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**HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

Wednesday 27 February 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

WALES

The Secretary of State was asked—

International Trading Opportunities

1. **Mr Ranil Jayawardena** (North East Hampshire) (Con): What recent steps he has taken to promote international trading opportunities for Wales. [909422]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Nigel Adams): I start by congratulating coach Warren Gatland and captain Alun Wyn Jones on their most magnificent victory in Cardiff on Saturday. Speaking as a proud Englishman, it was a joy to watch the game. There is no better way to kick off Wales Week in London, in which we champion and celebrate everything that is great about Wales, including its rugby team.

The Wales Office works closely with the Department for International Trade on promoting Wales's trading opportunities. From trade missions to his work with trade commissioners and sitting on the Board of Trade, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State works continually to create potential both for Welsh exports and for foreign direct investment projects to come to Wales.

Mr Jayawardena: I associate myself with my hon. Friend's remarks, although I preferred the first half.

Many people will have used the M4 this weekend. Given the M4's potential for promoting international trade in Wales, and indeed in the rest of the country, will my hon. Friend tell me what progress has been made towards honouring the commitment from the 1960s to build the M31 from Reading down to Gatwick Airport, via the M3?

Nigel Adams: I know that my hon. Friend is a great champion for that project, and rightly so. He is right to raise this important issue. The Department for Transport recognises the importance of cross-border connectivity. It has been gathering evidence to inform the second road investment strategy—RIS2—which will govern investment in England's motorways and major A roads between 2020 and 2025. Economic growth is one of RIS2's five stated key aims and will play a part in the appraisal of schemes. It will be published in 2019.

Albert Owen (Ynys Môn) (Lab): I join the Minister in congratulating the Welsh rugby team on their excellent victory. They are on course for the grand slam this year. The Minister will be aware that REHAU plastics in my constituency, which has traded internationally for more than 40 years, has announced its closure. It will now concentrate its business on the European mainland. Will his Department work with the Welsh Government, myself and local government to try to retain those important trading jobs? They are international jobs, and we need them on Anglesey.

Nigel Adams: Absolutely. I have a sneaking feeling that rugby might be a running theme throughout these questions. We recognise the importance of REHAU as an employer in the region and on Anglesey, and we will work closely with the hon. Gentleman and with the company to achieve the best possible outcome, most importantly for the important staff who work there.

Mr David Jones (Clwyd West) (Con): There are many excellent international trading companies in north Wales, but in order to continue to thrive they need access to the most modern digital infrastructure. What discussions is my hon. Friend having with the North Wales Economic Ambition Board to ensure that growth deal funding is targeted towards improving digital connectivity?

Nigel Adams: My right hon. Friend is indeed a great champion of north Wales. I recently met that board to discuss its progress in finalising its proposition to utilise the £120 million that we and the Welsh Government each allocated to the deal. Digital infrastructure is currently an underpinning project, but we have set the region a challenge to go even further and to be even more ambitious about what the project can achieve for the region by working closely with a range of partners, including the private sector.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr Speaker: Short questions and short answers, please.

Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley) (Lab): Jim Callaghan, a Labour Prime Minister, brought thousands of jobs to Ford in south Wales. Why is a Tory Prime Minister taking those jobs away?

Nigel Adams: I politely remind the right hon. Lady that we have record employment in Wales. Tough commercial decisions have been made in recent months, particularly by Hitachi. However, I point to the good economic news in Wales, particularly the record job numbers.

Chris Ruane (Vale of Clwyd) (Lab): Dydd Gŵyl Dewi hapus for Friday, Mr Speaker. I pay my good wishes to Sam on the sad loss of Paul Flynn. This is the first chance I have had to do that. He was a great man. He actually stood in my constituency in 1974.

