of the recent brutality, they can see nothing to make them believe that the new Government will make their chance of a fair hearing any greater. I know that the Minister and some of her colleagues in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office have been working on my constituents' behalf, and I thank them.

The new Government in Zimbabwe is keen to rejoin the Commonwealth. I can understand why at one point a number of people and the UK Government would have been keen on that happening. I would support the UK Government in helping Zimbabwe to become fit to rejoin the Commonwealth, but it would be a disastrous mistake to encourage or support an application when, clearly, it is not fit for membership of that honourable organisation. We need to make it clear that it cannot rejoin the Commonwealth until it can demonstrate beyond doubt that it has fully re-established the rule of law and the principle of respect for the human rights of all its people, regardless of creed, colour, race, gender or political views. I have a duty to represent my constituents, and I argue that people such as the Westwoods, and others who have suffered similar ordeals at the hands of the Zimbabwean Government, must receive a fair hearing. If an impartial court so rules, they should be given proper compensation for their loss.

There must at best be severe doubt about whether the investigation of recent atrocities and the holding to account of those who committed the crimes, gave the orders, or stood by and watched can be left to the Zimbabwean Government. I do not think it can. The rule of law has become so unreliable that those incidents can be properly investigated only with outside help. That is what must happen, because what has happened in Zimbabwe is too serious to be ignored as an isolated, localised problem.

For generations—perhaps centuries—the people of Zimbabwe seem to have been misruled and mismanaged by almost everyone. That has lasted from the absurdity of their country, and often their lives, being seen as the possessions of a Government thousands of miles away, to the appalling racialism of the Smith regime and, more recently, the combination of disastrous economic incompetence and rampant corruption under Mugabe. That has meant that in a country whose natural resources

are sufficient to give all its people a very decent standard of living the majority of the population are reduced to absolute poverty. I want the Government, in co-operation with other Governments and through bodies such as the Commonwealth and the United Nations, to help the people of Zimbabwe to see how to take their country back from the despots and dictators who have held sway over them for far too long.

What is sometimes called soft power, or soft influence, is often important. Exchange visits would enable elected politicians and others involved in civic society in Zimbabwe to come to the United Kingdom or other countries to see how things are and how they operate, in what looks like a reasonable democratic society. They could then see that it is possible for differences to be resolved without guns, tear gas and violence. We have to ask ourselves, just now, whether the way politics is being done in the United Kingdom is all that good an example for Zimbabwe or anyone else. Do some of the scenes that we have witnessed in the House of Commons Chamber in the past couple of days look like—

Mrs Anne Main (in the Chair): Order. The hon. Gentleman is straying far off the topic of the debate. Can he please confine his remarks to the topic of Zimbabwe? I do not wish to hear too much about yesterday's debate.

Peter Grant: I will, Mrs Main. I suggest that the United Kingdom, and any other country that wants to set an example to the people of Zimbabwe about how democracies can operate, sometimes need to make sure that they are as good examples as they think they are.

The people of Zimbabwe have been through more than the people of any nation on Earth should be expected to tolerate. I want to see the day when Zimbabwe is returned to its people, and the citizens of Zimbabwe are able to enjoy the rights that all citizens should have: the right to self-expression; the right to assemble; the right to disagree with and protest against their Government; and the right to remove their Government and replace it with a Government of their choice, if that is their wish. I look forward to the Minister telling us what the Government of these islands can do to help the people of Zimbabwe achieve that goal.

3.30 pm

Liz McInnes (Heywood and Middleton) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mrs Main. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Kate Hoey) for securing this important debate; Zimbabwe is a subject upon which she is very knowledgeable, and I thank her for her comprehensive introduction to the debate.

It is vital that we take this opportunity to discuss the violence that erupted in Zimbabwe earlier this month. A short debate on this issue also took place in the House of Lords on 21 January, which covered many of the points that have been raised today. As evidenced by the tone and content of this debate and the debate in the other place, there is clear concern about problems in Zimbabwe, ranging from currency problems to violent protests. I know that Zimbabwean people feel that way as well.

Anna McMorris (Cardiff North) (Lab): This is an excellent debate, and I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Kate Hoey) on securing it. My father grew up in what was then Rhodesia and is now Zimbabwe, and I remember the turbulent times during the civil war; I also remember the optimism when that country became Zimbabwe, and the recent optimism when Mugabe was ousted. However, does my hon. Friend the Member for Heywood and Middleton (Liz McInnes) agree that the current unrest is causing huge challenges for our charities, especially for Love Zimbabwe, a charity in Wales that operates in Chinamhora village?

Mrs Anne Main (in the Chair): Order. I know that the hon. Lady might have wanted to speak in this debate, but there was a lot of time for her to do so. Interventions need to be brief.

Liz McInnes: I thank my hon. Friend for her intervention. She has highlighted several issues, one of which is the hope that existed in Zimbabwe when Robert Mugabe finally left his position as President. Sadly, I think we have all become a little bit like the hon. Member for Rochford and Southend East (James Duddridge), going from optimistic about the future to slightly pessimistic.

Zimbabwean people have expressed their concerns to me and, as evidenced by the comments made in this debate, other Members' Zimbabwean constituents have also approached them with issues. Trade union and civil society groups in Zimbabwe regularly contact me to express their utter helplessness and despair in reaction to numerous human rights abuses, many of which occurred under the Mugabe regime and are now happening again. I was recently contacted by the TUC, which is concerned that the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions' secretary general, Japhet Moyo, has been arrested and charged with subverting a constitutionally elected Government, along with the ZCTU's president Peter Mutasa. Both men have been remanded until 8 February, which highlights the fact that at the moment, anyone in Zimbabwe who raises their voice in opposition to the Government is targeted.

Mr Paul Sweeney (Glasgow North East) (Lab/Co-op): My hon. Friend is making a powerful speech, in addition to the speeches that have been made so far. She mentioned constituents raising concerns, and my constituent Abigail has raised with me her concerns as a Zimbabwean, particularly about the oppression that my hon. Friend mentioned. It is clear that Zimbabwe is failing to adhere to the Patterson principles that underpin readmission to the Commonwealth, and until we have a robust understanding that Zimbabwe is making steps to adhere to those principles, readmission to the Commonwealth is not going to happen. Does my hon. Friend agree that the Minister needs to make a clear statement to that effect?

Liz McInnes: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention. He is right to bring up the issue of Zimbabwe's readmission to the Commonwealth; I think every Member who spoke in the debate has raised that issue, and I will be referring to it later. I am sure that the Minister will be able to speak with some authority on that topic.

The Zimbabwean people are tired of the systemic issues that have plagued their nation for so many decades. It has been said that people in Harare complain that the

new Administration is akin to a new driver in an old taxi. It was recently my privilege to visit South Africa, where I met many members of the Zimbabwean diaspora who expressed to us the same views regarding the lack of any change. The figurehead may have changed, but they were pessimistic that the country itself would change. As many Members said, the current violence erupted following the Government's hiking of the price of fuel, making it the most expensive anywhere in the world. The Government's response has been to blame the fuel shortages that caused that violence on those who hoard fuel and trade it on the black market, and while there may be some truth in that argument, those fuel shortages have been compounded by the Government's mismanagement of the currency crisis.

The Government must also take responsibility for their subsequent actions. The violence that followed a general strike on 14 January was utterly deplorable: in the cities of Harare and Bulawayo, protesters faced a vicious clampdown, in which soldiers as well as police were deployed to shut down peaceful protests. The figures are not totally reliable, but there seem to have been around 12 confirmed deaths; at least 78 gunshot injuries; between 700 and 1,500 detentions; and 844 human rights violations. The Government's shutdown of internet services during the violent outbreak, severely disrupting the flow of information and hiding and obscuring the behaviour of the army and the police, is also troubling.

Here we are again, with Zimbabweans suffering as a result of Government violence. Last year's elections represented a real opportunity for the country to change following the end of Robert Mugabe's regime. However, despite the improvements in the election process that were noted by various election observers, those elections were not free and not fair, as my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall outlined in her opening speech. The subsequent violence was nothing new in Zimbabwe, but it was particularly disappointing that the opportunity for change was not taken. That opportunity for change is still there, but the new leader is falling back into old habits. If President Mnangagwa is to avoid gaining the same reputation as his predecessor, he must act swiftly to restore the hope that existed last summer and put an end to attacks on civilians. We do not want history to repeat itself, nor do the Zimbabwean people. The future could be so positive for Zimbabwe, but its people will need help in getting there.

Mr Sweeney: My hon. Friend talks about the need for help to be provided. Of course, the Department for International Development will be providing international aid, as I am sure the Minister will confirm. However, does my hon. Friend share my concern that such aid may be manipulated by the Government to punish political enemies, and does she agree that DFID must put safeguards in place to make sure that does not happen?

Liz McInnes: My hon. Friend makes an important point. I am sure the Minister will be able to respond to that question. It is my understanding that the majority of DFID funding goes to non-governmental organisations, not directly to Governments. I hope that will help ensure that the aid reaches the people it needs to reach.

Many have spoken about the application for Zimbabwe to rejoin the Commonwealth. Rejoining would have benefits for Zimbabwe. It would vastly improve its

relationship with our country and countries around the world, but we cannot just gift Commonwealth membership to Zimbabwe. A return to the Commonwealth must be conditional on Zimbabwe's resolving its infringements of the Harare declaration of 1991. It would help if the Minister could explain whether her Government will prioritise human rights and do what they can to ensure that Zimbabwe is not allowed to rejoin the Commonwealth until its Government implement significant reforms and stop the violent crackdowns by security forces on the public that we have seen in the past two weeks.

I am pleased to hear that the Minister met the Zimbabwean ambassador recently, and I am sure she will elaborate on the outcome of that meeting. Will she say what she has been doing with our partners in Europe and with the African Union to ensure that the programme of reform for Zimbabwe outlined 12 months ago at the EU-AU summit is maintained? Finally, I know she met the EU and the African Union last week. What action is planned for Zimbabwe? In addition, what specific action will the UK Government take?

3.41 pm

The Minister for Africa (Harriett Baldwin): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mrs Main. I congratulate the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Kate Hoey) on securing this important and timely debate. We have had excellent and well-informed contributions not only from the hon. Lady, but from my hon. Friend the Member for Rochford and Southend East (James Duddridge), the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon), the hon. Member for Glenrothes (Peter Grant) and the hon. Member for Heywood and Middleton (Liz McInnes). We also had interesting interventions from other colleagues who get credible information from a range of different sources. I pay tribute to the long-standing interest of the hon. Member for Vauxhall in Zimbabwe, including as chair of the all-party parliamentary group. I add my voice to those of colleagues who have spoken so highly of her ongoing engagement.

I can only add the Government's view to the many examples that have been cited about the situation on the ground. The recent developments in Zimbabwe are cause for significant concern for Her Majesty's Government. The response of Zimbabwe's security forces to protests against the petrol price rise has been disproportionate and all too reminiscent of the darkest days of the Mugabe regime. Security forces have used live ammunition, carried out widespread and indiscriminate arrests and unleashed brutal assaults on civilians, with clear disregard for the due process of law.