In January, Dyson announced the relocation of its HQ to Singapore, Hitachi ended its interest in Wylfa and Airbus said it was prepared to leave Wales in the event of a no-deal Brexit. The Government's handling of Brexit has been described as a "disgrace" by Airbus's Tom Enders and a "state of total confusion" by tycoon

Sir Martin Sorrell. What message does that send to international investors and traders about trading opportunities in Wales?

Nigel Adams: If I might politely say so, the hon. Gentleman is being a little selective with his examples. I would point him to the employment figures. The real figures show that foreign direct investment last year created 3,107 new Welsh jobs, which is a 20% increase. I understand why he might want to paint a gloomy picture. Airbus has made it perfectly clear that it does not want no deal. It wants a deal, and the best thing that he and his party could do is support the deal when it comes before the House.

Withdrawal Agreement Bill: Legislative Consent

2. Angela Crawley (Lanark and Hamilton East) (SNP): What steps he is taking to secure the legislative consent of the National Assembly for Wales for the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Bill. [909423]

The Secretary of State for Wales (Alun Cairns): This is the first Welsh questions since the sad passing of our friend and colleague, Paul Flynn. He leaves a significant space on the Labour Back Benches.

The Government are engaging extensively with the Welsh Government in preparing the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Bill. This includes bilateral engagement and meetings of the Joint Ministerial Committees.

Angela Crawley: The National Assembly for Wales backed the Plaid Cymru motion calling for work to begin immediately on preparing for a public vote. A recent poll by YouGov also found that more Welsh voters back a people's vote than do not. If the Secretary of State is truly Wales's voice in Westminster, as he so boldly claims, will he outline the preparations he has pressed the Prime Minister for to facilitate a people's vote?

Alun Cairns: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for her question, but I would politely point out to her that Wales voted to leave the European Union in even stronger numbers than the rest of the UK. We have an obligation to act on the instruction that comes from that referendum, but in doing so we will continue to work closely with the Welsh Government to ensure and secure a smooth and orderly exit.

Christina Rees (Neath) (Lab/Co-op): I first met Paul Flynn in 1980. He was absolutely inspirational to me then and he continued to be a source of inspiration throughout the many years I had the privilege to know him.

Will the Secretary of State guarantee that the Welsh Government will be fully represented in any negotiations with the EU that impact on devolved competence and policy?

Alun Cairns: The UK Government have been open and transparent in their dealings with the Welsh Government on representation and engagement. In fact, the Welsh Government sit on the EU Exit and Trade (Preparedness) Sub-Committee, which shows and demonstrates our positive engagement. I am only

disappointed that the same privilege and opportunity has not been extended to the UK Government to sit on the Welsh Government's similar committee.

Christina Rees: I thank the Secretary of State for his answer, but does he understand that if the UK Government negotiate free trade agreements, for example with the USA, which force hormone-injected beef and chlorinated chicken on the people of Wales without the legislative consent of the elected Welsh Government, that will trigger a major constitutional crisis? Is he prepared to risk that?

Alun Cairns: First, I do not accept the basis of the question, but the hon. Lady raises an important point. We will, of course, continue our warm, constructive and positive engagement with all the devolved Administrations. Our work with the Welsh Government on leaving the European Union has proved fruitful so far. We have laid 120 statutory instruments on behalf of the Welsh Government and at their request. In terms of future trade agreements, we will continue to work with them constructively in the interests of the whole of the UK. Clearly, my interests and their interests will be to defend the Welsh interest. I plan to continue to work with them on that positive basis.

Leaving the EU: Economic Support

3. Gavin Newlands (Paisley and Renfrewshire North) (SNP): What recent discussions he has had with the Welsh Government on sector-specific plans to support the Welsh economy in the event that the UK leaves the EU without a deal. [909424]

8. Douglas Chapman (Dunfermline and West Fife) (SNP): What recent discussions he has had with the Welsh Government on sector-specific plans to support the Welsh economy in the event that the UK leaves the EU without a deal. [909430]

The Secretary of State for Wales (Alun Cairns): I meet my counterparts in the Welsh Government on a regular basis, including Baroness Eluned Morgan on Monday, to discuss a range of policy areas. A responsible Government prepare for every eventuality, including no deal, and we continue to work together on operational readiness through the Joint Ministerial Committees.