I have the up-to-date figures that we have sourced. We pay tribute to the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission, which has recorded a wide range of human rights violations since the protests began on 14 January. We recognise at least eight deaths and many injuries. There are credible reports that arrests may exceed 1,000. Certainly, 873 arrests or detentions were documented by 29 January. Many are still detained. The Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum reports at least 470 cases of assault, 80 of which have been gunshot-related. Many of us have seen footage of young men, and even children, allegedly scarred from beatings by soldiers. We have also seen atrocious accounts of security forces raping civilians during their violent crackdown, with indications of least nine reported rapes, some of which appear to be politically motivated.

On the subject of rape and sexual assault more generally, I confirm that DFID has extensive programming to support victims of rape. That includes shelter, counselling, case management, medical treatment and access to justice services. That includes some of the most recent cases linked to the suppression of protests. That addresses some of the points that Members raised.

We have been absolutely clear that the abuses and the failure to follow the due process of law contravene the fundamental tenets of international human rights standards and have no place in a democratic society. President Mnangagwa's return to Zimbabwe was a full 10 days into the crisis. He committed to holding his security forces to account for human rights violations and spoke of the urgent need for a national dialogue and reconciliation. I am sure colleagues would agree that words are good, but that they need to be followed by deeds.

President Mnangagwa must act to stop the abuses and make good on those commitments. We are particularly concerned by the targeting of opposition and civil society in the wake of the protests. The abuses have continued since his return to the country. His Administration must act now and learn lessons from the events and the tragic violence that followed the election on 1 August 2018. The President must, as he promised, implement the recommendations of the commission of inquiry into the 1 August violence.

3.46 pm

Sitting suspended for a Division in the House.

4 pm

On resuming—

[SIR CHRISTOPHER CHOPE *in the Chair*]

Harriett Baldwin: As I was saying, President Mnangagwa must address the finding of the commission that the use of force by his security services was unjustified and disproportionate. The Government's internet shutdown was also a disturbing curtailing of freedom of expression and the media. I was pleased that the High Court of Zimbabwe ruled the shutdown unconstitutional on 22 January.

The UK Government have been robust in our response to the crackdown, including working with the EU. Targeted EU suspended sanctions remain in place, including on Vice-President Chiwenga. I summoned the Zimbabwean ambassador on 17 January and told the ambassador that we expected Zimbabwe's security forces to stop using disproportionate force, and that the Government should reinstate full internet access and investigate all allegations of human rights violations. The Foreign Secretary repeated that message publicly to President Mnangagwa on 21 January.

Last week, I met the African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security to raise concerns about Zimbabwe. Yesterday, I spoke to Foreign Minister Moyo to reiterate our concern and to call for an end to ongoing human rights abuses. I am also travelling to the region this week, to urge a co-ordinated international approach to the crisis.

Our ambassador in Harare, Melanie Robinson, has delivered the same messages locally. She met Home Affairs Minister Mathema on 23 January and Foreign

[*Harriett Baldwin*]

Minister Moyo on 25 January. The ambassador also met the opposition leader, Nelson Chamisa, on 16 January. She has also been meeting civil society groups supporting victims of the violence and working to bring perpetrators to account. The team that we have on the ground in Zimbabwe has been absolutely outstanding throughout. I pay tribute to our entire diplomatic service and to our DFID civil servants.

At the end of the day, Ministers are advised by civil servants, but it is we who decide. The programme of clear-eyed engagement with the new regime to encourage free and fair elections is one that I am happy to answer to in Parliament.

DFID supports the Commonwealth Local Government Forum. In fact, the UK provides extensive financial and technical assistance to a range of civil society organisations in Zimbabwe. They help to support Zimbabwean citizens to hold the state to account. I am sure that colleagues will understand that we do not publicise the names of our partners, to avoid putting them at risk. That in itself is an indictment of the Zimbabwean regime.

I assure colleagues that extensive work is being done on the humanitarian side, that no aid is channelled through the Government of Zimbabwe, and that the UK will continue to play a key role in ensuring that the very poorest in Zimbabwe will have their suffering minimised during this period when economic reforms need to be undertaken. It is vital that Zimbabwe's political leaders focus on doing what is best for its people, with all parties rejecting violence and upholding the rule of law.

Sir Christopher Chope (in the Chair): There is a Division in the House. Does the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Kate Hoey) wish to respond to the debate? She is indicating that she does not. In that case, we will conclude the debate.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House has considered the situation in Zimbabwe.

4.4 pm

Sitting suspended for a Division in the House.

English Channel: Illegal Seaborne Immigration

4.20 pm

Mr Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con): I beg to move,

That this House has considered illegal seaborne immigration across the English Channel.

May I say what a joy it is to see you in the Chair, Sir Christopher? I am sure that we will all benefit from your benign chairmanship. I thank Mr Speaker for granting me this debate, and I welcome the Minister and other hon. Members present.

The debate is about the number of people who are crossing the English channel illegally—often in very small unsuitable, risky craft—to get to the United Kingdom. That is extremely dangerous; it has been described by the police as like

“trying to cross the M25 at rush-hour on foot.”

It is also driven by illegal people trafficking. Far too many of those who are successful remain in the United Kingdom, whether or not their claim is justifiable.

As I understand it, in 2018, 543 asylum seekers crossed the English channel illegally, including 438 in the last few months, October to December, of 2018. I invite the Minister to confirm those figures in her response. A lot of people are making that very risky crossing and those figures account only for those who make it. I would like to know from Her Majesty's Government if there is any estimate of the number of people who have died at sea trying to make the crossing.

The main route is across the short straits between Dover and Calais, which cover only 22 or 23 miles. Recent reports, however, say that some asylum seekers try to make an even longer crossing. In January, four Iranians were caught near Mablethorpe in Lincolnshire, having travelled across the North sea from Belgium—a journey 10 times longer than across the short straits between Dover and Calais. A lot of those people arrive along our coast, either on deserted stretches of the coastline or in small towns and villages. Their aim is to seek asylum. What concerns me and my constituents is that it is not only extremely risky activity that is dangerous to those seeking to cross the channel and to shipping, but it is effectively fuelled by horrendous people—the people traffickers—who charge those poor people a lot of money for the equipment to try to get across the channel.

There is also a security risk. The No. 1 priority of Her Majesty's Government is to defend this nation. We do not know who those people are, where they come from or what their intentions are, and that activity needs to be stopped. The simplest way to stop it is this: if people are intercepted crossing the channel, they should be taken back to the ports from where they came, whether in France, Belgium or elsewhere.

Adam Holloway (Gravesend) (Con): When I was a television reporter I lived undercover in the Sangatte camp in Calais, and spent several weeks trying to get into the UK. I entirely agree with my hon. Friend; the only way that we can stop the economic migrants—I would do exactly the same in their position, but they are economic migrants, not refugees, because they pass

through many safe countries—is to break the idea that getting into Britain or Europe means they can stay there. Until we do that, the problem will go on and on.

Mr Hollobone: I could not have put it better myself; my hon. Friend is exactly right. Those people need to be taken back to France, whether they are intercepted trying to cross the channel or after they have arrived in the United Kingdom.

I would like to know what we are doing to stop that illegal people trafficking. My understanding is that two Border Force cutters are bobbing around somewhere in the English channel. I am told that two more are on the way, because we had lent them to the EU to patrol the Mediterranean. Can the Minister confirm that there are two Border Force cutters in the English channel and that two more will be added to that number, and when that will happen? I understand that Border Force has a total of five cutters and six coastal patrol vessels at its disposal. Where are all those vessels deployed and what are they doing?

The Royal Navy has a patrol vessel in the channel, but I am reliably informed by sources in the Government that the Royal Navy actually has very little to do with Border Force operations. Its deployment is therefore probably just a cosmetic exercise by Her Majesty's Government in order to seem tough on the issue. I have the highest regard for the sailors of the Royal Navy and for those who serve on the Border Force cutters—they do their best in difficult circumstances—but I am not convinced that the Home Office or the Ministry of Defence is taking the issue seriously enough. In her response, can the Minister outline what vessels we have in the English channel and what they are doing exactly? Have they intercepted any asylum seekers and, if they have, have they taken them back to France or Belgium, or have they simply ensured safe passage to these shores?

The Government have spent £6 million on new security equipment for the French, including CCTV, night goggles and automatic number plate recognition equipment, for deployment in ports on the French coast. I welcome that if it is true, but I am not quite sure why we, rather than the French, have to pay for it. That compares with the £148 million that Her Majesty's Government have spent since 2014 on extra security at the port of Calais. I would like to see aerial surveillance close to the French coast, so that if small boats are detected trying to cross the channel, information can be relayed quickly to the French authorities, who can intercept them. Will the Minister tell the House whether the French have any vessels patrolling those waters? The rumour is that they have one French navy patrol boat doing something off the French coast. Is that true? Have any French vessels intercepted any asylum seekers and, if so, do they take them back to France, or do they offer them safe passage across the channel?

I understand that we have a comprehensive naval agreement between the Royal Navy and the French equivalent, covering a variety of defence and security issues. Under that agreement, is there any way in which we can have shared patrols so that wherever people are intercepted in the channel, they are taken back to France? It seems to me that the picture painted from all the television coverage is that if people are intercepted at sea, they have effectively made it—if intercepted at sea, they will be brought to the British coast. That acts

as a magnet for people to try the passage, because they know that they do not have to get across the 23 miles; they only have to make it to the 12-mile limit and, once they have crossed it, they will be picked up and brought over to this country.

There is something called the Dublin convention, or the Dublin regulation, whereby if someone claims asylum in the United Kingdom and has been in a safe country on their way here, we are entitled to return them to that country. Are we using that? My information is that since 2015 we have returned only 1,186 asylum seekers under those rules, but the number of people claiming asylum in this country is absolutely enormous—33,780 in 2017, I understand—so we seem to return a very small number to the safe countries through which they came.

It might be an accident of geography, but we are surrounded by safe countries—pretty much all those 33,780 asylum claimants will have come through one, two, three or more safe countries before reaching our shores. Under the EU regulation, they should be returned to the first safe country in which they arrived. Those EU countries, however, do not fingerprint arrivals when they come in, so no documentation proves that they entered the EU via Italy, Greece or Spain. Especially before we leave the EU, we should insist that our present European partners enforce the regulation.

What will we do once we have left the European Union? Non-EU countries are attached to the Dublin regulation, so the idea that we have to be in the EU for it to work is simply not the case. Are we preparing the ground so that, once we leave, we can still be a member of the convention and return asylum seekers?

I also understand that 80,813 asylum applications were refused or withdrawn between 2010 and 2016, which is 80,813 asylum claimants whose claims were refused or withdrawn. Is that figure correct, and is it correct that of that number only 26,659, or 33%, were actually deported? If we are to turn down people applying for asylum in this country, we need to deport them, because they are not legal asylum claimants—but we are simply not doing that. The problem is that if those people stay in this country, even though their claim was illegal, after five or more years they can claim indefinite leave to remain. That whole problem is fuelling people coming to this country illegally: basically, they know that they can get away with it.

Civitas published an excellent report recently. The author was one David Wood, who was dangerously overqualified: he worked at the Home Office for nine years, including as deputy chief executive of the UK Border Agency and as director-general of immigration enforcement; and before that he was 31 years in the Metropolitan police. He probably knows what he is talking about. I agree absolutely with what he makes clear:

“There needs to be a two-pronged approach to the problem: to reduce the numbers of illegal immigrants who enter in the first place, and to improve the rate of removal for those who are refused asylum.”

The report goes on:

“The difficulty is that if claimants know that all they have to do is to reach the UK, or Europe, claim asylum, and then disappear if the claim fails...then that is an incentive to pay criminals and take the risk of crossing the Mediterranean and, ultimately, the English Channel. The asylum system then becomes a tool of abuse for those we, as a country, have not provided with

[Mr Hollobone]

an entitlement to be here. Once an individual has been in a country unlawfully for a number of years, the courts are very reluctant to order their removal and many can then regularise their stay. Again, the unlawful entrants know this, and the systems incentivise deceptive behavior.”

He is absolutely right about that. What will the Minister do to tackle the issue?

A lot of the asylum seekers who cross the English Channel in small boats are, I understand, Iranians.

4.34 pm

Sitting suspended for a Division in the House.

4.47 pm

On resuming—

Mr Hollobone: I shall draw my remarks to a close.

What nationality are the people crossing the English channel illegally? It is reported in the media that most of them are Iranian. I understand that is fuelled by Serbia giving Iranians visa-free access to Serbia for a four-month period. Some 40,000 Iranians took advantage of that and are seeking to disperse themselves around the EU, including coming to these shores. Apparently, we let 63% of Iranians in; France keeps 69% of Iranian applicants out. Two and a half thousand Iranians applied for asylum here each year between 2008 and 2017—more than in any other EU country except Germany. Why are they all seeking asylum in this country and not in other EU countries on the way? Less than 4% of the total have been forcibly removed or have chosen to leave. What action have we taken or are we taking with the Serbian Government to ensure that the visa programme is closed down?

This is a big issue of huge concern to many people. We must be able to defend our coastline from illegal immigration. We must not encourage, by either doing nothing or doing very little, the people traffickers who are driving this horrible trade that puts many lives at risk. Above all, we want to ensure we have secure borders and can control who comes here and who does not.

Sir Christopher Chope (in the Chair): The Minister has until 5.13 pm, if she wishes to extend her remarks until then. That is because the previous debate finished early and we have been interrupted by Divisions.

4.49 pm

The Minister for Immigration (Caroline Nokes): It is always a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Sir Christopher. Thank you for that clarification about how long I may speak for.

It is a great credit to my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr Hollobone) that he secured this important debate. As many Members will know, this issue first came to prominence over the festive period, but it started significantly before that. We are very conscious that since October there has been a sharp increase in the number of migrants attempting to cross the channel to the UK in small boats. During 2018, more than 500 migrants, most of them Iranian, attempted to travel to the UK on small vessels. Some 80% of them made

their attempts in the last three months of the year. As a result, the Home Secretary announced a major incident and this issue has become an operational priority for the Home Office.

The decision to announce a major incident was taken not least to protect the lives of those attempting to make this dangerous crossing; my hon. Friend was absolutely right to point out how perilous it is. However, it was also taken because we have an absolute duty to protect the border and stop organised crime gangs exploiting vulnerable individuals who want to come here by sending them through the busiest shipping lane in the world. That is why we must stop this incredibly dangerous route becoming the new normal for those wanting to enter the UK illegally.

My hon. Friend pointed out the hazards to individual migrants and shipping, but there is also a very real hazard to brave volunteers from the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, many of whom have been deployed from Dover to effect rescues in the channel, and to coastguard and Border Force officials, who have been on both our cutters and the coastal patrol vessels.

My hon. Friend was right to point out that this migration is driven very much by organised crime gangs. Just last month, five members of an organised crime group received a combined custodial sentence of 21 years and 10 months for smuggling migrants across the border, and last year alone, Immigration Enforcement’s criminal and financial investigation teams successfully disrupted 405 events of organised crime groups and their activity.

As well as those investigations, the Home Secretary has redeployed two Border Force cutters from overseas to the channel. While they are returning, other Border Force vessels have been supplemented by a Royal Navy offshore patrol vessel. There has been some criticism from people who ask why the cutters have not returned sooner. It is important to note that those vessels are designed and built to work around coastal areas rather than to make longer distance or open ocean deployments. For the crews to transit the bay of Biscay during winter—especially while deep Atlantic pressures are sweeping across, causing high swells, at times of up to 14 metres—is a dangerous pursuit, which must not be taken carelessly. I fully support the principle that the safety of our Border Force commanders, crews and vessels is paramount.

All essential maintenance activity has now been carried out on the cutters. Both are fully crewed and await a favourable weather window to return to the UK safely and securely. Currently, our forecast for their return is early February. Upon their return, we will have four cutters available to operate in the channel, but Members will appreciate that I will not discuss operational deployment in detail. As I said, until the cutters’ return, we are supplementing coverage with a Royal Navy vessel. In addition to the cutters, we have Border Force coastal patrol vessels in place. I visited Dover over the Christmas period to see the great work Border Force officers are doing there. As the Home Secretary said last week, we have also started to deploy aerial surveillance of the English channel. However, Members will appreciate that that is covert surveillance and I do not wish to discuss those actions in detail.

It is important to note that we have not taken those actions alone. We have worked very closely with the French authorities to tackle the issue. Around 40% of

people who attempted the crossing last year were either disrupted by French law enforcement or returned to France via French agencies. Just last week, along with the French Interior Minister, Christophe Castaner, I visited the joint co-ordination and information centre in Calais to see at first hand the great co-operation between French and British authorities. In London last week, the Home Secretary and Mr Castaner signed a joint action plan to commit to reinforcing our border control. That builds on the 2018 Sandhurst treaty and demonstrates our determination to secure our shared border.

Through those efforts, we have reduced the number of individuals attempting the crossing from around 250 in December to 90 so far in January. However, we must not be complacent, and I am determined that we make further efforts to deter both the facilitators and the individuals who seek to make the crossing.

As Members will be aware, there is a widely accepted principle that those seeking asylum should claim it in the first safe country they reach, be that France or elsewhere. Therefore, if we establish that a migrant first entered another EU member state, we will always seek to return them to that state, in accordance with the Dublin regulation. For arrivals from safe non-EU states, asylum claims in the UK may be deemed inadmissible if the claimant has already been recognised as a refugee or given similar protection, if they have claimed asylum elsewhere, or if they have already spent five months in a safe country in which they could have claimed asylum.

We expect refugees to claim at the first reasonable opportunity. Indeed, that is a widely held international principle, and it certainly does not involve travelling through safe countries to reach the UK. Upholding that principle does not mean we will remove those who face persecution to their country. However, we will seek to return migrants to the first safe country in which they should have claimed asylum. Last week, a small number of migrants who entered the UK by small boat over Christmas were returned to France.

In the majority of cases, if a migrant is picked up in UK waters they are taken to the UK, and if they are picked up in French waters they are taken to France. The action plan we signed with France last week makes a commitment that migrants encountered in the channel will be taken to the nearest safe port, in accordance with international maritime law. Too often, migrants in the channel dictated to those who came to their rescue where they should be taken. That is not right, and I have asked officials to do all they can to prevent that “asylum shopping”, whether on land or at sea.

It is an established principle that those in need of protection should claim asylum in the first safe country they reach, and if we establish that a migrant first entered another EU member state, we will seek to return them there, in accordance with the Dublin regulation. We do not want people to think that if they leave a safe country such as France and get to Britain they will get to stay, which is why we are working out, with our French counterparts, ways to increase the number of returns we make.

As part of the joint action plan agreed last week, the UK and France made a renewed commitment to return migrants who attempt to cross the channel to the country they came from. That plan, which comes into force immediately and builds on the existing framework of co-operation in the Sandhurst treaty, states specifically:

“Migrants rescued at sea will be taken to a port of safety in accordance with international maritime law. The respective maritime authorities will liaise with each other about rescue operations to provide mutual assistance as necessary at sea, and to determine the appropriate port of safety for a rescued migrant.”

My hon. Friend the Member for Kettering rightly raised the issue of funding. The UK has agreed to allocate more than £6 million to support France’s comprehensive regional action plan. As he pointed out, that has led to additional surveillance and security on French beaches and ports, as well as greater co-ordination between the French authorities on land and at sea. Just over half the investment will come from money already allocated under the Sandhurst treaty, which was signed back in January 2018, and an additional £3.2 million of new funding will be used for equipment and measures to tackle illegal migration via small boats.

The structures in place to co-ordinate operations in the channel include the joint maritime operations co-ordination centre and the national maritime information centre. They are both supported administratively by Border Force, but the Department for Transport is responsible for their governance. The Border Force maritime intelligence bureau and maritime co-ordination centre also maintain a close dialogue with the French authorities operating both at sea and in the air.

The UK’s obligations to those seeking asylum are clearly defined in UK law. Those obligations will continue to be met after Brexit, and the UK will continue to recognise refugees under the 1951 convention. If a deal is secured and finalised with the EU, we will continue to participate in all EU asylum directives we are part of, including the Dublin III regulation, throughout the implementation period, but my hon. Friend will be aware that we have not opted in to Dublin IV. The UK’s position on granting protection to those who need it will not change as a result of leaving the EU. As well as providing sanctuary to those who need it, we intend to continue to work together at every point in the migrant journey, to address push factors, to importantly tackle organised crime and to limit pull factors and abuse of claims.

Mr Hollobone: I am listening to this good speech very closely. One of the pull factors for asylum seekers is that so many of those who make an asylum claim that is then rejected get to stay here anyway. Some two thirds of rejected asylum claimants remain in this country, which is an appalling figure. What will Her Majesty’s Government do about that?

Caroline Nokes: I thank my hon. Friend for raising that important point. He will be conscious that I have been in post as Minister of State for Immigration for a year now. One of the real concerns we have is how we address people who remain here without status and without a right given to them by the courts to be here. Both my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and I are working very hard on promoting voluntary returns and, where appropriate, using means of returning people to their safe country of origin by enforced measures. That does not always make us popular. I am conscious that we have an absolute duty to uphold our asylum system, to make it robust and to make it firm but fair, and part of that process is indeed returns.

My hon. Friend also mentioned pull factors in his speech, with specific reference to Iranians and he asked me to confirm that the majority of those making these

[*Caroline Nokes*]

small vessel crossings are Iranian. We believe in the region of 80% are Iranian, so that is a very high proportion. He also commented on the visa route through Serbia. I met—I am not sure if it was last week or the week before—the Serbian ambassador to raise this. She shared our concerns that Serbia had been used as a transit country. The visa route is now closed, but we are having close co-ordination with Serbia about the problem that has occurred there. The ambassador was positive about the role that Serbia could play, working with the UK.

There are many pull factors when it comes specifically to Iranians coming to the UK, one of which is language. I am well aware from my own constituency that a high number of Iranian citizens have come here, largely back in the 1970s. They have settled in the UK and been very successful. One of the big pull factors that we see for migration, throughout the middle east and north Africa region and beyond, is that when family members have come here, migrants often use that as reason to choose the UK, rather than other safe countries. The Home Secretary has been very clear on this point, and I hope I have been today as well. It is firmly our view that people should claim asylum in the first safe country and not the last, which in many cases is the UK.

Our position on granting protection will not change, as I said. We will still provide people with sanctuary, but we must continue with a strategy on the whole route of migration. The focus at the moment is very much on the channel, but we continue our work with our EU partners and beyond, across the MENA region, in the Aegean and the Mediterranean, looking at those strong routes of migration and working out how we can best counteract them.