Gavin Newlands: That is all very well, but the Government's no-deal assessment made it clear that the impact of a no-deal Brexit on the UK's food and drink sector would be most damaging in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, where the sector comprises over 5% of those economies compared with just 1.38% in England. How can the Government claim, therefore, that this is a partnership of equal nations when they stand ready to ruin the economies of three, purely in the interests of Tory party unity?

Alun Cairns: The hon. Gentleman is quite selective with the data that he points to. He has highlighted one scenario, but if he is happy to take that message so clearly from the sector that he has highlighted, that same sector encouraged him to support the Prime Minister's

deal with the European Union. When that meaningful vote returns to Parliament, I hope that he will heed that message then.

Douglas Chapman: Will the Secretary of State recognise that 92% of Welsh lamb goes for EU export? Welsh hill farmers have said that if a no-deal Brexit goes ahead, their industry will be decimated and wiped out—a view confirmed in his economic evidence that was published last night. If that is his analysis, will the Secretary of State for Wales act responsibly and make sure that Welsh lamb is protected?

Alun Cairns: I would say similarly to the hon. Gentleman that absolutely, we recognise the importance of Welsh agriculture, as we do all the important employment and economic sectors in Wales. The National Farmers Union and NFU Cymru were strong supporters of the deal with the European Union, so if he is happy to repeat their message today, I hope that he is happy to act on their message when it comes to voting on the meaningful vote in this House.

Sir Oliver Heald (North East Hertfordshire) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that agriculture is a very important industry not only for Britain but for Wales—particularly, as has already been outlined, Welsh lamb? What measures could be taken in the event of a no-deal Brexit? Clearly the deal would be the first option, but if there was a no-deal Brexit, how would those difficulties be overcome?

Alun Cairns: My right hon. and learned Friend raises an important point. Agriculture is an extremely important part of the Welsh economy and is disproportionately important there compared with the rest of the UK. We would, of course, act in a way that would protect the interests of that economy to ensure that those jobs are there for the long-term future, in spite of any short-term challenge.

Michael Fabricant (Lichfield) (Con): Regardless of whether we have a no-deal Brexit, is my right hon. Friend aware—I am sure he probably is—that it is coming up to the 50th anniversary of the investiture of the Prince of Wales? How can we employ, in that sense of the word, the Prince of Wales's soft power and so on to promote Wales and the Welsh economy?

Mr Speaker: Irrespective of membership of or departure from the European Union, with which matter we would not want to involve him in any way.

Alun Cairns: My hon. Friend makes an important point. As we leave the European Union, there is an opportunity to look outwards, and the Prince of Wales is a great champion of Wales and brings about significant soft power. We rightly recognised him last year by renaming the second Severn crossing the Prince of Wales bridge. I pay tribute to Her Majesty the Queen, who will host a reception next week to mark the 50 years since the Prince of Wales was named such.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: The voice of Ogmere will be heard, but I see a great phalanx of men standing and only one female Member. Jo Stevens must be heard!

Jo Stevens (Cardiff Central) (Lab): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Every sector of the Welsh economy is going to be damaged by the UK leaving the EU, so will the Secretary of State for Wales confirm that he will be voting to rule out no deal?

Alun Cairns: I will be voting for a deal with the European Union. The hon. Lady will have an interest in a whole range of sectors, be they agriculture or automotive, and all those sectors have strongly supported the Prime Minister's deal with the European Union. I am disappointed that the hon. Lady voted against that, making no deal more likely.