Some of the best work that the UK does in counteracting the pull factors is through our extensive aid programmes, led by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Development, that make sure people can be safe, whether it be in the countries immediately surrounding Syria or further afield.

It is a month since the major incident was declared and the number of arrivals and attempts is around half that of the previous month. I would not want my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering or other Members to think that we are in any way complacent about that. We have seen these crossings attempted during perhaps the most dangerous part of the year. As spring and summer are approaching—I say that somewhat optimistically—it is imperative that we remain vigilant and continue our work with the French, to make sure that they too keep up the surveillance and observation on their beaches. When I was in Calais last week, I was conscious that it is a sparsely populated coastline, which is difficult to monitor closely. They have aerial surveillance and the French have been proactive in making sure they are playing their part. The Mayor of Calais was forceful in his message to me about how we could provide further help. It is important that we continue our work on a joint basis.

I am pleased by the progress we have made thus far, but more remains to be done. It is imperative that we go forward in the vein of joint co-operation, because migration across the channel is sadly not an issue that we will solve on our own.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House has considered illegal seaborne immigration across the English Channel.

World Cancer Day

Sir Christopher Chope (in the Chair): We now come to the next debate, which can continue with the benefit of unused time until 13 minutes past six.

5.5 pm

John Lamont (Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk) (Con): I beg to move,

That this House has considered World Cancer Day.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Sir Christopher. I am grateful to right hon. and hon. Members for being here to debate an important issue that sadly affects too many of our constituents.

This debate comes ahead of what will be the 20th World Cancer Day, which will take place on Monday 4 February. I am delighted that following a suggestion from Elaine Monro, who is a constituent of mine and a Cancer Research UK volunteer, the Palace of Westminster will mark World Cancer Day by lighting up in pink. As far as I am aware, this will be the first time that Westminster will be illuminated for World Cancer Day, so I would like to place on the record my thanks to the Speaker and the Lord Speaker for agreeing to that request.

World Cancer Day is an initiative led by the Union for International Cancer Control. Each year, the global cancer community is united in seeking to raise awareness about cancer prevention and treatment, and about the importance of Governments working together, tackling cancer globally. Last year's World Cancer Day involved more than 1,000 activities in 139 countries, culminating in half a million social media mentions and over 14,000 press articles and broadcasts in 145 countries worldwide.

Cancer is a global problem. Last year, more than 18 million people worldwide were diagnosed with cancer, but the story of those patients varies hugely depending on where they were born; many countries have no access to basic treatments, such as radiotherapy. This is all about working together—a global push to tackle a global issue. As Cancer Research UK has put it:

“No single person, organisation, or country is going to beat cancer on its own. We must all work together.”

In the UK, a number of charities mark World Cancer Day through campaigns or fundraising activities. Cancer Research UK and CLIC Sargent both sell wristbands, which I am pleased that I and colleagues are wearing today, to raise funds and awareness about the day. Children with Cancer UK and the Institute of Cancer Research are also running campaigns to coincide with World Cancer Day, and in previous years many other charities, including Macmillan Cancer Support, Marie Curie, Breast Cancer Now and Anthony Nolan, have also marked the day. Events are taking place across the United Kingdom, from the Scottish cancer prevention conference in Edinburgh to Cancer Research UK's winter run in London.

I pay tribute to each and every one of those charities, their staff and volunteers; they do incredible work. They are truly a credit to our country and contribute significantly to the global effort to tackle cancer, doing hugely valuable work with global partners. Cancer Research UK is the largest independent funder of cancer research in the world and it has played a role in developing eight of the world's top 10 cancer drugs. Can the Minister

touch upon how the Government support this work and how they help the UK to continue to contribute to the global effort to tackle cancer? I know that some charities have concerns about the impact that Brexit may have on the UK's continued contribution to this work.

There is some great work being carried out in my constituency; I shall mention a few examples. The Cancer Research UK team from Selkirk, led by Elaine Monro, has developed an official tartan scarf, which is produced in the Borders by Lochcarron and continues to sell like hot cakes, not only in Selkirk and Scotland, but throughout the United Kingdom. The Marie Curie team in the Borders, who now help patients with terminal illnesses generally, not just cancer, do some incredible work caring for people in their final days. I must not fail to mention that I will be running the London marathon in a few weeks to help raise funds to support my local Marie Curie nursing team. I hope that by raising £5,000 I shall be able to support their work in caring for people with terminal illness in my constituency.

In partnership with Macmillan, NHS Borders runs a dedicated, world-leading cancer centre at the Borders General Hospital, which pulls together specialist staff and treatments all in one location. NHS Borders is very good at meeting its cancer treatment waiting times, as well as targets for cancer screening, not least because of that Macmillan centre.

Although World Cancer Day is focused on tackling cancer globally, we are understandably focused on the UK's record. Like most other developed nations, the UK has higher rates of cancer, but we also have quite high mortality rates—just above the average, according to the 2018 Global Cancer Observatory figures, and higher than many other developed nations. Given that the UK leads the way in vast amounts of cancer research, and that we have some of the world's best cancer professionals and a universal health service, our mortality rates are simply too high.

Cancer continues to affect far too many people in the UK. More than 360,000 Brits are diagnosed with cancer each year, and that is expected to rise to the equivalent of one new case every minute by 2035. Every day, 12 children and young people are diagnosed with cancer, which remains the biggest killer of children by disease in the United Kingdom.

Douglas Ross (Moray) (Con): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his excellent speech and for securing this debate. When he mentions children's cancer, he will be aware of a case that I have raised in Parliament and a guest that I had at Downing Street last week. Abbie Main, who sadly died on Christmas day two years ago, died of a very rare disease—sarcoma. Her legacy, through a difficult period, was to set up a charity. While great work is done by charities to raise funds for research into cancer, great work is also done by local charities such as Abbie's Sparkle Foundation, raising money for people who have to live with cancer, to give them better facilities and better care in hospital.

John Lamont: My hon. Friend makes an excellent point; I was delighted to meet Abbie's brother at the Downing Street Burns supper last week. He has done an incredible amount of work to raise funds for Abbie's Sparkle Foundation in memory of his sister. He is one of many examples, not only in Moray but in all our

[John Lamont]

constituencies throughout the United Kingdom, of fundraising groups that are raising the profile of cancer and also raising much-needed funds to tackle it.

Kirstene Hair (Angus) (Con): I congratulate my hon. Friend on bringing this important debate to the House. Does he welcome the initiative in my constituency, run by the Maggie's Centre in Dundee, which helps and supports many people who are suffering? We had a penguin parade in which 80 penguins were decorated across Tayside, and children through their summer holidays had to go on a penguin search. In the end, we raised £540,000 for the local Maggie's Centre. It just shows that there are initiatives all across Scotland and the United Kingdom that are beneficial in raising as much money as possible.

John Lamont: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising that example, which demonstrates that it is not just in large cities, but smaller communities, whether they be in Angus and Dundee, in Moray or across our county, that people are coming together to produce such great work to tackle this dreadful disease.

Paul Masterton (East Renfrewshire) (Con): My hon. Friend is making an excellent speech. One issue that is not often raised is that of people with cancer who have disabilities. Wendy Douglas, a constituent of mine, died of breast cancer aged just 36. She had very severe autism, and her cancer was caught too late because she was not able to communicate any symptoms or pain verbally to her family or doctors. Will my hon. Friend join me in paying tribute to Wendy's mother Eileen, who raises money for all kinds of cancer charities, and particularly for her work trying to raise awareness of cancer in those who cannot communicate it?

John Lamont: Again, I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising a powerful case and example. I suppose the question is what would happen were it not for all these volunteers, raising huge amounts of money and raising awareness of cancer, and filling a gap that otherwise the NHS and the state would have to provide for. That is something we should not forget.

That is not to say that we have not made huge progress in tackling cancer. While diagnosis rates have risen significantly in the past decade, the number of people dying from cancer in this country is falling.

Alex Sobel (Leeds North West) (Lab/Co-op): I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on securing this important debate. On the question of diagnosis, I congratulate Leeds Teaching Hospitals and the University of Leeds; their pathology department is the first in the world, I believe, to move away from glass slides to fully digitised diagnosis, and is now working with artificial intelligence, which will improve diagnosis rates and move us forward, so that many more people can get early treatment.

John Lamont: The hon. Gentleman makes an excellent point, and raises a very good example. My brother's father-in-law sadly died a couple of weeks ago. His treatment was provided by Leeds hospital, so I know the tremendous amount of resource and expertise they have in that particular hospital.

For breast cancer in Scotland, the mortality rate was 53 per 100,000 women in 1992. That has fallen to 32 per 100,000, despite the incidence of breast cancer increasing. In short, we are much better than we used to be at both identifying and treating cancer. That is because the UK has taken the steps that World Cancer Day promotes—in particular, tackling tobacco use and obesity levels and rolling out national cancer strategies.

Big issues clearly remain; pretty much all the cancer charities I have spoken to ahead of today's debate agree with that. We need to get better at early diagnosis, because we know how much of a difference it can make. For example, if bowel cancer is diagnosed early, nine in 10 people will survive, but with a late diagnosis, the survival rate is only one in 10.

Dr Philippa Whitford (Central Ayrshire) (SNP): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that research shows that the awareness around breast cancer means that women come forward quickly, but with bowel cancer people do not? Research done in the west of Scotland showed that the biggest delay was in going to the GP. We need to get people to talk about it, be open about it and go and get help.

John Lamont: I could not agree more. There is an awareness issue. Often, when people develop some symptoms that they are unsure of, they are nervous about going to the doctor. People need to be encouraged to step forward and go to their GP, to ensure that if there is an opportunity to get an early diagnosis, that is achieved, because the results are clearly much more positive if that is the case.

That is why we have early diagnosis targets across the UK, and why it is so serious that in Scotland, more than 20% of patients are waiting for longer than the six-week standard for diagnostic tests. Too many people are waiting too long for treatment. NHS boards north of the border are meant to take no more than two months to start treatment, but that target is being missed for every type of cancer. In some health boards, one in five patients did not meet that target. I am sure we have all received emails from patients who are faced with an agonising wait for treatment, knowing that they have cancer. While the missed targets are by no means unique to Scotland, I hope that we can all come together here—Scottish National party colleagues included—to call on the Scottish Government to make clear that that needs to get better.

I should also be interested to hear the Minister's views on whether any consideration has been given to reviewing treatment target times with a view to introducing faster treatment targets for certain types of cancer. It strikes me as odd that across the UK our targets are the same for all cancers, regardless of type.

One significant reason for the time taken to diagnose and treat is problems to do with workforce. Demand for tests is only going to increase, due to a growing and ageing population, but we already do not have enough staff in a range of areas.

Karen Lee (Lincoln) (Lab): Does the hon. Gentleman agree with me on the impact of no longer having nursing bursaries? When I was a nurse, I had a nursing bursary. I could not have trained without that. We really must bring back the bursary. It is all right saying, "We

have all these vacancies and we are going to have all these nurses,” but if people do not train, we will not have the people to fill those vacancies.

John Lamont: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for making that point. There is a range of options that we need to consider. I recently met my local NHS health board, and I meet a number of my GPs frequently. There are vacancies in all different parts of the health service, and we need to consider how we get more people in to do the jobs that we need. There is a particular challenge in my constituency—many rural communities do not have enough GPs or get enough nurses. Bursaries may be part of that. There are a range of things that we need to do, and that the Scottish Government and the UK Government can do, to address those issues.

For example, there is a 10% vacancy rate for radiology consultants across Scotland. One in five of the current workforce are expected to retire over the next five years. So, yes, there are challenges just now, but there are future challenges coming down the line.

Ged Killen (Rutherglen and Hamilton West) (Lab/Co-op): I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on securing the debate. He talks about access to existing treatments, but does he agree that more work has to be done on conditions for which treatment is not yet available? The late Tessa Jowell worked very hard on this issue, right up to the end of her life, trying to improve access to new treatments and to improve care for people with conditions for which there is perhaps no treatment out there. Does he agree that we should pay tribute to Tessa Jowell and continue that work?

John Lamont: I absolutely agree. We need to do much more to promote awareness of those conditions. I will come on later to the availability of drugs.

The Scottish Government recognise that the high number of vacancies is a problem, but missed their target for increasing the number of nurse endoscopists by 40%. In England, nurse vacancies are similarly too high. The availability of drugs is also an issue that concerns charities and patients alike. The most high-profile example is the breast cancer drug Perjeta, which was rejected for use three times in Scotland but was finally approved just a few weeks ago. Quicker and more cost-effective access to the latest and best treatments must be a priority in future.

I know that colleagues will want to press the Minister on what the UK Government are doing to tackle cancer in England, but all these issues need to be addressed across all parts of our United Kingdom. As a Scottish MP, I am conscious that the Minister is not directly responsible for the cancer waiting times and treatments for my constituents. However, UK-wide approaches should be taken to help us tackle cancer head on, together.

World Cancer Day is all about recognising that cancer knows no boundaries, and that individual Governments cannot address these challenges in isolation. That gives rise to the question: are the UK Government and devolved Governments working as well together on this issue as they should be? For example, should we buy some drugs and equipment on a UK-wide basis? Current practice is that four separate bodies approve new drugs

across the UK. While that allows different parts of the UK to make their own decisions, surely a UK-wide approach would make sense in some cases. We could make ultra-orphan drugs more affordable or use economies of scale to deliver common drugs at lower cost.

I am therefore interested in the Minister's views on this suggestion. Have there been any discussions with the devolved Administrations about this possibility? Are health boards across the UK as good as they can be at talking to each other and sharing best practice? Representing a constituency on the border with England, I all too often see examples of that border acting as a barrier to co-operation. I certainly hope that that is not the case when it comes to cancer treatment.

I hugely welcome the extra funding coming the NHS's way, which will of course mean an extra £2 billion a year for the Scottish Government to spend on health, if they choose. Will the Minister outline what that means for cancer treatment in England, and how much of that extra funding will be used to improve treatment and reduce cancer waiting times?

Can we do more to support families with the cost of cancer treatment? Parents spend an average £600 a month in additional expenses as a result of their child's active cancer treatment, much of that on travel costs. Young people in my constituency often have to make a 100-mile round trip to Edinburgh for tests and treatment. Children's cancer charity CLIC Sargent is calling for a cancer patient travel fund, as well as a review of the disability living allowance and personal independence payments, to backdate young cancer patients' financial support to their day of diagnosis. I certainly think that these are reasonable suggestions.

Ruth George (High Peak) (Lab): As a parent who supported a child through cancer, I know at first hand how much a child going through cancer costs and the financial strain, as well as the emotional and physical strain, on parents and families. Universal credit does not take account of the cost of cancer; both parents often have to give up work to support one child in hospital and other children at home or at school. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that that is absolutely crippling for those families?

John Lamont: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for sharing her experience. This all needs to be looked at. As I said, DLA and PIP should at the very least be backdated to the date of diagnosis. Additional support, particularly for parents like those in my constituency who have to travel such long distances to access treatment, should be factored into the calculation of how much they might be entitled to. We need to ensure that the system at least recognises those extra financial pressures.

Dr Whitford: I utterly agree with the hon. Member for High Peak (Ruth George) on financial support. Macmillan Cancer Support estimates that having cancer costs £570 a month, which is very difficult for some families. Will the hon. Gentleman suggest to the Minister that removing the expensive parking charges at hospitals in England would make a little difference? At the moment, a parent being stuck in hospital for eight hours and then paying through the nose for parking adds insult to injury.

John Lamont: I am grateful for that point. I am certainly aware of constituents, including hospital staff, facing huge penalties from the health board for parking at Borders General Hospital, because of the limited parking spaces—that is a consequence of the hospital's parking arrangements. There are lots of dynamics, but Scotland has just as many issues as England.

It is great to see so many colleagues present today. I am pleased that Parliament will mark World Cancer Day in such a public and clear way on Monday. We have made great strides in treating cancer in recent years, thanks in no small part to the work of charities, researchers and health professionals across every part of our United Kingdom. World Cancer Day is an opportunity for us all to come together to make a strong commitment to continue the fight against this dreadful disease.

5.27 pm

Ruth George (High Peak) (Lab): As I mentioned earlier, I have personal experience of cancer, both as a parent and a child; my mother died of breast cancer when I was five years old. From a very young age I have seen the impact of cancer on families. I have also seen treatments improve over the decades, from the time that my mother was suffering and had what appeared to me, at that young age, to be fairly rudimentary treatments, to what are now much more sophisticated treatments, which are available to children and adults in centres of excellence such as the Christie Hospital in Manchester.

The support has also evolved greatly. I pay tribute not only to the very brave people going through cancer, and their families who support them, but to amazing organisations such as Mummy's Star, a national charity set up in my constituency to support families with children whose parent is dying or has died of cancer. It does amazing work counselling children and helping them through the process of treatment and grief, and often bereavement as well.

I also pay tribute to our hospices. Blythe House Hospice in my constituency has a brilliant "Breast Friends" group, which I have visited and spoken to. They are very brave survivors of cancer, often two or possibly even three times over. The support they get from the local hospice and community really helps them to keep going through the emotionally and physically gruelling trauma of cancer treatment.

We have very particular concerns in High Peak. At the end of last year, just after Breast Cancer Awareness Month, breast services for patients in north Derbyshire were withdrawn from our local hospital. As that is our nearest hospital, it was incredibly traumatic for patients and families, who were faced with possibly very long distances to travel for treatment. It is extremely difficult to drive and no public transport is available. That is exceedingly worrying for them, on top of the worry and trauma of their diagnosis and treatment.

Services were also withdrawn from gastroenterology patients in Macclesfield Hospital in north Derbyshire—our other nearby hospital. On both occasions, that was due to staffing shortages; there are 42,000 vacancies for registered nurses. I urge the Minister to look at the amount of investment that is going in to support not just the nurses, but the radiotherapists and radiologists who are so important in cancer diagnosis and care.

Early diagnosis is important for people's outcomes. We do not want to see any more people than have to go through treatment, and we certainly do not want them to find out about their cancer at a late stage, when it is much more difficult for them to recover and when the prognosis is much worse.

I echo the comments of the hon. Member for Central Ayrshire (Dr Whitford) about the costs of cancer. Again, universal credit is an extremely complicated system for people—not just the parents of children with cancer but cancer sufferers themselves—to go through. It took six hours at a computer for one young man, Neil, who is cited by Macmillan Cancer Support, to complete the claim form for universal credit while suffering from the treatment for a brain tumour. We are putting cancer patients through an absolutely sub-human system when they should already have as much support as possible.

I ask the Minister to speak to colleagues in the Department for Work and Pensions about the strain and lack of support available to parents of children with cancer or to cancer sufferers in claiming universal credit. At the moment, almost one in five patients with cancer struggles to pay their bills, which should not be the case for people who need to put all their efforts and energy into getting well.

5.32 pm

Bill Grant (Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Sir Christopher. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk (John Lamont) for securing this important debate.

It is staggering that about 4,600 women and more than 20 men in Scotland are diagnosed with breast cancer each year. Sadly, few people, particularly males, realise that men can also be affected. My researcher was diagnosed with breast cancer nearly 16 years ago and remains eternally grateful for the care and support she received from the national health service. Her paternal grandmother and great-aunt were of a different, less fortunate generation and lost their lives to breast cancer shortly after diagnosis, although a delay in seeking assistance was undoubtedly a factor in their demise.

Regrettably, previous generations were often reticent to seek assistance, perhaps due to a lack of knowledge or embarrassment. Encouraging openness and interaction, as World Cancer Day does, and media campaigns from the national health service and various cancer charities are vital if we are to empower people through education and advocacy, including peer support, to improve their quality of life and life expectancy following a cancer diagnosis.

Dr Whitford: I welcome the mention of embarrassment. Does the hon. Gentleman not think that we have a particular job to do with men to get beyond the embarrassment of talking about bowels, bowel motions and other bodily functions? If people cannot talk about it with their families, they will struggle to talk about it with a GP.

Bill Grant: I totally agree; I am of the embarrassed generation. It is challenging for males—I concede that it is men in particular—to go to the general practitioner, but we need to educate them about making that first

contact and being conscious of the risk. It is particularly my generation; the generation following are a bit less self-conscious and more eager to go to the GP, where they will find that help.

As a member of the Select Committee on Science and Technology, I have become acutely aware of the importance and benefits of research. In 2014, the city of Glasgow, not far from my constituency, hosted the European breast cancer conference. Such conferences bring together experts in their respective fields to share knowledge and experience for the benefit of patients and to consider preventive measures for the future, such as developments in immunotherapy that harness the body's immune system to target cancer cells. As I understand it, such developments may be able to complement, if not replace, radiotherapy and chemotherapy, the side effects of which many breast cancer patients find more challenging than the cancer itself.

Treatment has very much improved, recognising the importance of body image in an era when the media often seek to portray the perfect person. The charity Breast Cancer Care stages regular fashion shows in which those who take to the catwalk have themselves been cancer patients. The male and female models, resplendent in their latest outfits, send a very clear message that they have beaten or are robustly fighting cancer.

Tamoxifen, a common medication for breast cancer treatment, is now just one of a range of drugs available to patients. It was heartening to learn of the Scottish Medicines Consortium's decision to approve the life-extending drug Perjeta for routine use in treating secondary breast cancer on Scotland's national health service. Compared with existing treatments, the drug apparently has the potential to offer valuable time to those with incurable HER2-positive secondary breast cancer.

Nowadays, cancer is treated by multi-disciplinary teams that include GPs, surgeons, oncologists, radiographers, radiologists and clinical nurse specialists. It is crucial that we have appropriate succession planning so that we can replace those vital experts as they reach retirement age or change career for whatever reason. It is quite concerning that 20% of breast radiologists in Scotland are predicted to retire before 2025, according to the charity Breast Cancer Now. We need to get the wheels in motion to replace those very important individuals.

Cancer is a challenge to our society. It changes people's lives in different ways, and sadly some go on to develop lymphoedema. However, collectively we can meet that challenge. Some countries have a lesser incidence, so it may be prudent, as an aspect of self-help, to reflect on diet and lifestyle choices in the UK that may have a bearing on development or outcomes. The potential effects of obesity, cigarettes and alcohol need to be seriously addressed. That apart, we need to focus on the future needs of the researchers and medical professionals to protect the population who are at risk of cancer.

Finally, my constituents and I thank the national health service professionals, the volunteer drivers, the penguins of Dundee, the marathon runners from the borders and the charities. They all make the challenge of living and dealing with cancer that wee bit easier.

5.37 pm

Karen Lee (Lincoln) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Sir Christopher. I will keep my speech fairly brief. I speak as an ex-nurse who worked in gynaecology outpatient clinics every Tuesday morning and as a mum whose daughter died of breast cancer at just 35. She was not overweight and she did not smoke—sometimes it is just the luck of the draw, sadly.

I will make a few short points, but the most important is that although we talk about a lot of issues related to cancer, we need to consider the people—the patients with families and lives. It is not just a disease in the abstract; it affects people. That should make us determined that, austerity or no austerity, those people should get the very best treatment possible.

We must ensure that we have the best screenings processes, because everybody knows that early detection means more positive outcomes. We need to put an end to people not being called for mammograms or waiting 12 weeks for the result of a smear test, as they do where I live—surely we can do better than that. If people have a positive diagnosis, treatment must be prompt. There should be no geographical inequalities in access to care or to a clinical nurse specialist, whether for the psychological or physical manifestations of disease.

That level of treatment should be there and everybody should be able to access it, but that is just not happening. I work with a lot of cancer groups because of my experience, and it really is not equal out there. As for surgery—fancy going into hospital and having the surgery cancelled! That is what happened to a constituent of mine. It is stressful enough going in, never mind having it cancelled and then having to go back. I spoke to another constituent recently who could not access a particular drug. People just should not have those battles; the disease is enough of a battle in itself.

If a patient is lucky enough to be successfully treated, it is vital that they can access regular follow-ups as necessary. I am a patron of Westminster Health Forum and we had a day last summer when we looked at cancer treatment in the round. One of the things we talked about was having Skype sessions instead of cancer patients having to trail all the way to a hospital and sit around. Because there are not enough nurses or doctors—I speak from experience—appointments are often an hour or an hour and a half behind. People spend hours and hours sitting around when they could have had a Skype session. That is not for every patient, but some can do it. It is about looking at what is most appropriate for that patient.

We must ensure that patient experience surveys are completed so that we know what is happening to patients and can collate that and act on it. If the disease progresses, we must ensure psychological support and medical treatment are as good as they can be. There should not be variations in end of life care. There are not enough nurses in our NHS. We have nurses in hospitals at the end of life, and we have nurses in out-patient clinics. They are a vital part of the treatment. We have lots of vacancies and apprenticeships are not being taken up at the rate that was hoped for. We need nursing bursaries back. It is not just me and Labour politicians who are saying that; the Royal College of Nursing is saying that, too. We need more nurses and more radiologists, and to get that we need bursaries.

[Karen Lee]

Patients should not have to struggle with the benefits system. My hon. Friend the Member for High Peak (Ruth George) talked about filling out a form. I remember the film “I, Daniel Blake” was shown recently and a very thoughtless person—a senior politician—put something on social media saying, “It is just a film, you know.” Actually, it is what people are going through. What was said was shameful, and I do not think any apology was ever forthcoming.

Recently, I had a constituent whose husband died of cancer. He should have been on a very high level of benefits at the end, but his benefits were messed up. She tried to claim them after his death because she had to borrow money to bury him. My office fought and fought for several weeks, and we got that backdated money, but if we had not done that, she would have not got it. She would still be paying money back for that funeral, and that is shameful.

As politicians, I think we have the best of intentions, and I mean everyone in every party, but it is important that those intentions and words are matched by effective actions that ensure that people get the treatment they deserve.

5.42 pm

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): First, I congratulate the hon. Member for Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk (John Lamont) on securing the debate and giving us all an opportunity to participate. This issue is very close to my heart. My father battled and had the victory over cancer three times during his lifetime, but watching him and my mother go through it was incredibly tough. My dad survived those three times due to the clinical and surgical skills of the doctor, the care of the nurses, who were excellent, and, as a man of faith, the prayers of God’s people. That is the experience of so many people throughout my constituency and throughout the UK.

Cancer is no man’s respecter and the reality is that in our lifetime one out of two of us in this place will have an experience of it. I was in touch with CLIC Sargent—indeed, it was in touch with all of us. It is a wonderful charity that is very active in my constituency and I am happy to support it. It gave me the following figures, which are simply heartbreaking. Some 4,450 children and young people under 25 are diagnosed with cancer every year. That is 12 children and young people every day. Those are extremely worrying figures. Around four in five children and young people survive cancer for five years or more, yet cancer remains the disease that is the biggest killer of children and young people in the UK aged from one to 24 years old.

Cancer impacts on young people and parents’ mental health. Undergoing cancer treatment is challenging, isolating and deeply personal. Young people’s ability to cope is often seriously affected by the emotional pressures and the mental health impact of a diagnosis and months of treatment. CLIC Sargent’s 2017 “Hidden costs” report found that 79% of young people felt cancer had a serious impact on their emotional wellbeing. During their cancer treatment, 70% of young people experience depression, 83% experience loneliness, 90% experience anxiety and 42% experience panic attacks. More than half of parents—63%—say they experience depression during their child’s treatment. It affects not only the

child, but the family and the parents. More than a third of parents experience panic attacks and 84% experience loneliness.

I stand with CLIC Sargent, Macmillan, Marie Curie and all the other charities that are too numerous to mention, but which do great work. They are asking the Government to improve support for young cancer patients and their parents by making changes to the way benefits such as PIPs and DLA are accessed. The stories that I have heard from others in the Chamber, in my constituency and elsewhere, and in the news are disgraceful. I know that the Minister is not responsible for the DWP, but he does, I believe, have compassion and a heart, and hopefully he will pass these issues on to the Minister who is responsible. I have written to that Minister about these matters as well.

Not only do I need to see change; the system needs to see change. As treatment starts immediately and often takes place a long way from home, the costs start building up from day one. There must be a review of access to DLA and personal independence payments for young cancer patients, so that they can get their financial support backdated from the day of diagnosis. It is so important to have that financial support in place, because that worries the parents, the families, and everyone else at a time when they need that support most desperately.

Following the Prime Minister’s announcement in April 2018 of the establishment of a children’s funeral fund in England, I ask the Minister to further clarify when that fund will be introduced. Again, that is not his responsibility, but perhaps he can ask that question of the Minister who is responsible. Furthermore, will the Minister provide an update on what the Government are doing to ensure that parental bereavement leave, which would give all employed parents a right to two weeks’ leave if they lose a child, is ready to be introduced in 2020?

I will quickly mention the importance of partnerships between universities and businesses to develop cures for cancer and other diseases: Queen’s University Belfast does that extremely well, and that partnership works. I will also mention that I had the opportunity to speak with Bowel Cancer UK the other day. Every year in Northern Ireland, 1,100 people are diagnosed with bowel cancer and 400 people die. By 2035, 332,000 more lives could be lost to that disease in the UK. There are some things that Bowel Cancer UK has asked for, but I will not go into those in the time I have left.

These topics are heartbreaking, but they need to be addressed. I ask the Minister for a response, either in this place or in writing, on how changes are going to be made to support the families of children with cancer throughout the UK. How can we make these impossible, dark, soul-wrenching things a little bit better? We can make them better by using common sense, and using funding in appropriate ways to provide support as and when it is needed, lightening the load in the only way that we can. That will not take away the pain of watching a child go through this, or losing a child, but it will take away pressure that should not exist in the first place.

5.47 pm

Hugh Gaffney (Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill) (Lab): Thank you for calling me to speak in this debate, Sir Christopher, and I congratulate the hon. Member

for Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk (John Lamont) on having secured it. World Cancer Day reminds us all that although much progress has been made, there are still many challenges to be tackled in improving treatment, support and outcomes for individuals with cancer.

Today, the importance of World Cancer Day could not be greater. Macmillan Cancer Support estimates that 2.5 million people in the UK are currently living with cancer, and about another 360,000 people will be diagnosed with cancer this year, with nearly 1,000 diagnosed every day. Those people are our colleagues, neighbours, friends and family: everyone will have their own experience of a loved one who has been taken from them because of this dreadful illness. Tomorrow, I will be attending the funeral of my brother-in-law, Jimmy Boyle, who was taken from us by cancer. He was a loving husband to my sister Mary Jo and a fantastic father to my niece Lorna. Both spent the last six months caring for and looking after Jimmy, and both know that he will be in peaceful rest, free from pain, and will never stop loving them.

This Saturday, I will be attending a teenage cancer fundraiser with my other nieces, Eva and Lia, who along with their friends wanted to do something for teenagers who are living with cancer. It is my family's experience and those of families across the country that motivate all of us in this House to campaign for better support for those living with cancer, or living with someone who has cancer. I am sure that other Members have been contacted in the days leading up to this debate, be it by those living with cancer, their loved ones, or charities fighting on their behalf. It is staggering to me that when a person is undergoing cancer treatment, as mentioned earlier, the average cost to their family is £600 a month. The idea that people undergoing treatment and their families should face such a financial burden at a time of emotional and personal distress is shocking, and we have heard from hon. Members about universal credit.

The UK, Welsh and Scottish Governments could and should do more to provide financial support for these families. Young Lives Vs Cancer has proposed that a young cancer patient travel fund should be established to help families with the cost of transport to and from treatment, as other Members have already mentioned. That is a great idea that is worth exploring and indeed we should look at reducing the cost of travel for treatment.

We should also look at improving the public transport links to our hospitals. My local bus and rail services are at their worst level. That is another debate. In my own area of North Lanarkshire, Breast Cancer Now estimates that around 120 local women develop breast cancer every year and it is expected that there will be a 27% increase in breast cancer diagnoses in Scotland by 2027. Yet Breast Cancer Now suggests that 20% of Scotland's cancer radiologists will have retired by 2025.

I call on the Scottish Government and NHS Scotland to ensure that we recruit the next generation of radiologists, so that women can access the service they need. Whether we are considering breast cancer or other types of cancer, we must ensure that the NHS is properly funded and staffed, and capable of improving the treatment, care and positive outcomes that those who are living with cancer deserve. That matters not just in Scotland; it matters here as well, and across the whole of the UK.

I conclude by paying tribute to my local Maggie's Centre, the Lanarkshire Beatson and of course St Andrew's Hospice, which cared for my brother-in-law, Jimmy, for their care and support, and the services that they provide for those living with cancer, their families and their friends, and I urge everyone in this House to show their support for World Cancer Day.

5.51 pm

Dr Philippa Whitford (Central Ayrshire) (SNP): It is great to have this debate on the 20th World Cancer Day and I, too, congratulate the hon. Member for Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk (John Lamont)—we need shorter constituency names—on securing it.

Obviously, it is very clear in my record and from my previous speeches that I have been a breast cancer surgeon for over 30 years. When I graduated in the 1980s, the survival rate from breast cancer at five years was approximately 53%; we are now in the high 80s and approaching 90%. However, breast cancer is not just about survival. In those days, treatment was incredibly destructive. Women lost their breasts through mastectomy and had very harsh radiotherapy, the side effects of which were awful, and there was very little in the way of other forms of treatment.

Now, we practice much less destructive surgery; we have computed tomography-planned radiotherapy; and our drugs are designed and developed, such as the immunotherapy that the hon. Member for Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill (Hugh Gaffney) mentioned. So the treatment has moved on, the survival rate has moved on and the impact on patients has moved on.

Critical to that movement, as is said over and over, is early diagnosis; that is the importance of screening. However, what we are seeing in many screening programmes, particularly in breast cancer screening programmes, is a gradual fall-off. So it is important that we encourage people to attend the screening that they are suitable for, whether that is cervical screening or breast cancer screening, or—as I say—people putting poo in the post once they reach that age, examining themselves, and not being embarrassed to go and see a doctor.

We have raised this issue in previous discussions, but we are lucky enough in Scotland that bowel screening—the poo in the post programme—starts at 50, and because the endoscopy that results from a positive test does not just treat cancer but gives us the opportunity to remove a polyp, the incidence of bowel cancer in men in Scotland has fallen by 18%. So bowel cancer screening is not just finding cancer early; it is a chance to prevent the cancer from developing. The Government said last August that they would also move to that earlier screening age instead of 60, and I would be grateful to know from the Minister roughly when that change will happen.

However, what challenges screening, as Members have already talked about, is workforce. Radiology is not just an issue in Scotland; radiology is an issue right across the UK. I am co-chair of the all-party parliamentary group on breast cancer and our report last year—“A Mixed Picture”—showed very clearly that as three radiologists retire, they are likely to be replaced by only two.

The other group is endoscopists. If we are running screening, and if screening in England is going to start earlier, that will generate more endoscopies. The NHS is

[Dr Philippa Whitford]

not buildings and machines; it is people. That is a challenge for all of us and I have to say that unfortunately I think Brexit will make workforce more difficult as we go forward.

The number of cancers increases as we get older, as does the complexity of treatment. We are discovering new drugs by design, genetics and cell biology rather than just by accident, as many drugs in the past were found. We have to turn that around. We talk about access to a new drug that might be £100,000 a treatment, but how much cheaper to try to prevent the cancer in the first place? Most members of the public know that smoking is the No. 1 cause, but smoking has been going down, particularly since the smoking ban in the mid-2000s. In fact, lung cancer incidence in men is down by just over 17%. That means 17% of men not getting lung cancer, not having a big operation and not dying from it. There is absolutely no treatment that will achieve that.

What many people do not know is that obesity is the second commonest cause. We have discussed things such as childhood obesity strategies, and the need for a watershed on advertising, high-quality school meals and active transport, so that it is easier for people to maintain a healthy weight and to remain fit. We live in an obesogenic society; it is really hard for people to resist things when they are bombarded from every direction. Low-quality carbohydrate food is still much cheaper than fresh vegetables and protein. That always means people are slanted in the wrong direction.

Alcohol is also a cause of cancer. I am proud that, after five years of being dragged through the courts, the Scottish Government have managed to introduce minimum unit pricing, particularly to tackle white ciders—the really poor-quality alcohol at the lower end of the spectrum.

To tackle cancer, the best strategy is to prevent it. That requires a health-in-all-policies approach right across every Department and Government. As well as preventing cancer, that would prevent many of the chronic illnesses that cause debility in older life. As well as preventing cancer, it would prevent other suffering; we would improve the quality of life of our senior citizens. That is something we should all aspire to.

5.57 pm

Mrs Sharon Hodgson (Washington and Sunderland West) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Sir Christopher. I start by thanking the hon. Member for Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk (John Lamont) for securing this timely debate, and the other hon. Members for their excellent contributions: my hon. Friends the Members for High Peak (Ruth George), for Lincoln (Karen Lee) and for Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill (Hugh Gaffney), and the hon. Members for Strangford (Jim Shannon) for Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock (Bill Grant), and for Central Ayrshire (Dr Whitford).

World Cancer Day gives us an opportunity to come together and celebrate how far we have come in cancer diagnosis, treatment and care. It also gives us a chance to reflect on what more needs to be done to fight cancer. The Minister and I have previously worked closely

together as co-chairs, as we often say in debates, on breast cancer, as I also have with the hon. Member for Central Ayrshire. That shows that all the main parties' spokespersons are committed to working together on this issue.

Cancer is a very emotive issue, as we have heard in this debate in some passionate contributions. One in two of us will be affected by it in our lifetime. Most of us in this Chamber will be here today because of the personal effect that cancer has had on our or our family's lives. In the UK alone, more than 360,000 people are diagnosed with cancer every year. That figure is expected to rise to more than half a million cancer cases every year by 2035. That is equivalent to one new case every minute. That makes the Prime Minister's commitment to diagnose three in four cancers at an early stage by 2028 all the more ambitious.

Our NHS workforce do a fantastic job every day in caring for us and our loved ones, but as we have heard, there are chronic staff shortages across the NHS. There are vacancies for 102,000 staff, including 41,000 nurses. That makes it harder and harder for them to do the jobs that they want to do. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Lincoln, who as a former nurse powerfully made the point about the effect that the lack of the bursary has on the situation. Cancer Research UK has also pointed to the chronic shortages in the diagnostic workforce, with over one in 10 positions unfilled nationally. This is a worrying trend, as more people are expected to be diagnosed with cancer over the years and the NHS cancer workforce are already struggling to keep up with demand.

We covered a lot of this ground with the Minister in the debate earlier this month, in which we also discussed the long-term plan. The Minister said that,

"we must ensure that we have the right staff with the appropriate skills and expertise to ensure that patients receive the best care."—[*Official Report*, 8 January 2019; Vol. 652, c. 60WH.]

I agree with him. Therefore, will he tell the House when he plans to publish the workforce implementation plan and when the budget for Health Education England will be set? Patients have a right to the best possible care and it is crucial that the NHS workforce are able to provide that. That is why I believe the Minister should consider it—as he probably does—a top priority.

It will be World Cancer Day on Monday, and I am proudly wearing my wristband. We must recognise the contribution the UK in particular has made to cancer diagnosis, care and treatment around the world. For example, Cancer Research UK has played a role in developing eight of the world's top 10 cancer drugs. More than a quarter of the clinical trials that Cancer Research UK funds involve at least one other country. Cancer Research UK's international grand challenge scheme brings together researchers from the UK, Europe and around the world on three five-year programmes, to take on some of the toughest challenges in cancer research. Cancer is an international challenge, which is why we should all unite together against cancer.

It is not just about surviving cancer. As we have heard today, it is about living well with cancer. According to Macmillan, 70% of people with cancer are living with one or more other serious health condition, often as a result of cancer and its treatment. Similarly, a third of people who have completed their treatment in the last two years say that their emotional wellbeing is still

affected. As we have heard, during and after treatment, the cost of cancer can be a major issue with regard to not just loss of earnings, but travel and transport costs, and the increasingly expensive parking charges.

I have supported Macmillan's Cost of Cancer campaign for over 10 years now. It is sad that we still need to debate and discuss this, but it is still a major issue. The issue of parking could be very easily solved. The cost of cancer also includes access to benefits, as we heard from my hon. Friends the Members for High Peak and for Lincoln. That can also be solved easily by some joined-up action across Government. That is why, when thinking about cancer, we must not forget about after-care, advice and support, especially when it comes to further symptoms that could become secondary cancer. In this regard, I believe that it is vital important that GPs are aware of all symptoms of secondary cancer, so that it can be picked up as soon as possible.

Finally, in this World Cancer Day debate, I want to pay tribute to all the NHS cancer workforce for all the hard work they do, day in, day out. Whether diagnosing, treating, caring or advising, they do a difficult but fantastic job, which we are all very grateful for. I also pay tribute to the scientists and researchers who discover the groundbreaking new treatments and information. Finally, I thank the campaigners and volunteers. We cannot beat cancer alone, which is why we must all come together to do so. As always, I look forward to working with the Minister to do just that.

6.3 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Steve Brine): As ever, time is short, so I cannot answer everyone's questions, but that is the nature of Westminster Hall. It is nice to see you in the Chair, Sir Christopher.

It is an honour, as always, as the Cancer Minister, to respond to these debates. As the shadow Minister said, we have been here before many times. The three Front Benchers are consistent and other hon. Members move around us. This time I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk (John Lamont) on securing the debate and on lighting up Parliament pink next Monday. It will be my wife's birthday, so she will enjoy that. I look forward to seeing my hon. Friend for the event on the Terrace.

The title of the debate, World Cancer Day, suggests two things to me—the fact that cancer is recognised as important enough to have its own world day, and the fact that it transcends every international border and, tragically, affects everybody, regardless of their standing, their age and the wealth they accumulate. It touches everybody, including those of us here in the Chamber. I offer my condolences to the hon. Member for Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill (Hugh Gaffney) and his family. I hope that tomorrow goes well, and I am sure they will honour his late brother-in-law. I wish the hon. Gentleman well.

The hon. Member for Lincoln (Karen Lee) always speaks with great passion in cancer debates. She is another one of the consistencies in such debates—it is always nice to see her. She talked about the screening review. She was not here on Monday, when we had a very big debate on cervical cancer. There was a Petitions Committee debate initiated by a young lady who died of

cervical cancer at the age of 31, leaving four very young children. It was a heartbreaking story, and all her friends were in the Gallery. There was obviously a lot of talk about cervical cancer and the screening age for it. As I said in that debate, Sir Mike Richards is doing a big piece of work for the Department on screening programmes, including for cervical and breast cancer. I am optimistic about what the review will bring, and I know the hon. Lady will take great interest in that report.

The hon. Lady mentioned the national cancer patient experience survey. As she knows, I agree that it is very important, because we need to know what patients are saying. She will therefore be pleased that I decided to give that a permanent opt-out from the new Data Guardian rules, to ensure that that can continue and that the data can be good. She also mentioned technology and Skype interactions, and I know that she will be pleased that technology is one of the three priorities of the new Secretary of State, and that it is at the centre of the long-term plan. She is right to say that words should be followed by action—indeed, that is why the 10-year plan for the NHS has been produced and there will be £20.5 billion a year of extra investment for the NHS in England.

As always, the hon. Member for Central Ayrshire (Dr Whitford) spoke from great experience and raised many good points, which I shall not repeat. She is right to say that smoking is still the biggest preventable killer in our United Kingdom. We must and will do better, and we have a very ambitious tobacco control plan in England. We had an interesting ten-minute rule Bill in the House yesterday on smoking in NHS properties in England, which provoked an interesting debate. The Bill was promoted by the hon. Member for Batley and Spennings (Tracy Brabin).

The hon. Member for Central Ayrshire asked about bowel cancer screening at 50. I cannot give a firm commitment on timescales for lowering the age to 50, but the NHS long-term plan makes it clear that we are committed to doing so as soon as practically possible, which is the key phrase—it has to be practically possible. NHS England and Public Health England, for which I am responsible, are working hard on that. They know I am on their case about it, and I hope to be able to confirm a start date very shortly. I am following it incredibly closely and will say more as soon as I can—I know that she will be watching like a hawk.

The hon. Member for High Peak (Ruth George) and my shadow, the hon. Member for Washington and Sunderland West (Mrs Hodgson), talked about the workforce. As I have said many times, the NHS is nothing without the 1.3 million staff who patients depend on day in, day out. With the right workforce in place, we can deliver the long-term plan. In December 2017, Health Education England published the first ever cancer workforce plan, in which we set out our ambitious plans to expand the capacity and skills of the NHS cancer workforce. That was a welcome first step, and the Secretary of State has now commissioned Baroness Dido Harding—she is working closely with Sir David Behan, formerly of the Care Quality Commission—to lead a number of programmes to engage with the key NHS interests and develop a detailed workforce implementation plan. In March they will present initial recommendations to the Department and Secretary of

[*Steve Brine*]

State, who will then consider the detailed proposals to grow the workforce rapidly as we move towards the big spending review.

The sponsor of the debate, my hon. Friend the Member for Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk, raised many great points. He asked about the health boards that they have north of the border, and about those boards' collaboration with the 19 cancer alliances that we have in England. My cancer alliance is down in Wessex—I should not think that they have an awful lot of interaction. He raises a good point, and I am always up for more collaboration—the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) often raises that subject with me, certainly in the absence of an Executive at Stormont. He knows that the offer is always there. In answer to my hon. Friend's question on health boards, to be honest, there is not much interaction between them and the cancer alliances at that level, but I would say there is significant collaboration at the clinical level, particularly on research. The original bowel cancer screening trial was based at sites in England and Scotland. Indeed, the chair of the UK National Screening Committee, Professor Bob Steele, is based at the University of Dundee. There was therefore a lot of clinical interaction, but maybe not enough practical interaction. I am happy to explore ways to make that happen.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned research, and I think that our record is clear: we are, and want to remain, a world leader in cancer research. That is made clear in the long-term plan. The National Institute for Health Research spent £137 million on cancer research in 2016-17, and the largest research investment in a disease area was in cancer.

The hon. Member for Rutherglen and Hamilton West (Ged Killen), who is no longer in his place, made the point about the late Baroness Jowell and her work on brain tumours. Her great legacy there is to stimulate the research community to come forward with decent research proposals that we can back. We heard the same in last week's debate on the treatment of ME: it is not for Ministers in the Department of Health and Social Care to decide what research projects will and will not happen. The projects have to come from the research community, and they have to be good to be backed by the NIHR. That is the same for cancer as it is for every area.

How much of the extra NHS funding will be used to tackle cancer? The funding breakdown for the long-term plan is still being finalised, but the plan has significant ambition for England around the 75% stage 1 to early diagnosis standard. I am very proud of that. We have already put £600 million into the 19 cancer alliances in England, and there will be more. They are very much our delivery mechanism and, as I said, I would be very keen to see any interaction between those two across the border—especially on behalf of those who represent seats close to the border.

Many other points were made—those around PIP and DLA were well made—and I know that CLIC met the Minister for Disabled People, my hon. Friend the Member for Truro and Falmouth (Sarah Newton). She, too, will take notice of all the points made in the debate.

I wish to give my hon. Friend the Member for Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk 60 seconds to sum up, so I will conclude. We have made great strides in cancer in the past 20 years, and we have the best survival rate ever. On research, diagnostics, treatment and, ultimately, survival rates, however, there is so much more to do. Anyone who knows me or listens to me when I respond to such debates knows that I certainly do not lack ambition in this area, nor is there an ounce of complacency in me.

6.12 pm

John Lamont: I am grateful to all Members who contributed to the debate. I am struck, as ever, by how many of us have had friends, families or people in our community—as well as people through casework—affected so personally by this terrible illness. I am also grateful for the Minister's comments. I make a final plug for 4 February, the coming Monday, which is World Cancer Day. If people are able to join the team from Cancer Research and others on the Terrace at about 5.30 pm on Monday, they will see the Palace of Westminster lit in pink to mark that important day.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House has considered World Cancer Day.

6.13 pm

Sitting adjourned.

Written Statements

Wednesday 30 January 2019

TREASURY

Public Service Pensions

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Elizabeth Truss):

The Government are announcing a pause to one element of the valuations of public service pensions, following a Court ruling on part of the 2015 pension reforms.

The coalition Government introduced reforms to public sector pensions, meaning most public sector workers were moved to new pension schemes in 2015.

In December 2018, the Court of Appeal ruled that the “transitional protection” offered to some members as part of the reforms amounts to unlawful discrimination. The Government are seeking permission to appeal this decision. If this is unsuccessful, the Court will require steps to be taken to compensate employees who were transferred to the new schemes.

A mechanism for assessing the value of pensions (the “cost control mechanism”) was also introduced as part of the 2015 reforms. In September of last year, the Government announced that provisional results indicated that the cost control mechanism would be engaged, triggering automatic changes to member benefits.

However, given the potentially significant but uncertain impact of the Court of Appeal judgment, it is not now possible to assess the value of the current public service pension arrangements with any certainty. The provisional estimate is that the potential impact of the judgment could cost the equivalent of around £4 billion per annum. It is therefore prudent to pause this part of the valuations until there is certainty about the value of pensions to employees from April 2015 onwards.

The value of public service pensions will not be reduced as a result of this suspension. If the Government are successful in court, we will implement the changes to employee benefits as planned. If the Government are defeated, employees will be compensated in a way that satisfies the judgment.

In order to ensure employers are meeting the increased costs of providing pensions, the part of the valuations of the unfunded pension schemes which sets employer contributions (which existed before the 2015 reforms) will continue. Employers in unfunded schemes have been planning for these changes in employer contributions to be implemented in April 2019, and the Treasury is in the process of allocating funding to Departments to help with these costs.

Whatever the Court outcome, we know the costs of providing public sector pensions are increasing. The 2015 reforms were to ensure public service pensions are affordable and sustainable in the long term, maintaining intergenerational fairness and ensuring the burden on the working population remains proportionate.

[HCWS1286]

DEFENCE

Afghanistan: Locally Employed Staff

The Minister for the Armed Forces (Mark Lancaster):

I am responsible for overseeing and assuring the delivery of the ex-gratia redundancy scheme and intimidation policy, in support of former Afghan locally employed staff (LES), on behalf of the interested Government Departments.

All former staff have now selected their redundancy option, provisioned through the ex-gratia scheme. Some 200 former staff chose the finance option, and around 150 former staff are in education having selected our five-year training offer; 18 people began their training in 2018, while the first cohort are due to complete their five-year package by mid-2019. Within the training package, the Government have also provided additional resources to support in their studies scholars with disabilities. The Government are proud to have assisted these men and women in achieving their potential and ensuring they, their families and their country have a brighter future with improved employment prospects.

In June 2018 the Secretary of State for Defence, my right hon. Friend the Member for South Staffordshire (Gavin Williamson) announced an amendment to the relocation offer of the ex-gratia scheme; this changed the eligibility date from 19 December 2012 to 1 May 2006. All other criteria remain the same, namely that the former LES must have been directly employed by the UK Government, have worked for 12 months continuously outside the wire on the front line in Helmand province and have been made redundant. Following the announcement, Ministry of Defence (MOD) officials are on target to complete a review of approximately 4,500 personnel files to assess each individual's eligibility under the amended criteria; this task will be completed by Easter 2019. In addition, officials have received enquiries from over 440 callers regarding the amended criteria; 95% of these callers have been informed of the outcome of their enquiry with officials seeking clarification and further evidence for the remainder.

The scheme has relocated 437 former staff and their families, a total of 1,279 individuals, to the UK, and we expect around 10 families to relocate this year; this does not include those who might now be eligible under the amended eligibility criteria announced in June 2018.

Last year a review was initiated into the ex-gratia compensation payments made to 12 individuals for injuries they sustained while working with UK forces. They had each subsequently decided to relocate to the UK through the ex-gratia scheme and the review sought to uplift their original payment made while residing in Afghanistan to reflect the economic conditions of life in the UK. Thus far the review has resulted in payments totalling £3.35 million to support these brave people, some of whom sustained profoundly life changing injuries. Our hope is this money will improve their quality of life and support them and their families to build their life in the UK.

Our intimidation policy continues to support all former staff who experience intimidation within Afghanistan as a result of their employment with the UK. This policy

is delivered by an expert team based in Kabul, including a member of either the Home Office Constabulary or MOD Police to investigate the claims. To date this dedicated team have assisted over 530 staff by providing bespoke security advice and, where applicable, funding relocations to safe areas within Afghanistan. It remains the case that the level of intimidation faced has not so far been such that an individual has had to be relocated to the UK in order to ensure their safety. However, the changing security position in Afghanistan is kept under careful review. The UK remains the only nation to have established an in-country specialist investigation unit to address concerns of intimidation.

I chair the cross-Government locally employed civilian assurance committee, which has continued to scrutinise the application of the intimidation policy to ensure that it is effectively administered and that former Afghan staff who feel threatened owing to their employment by the UK are properly supported. Committee members include peers from the House of Lords (the former Chief of Defence Staff, Lord Stirrup, Baroness Coussins and the Bishop of Colchester), a suitably experienced Police detective, a former local staff member who relocated to the UK through the ex-gratia scheme and cross-Government representatives. The Committee met three times in 2018 and reviewed a total of 18 cases; in each case the Committee members felt the policy has been applied effectively. The Committee has continued to review the security situation in Afghanistan at each meeting, as it relates to the risk of intimidation and the viability of mitigation measures. No issues have so far been raised in this respect. The Committee also considered elements of the guidance that supports the in-country delivery of the intimidation policy and made recommendations to enhance the advice provided. Furthermore, a selection of closed intimidation cases were also independently assured by the Government Legal Service, who have continued to conduct regular reviews of closed intimidation cases to ensure that the decisions are robust; no significant issues were raised.

It is the Government's belief that our ex-gratia redundancy scheme and intimidation policy remain fit for purpose and properly meet our responsibilities to men and women who played such an important part in our efforts to bring peace and security to Afghanistan.

[HCWS1284]

NORTHERN IRELAND

Northern Ireland (Executive Formation and Exercise of Functions) Act 2018: Section 4 Report

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Karen Bradley): This statement is issued in accordance with section 4 of the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation and Exercise of Functions) Act 2018 ("the Act"). Section 4 of the Act requires that I, as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, report on a quarterly basis on guidance issued under that section of the Act, and report on how I plan to address the impact of the absence of Northern Ireland Ministers on human rights obligations within three months of the day the Act was passed.

The Act received Royal Assent on 1 November 2018. Following careful consideration of the sensitive issues section 4 deals with, and in consultation with the Northern Ireland civil service, guidance under section 4 was published on 17 December 2018.

The guidance notes that it does not, and cannot be used to, change the current law on abortion or same-sex marriage in Northern Ireland. Both issues remain devolved matters in Northern Ireland. The guidance provides that all relevant Northern Ireland departments should continue to have regard to all of their legal obligations, including the Human Rights Act 1998 and sections 24 and 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, in exercising any relevant functions in relation to abortion and same-sex marriage.

I have consulted the head of the Northern Ireland civil service in the preparation of this report. He has reaffirmed the continuing commitment of the NICS to have regard to their legal obligations when exercising any relevant functions in relation to abortion and same-sex marriage.

I will keep the Government's position on these sensitive devolved issues under review in light of the UK Government's legal obligations, and in light of any relevant emerging legal judgments, as appropriate.

I believe, however, that the current absence of devolved Government in Northern Ireland should not dislodge the principle that it is for the devolved Administration to both legislate on, and ensure compliance with, human rights obligations in relation to such devolved matters.

Restoring the Executive remains my top priority and I am continuing to encourage the parties to come together to work towards restoring devolved Government. I am firmly of the view that the people of Northern Ireland need their elected representatives back in Government to take important decisions on the issues that matter most to them.

[HCWS1285]

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