11. [909433] **Chris Elmore** (Ogmere) (Lab): One of the ways that the Welsh Secretary could start doing his job and providing support for the Welsh economy is by confirming how the Shared Prosperity Fund will work beyond 2020. Treasury Ministers and Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Ministers will not give me an answer, so is it not time that he stepped up, did his job and explained to the House how the Shared Prosperity Fund will work?

Alun Cairns: I do not want to pre-empt our consultation, which will go out very shortly, but I say candidly to the hon. Gentleman that he will recognise that more than £4 billion—approaching £5 billion—in EU structural funds has been spent in the Welsh economy over the last 17 years; does he honestly believe that we have had the best value from that, and is there not a better opportunity to deliver better value for money for the taxpayer?

Chris Elmore: I am asking the questions, not you.

Mr Speaker: The question was a rhetorical one; it requires no answer, and indeed it would be inappropriate, as the Secretary of State knows.

Leaving the EU: Business Preparations

4. **Tom Pursglove** (Corby) (Con): What recent discussions he has had with businesses in Wales on preparations for the UK leaving the EU. [909425]

The Secretary of State for Wales (Alun Cairns): Since the referendum I have been talking to stakeholders the length and breadth of Wales on the implications of EU exit. This includes the discussions I have had with my expert panel and economic advisory board, which met again last month.

Tom Pursglove: I am grateful to the Secretary of State for that answer, but what steps is his Department taking specifically to support small businesses reliant on tourism in Wales?

Alun Cairns: My hon. Friend is a great champion of his constituency, and I have no doubt that people in Corby and east Northamptonshire will want to visit Wales regularly. This is a great opportunity to highlight Wales Week in London. Wales Week has gone global this year, being held in New York, in Washington and in all parts of the UK. I would be interested in seeing what we can do in my hon. Friend's constituency next year.

10. [909432] **Anna McMorrin** (Cardiff North) (Lab): My constituent's restaurant business is under threat because of this Brexit chaos. His Polish and Hungarian staff, who have been with him from the start, have left, and the pound is plummeting, causing huge challenge to him. Does the Secretary of State believe that this chaotic Brexit is really making Wales a more attractive place for visitors?

Alun Cairns: There is absolutely no reason why those employees should have left, because we have respected their rights. I only hope and wish that as we continue to negotiate, all the rights of UK nationals living in the European Union will be respected in exactly the same way. The hon. Lady voted against the Prime Minister's deal with the European Union, and by doing so she is making no deal far more likely. So I would encourage her to look objectively at the data, and to support the meaningful vote when it comes up.

Stephen Kerr (Stirling) (Con): What discussions has my right hon. Friend had with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy about relocating the resources that are concentrated on Victoria Street into Wales and into Scotland?

Alun Cairns: My hon. Friend makes an important point. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office already has an agenda to take as many jobs as possible out of Whitehall and relocate them across the rest of the UK on an ongoing basis. Leaving the European Union will bring new responsibilities. I think there is an opportunity for my hon. Friend's constituency, and I shall be seeking to play my part in ensuring that Wales benefits too.

Hywel Williams (Arfon) (PC): In respect of Welsh business preparation for Brexit, can the Secretary of State tell me how many of the hundreds of Government Brexit work streams have been allocated exclusively or primarily to the Wales Office?

Alun Cairns: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the Wales Office sits and acts right across the whole of Government, but my prime lead is with the Welsh Government. We have now ensured that they sit on the European Union Exit and Trade (Preparedness) Sub-Committee, and as I mentioned earlier, I only hope that they will similarly invite a UK Government representative to sit on their equivalent Committee.

Policing Budgets

5. **Nick Thomas-Symonds** (Torfaen) (Lab): What assessment he has made of the effect of changes to policing budgets since 2015 on the effectiveness of Welsh police forces. [909426]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Nigel Adams): The Government understand that police demand is changing and becoming increasingly complex. That is why, after speaking to all police forces in England and Wales, we have provided a comprehensive funding settlement that increased total investment in the police by over £460 million in 2018-19.

Nick Thomas-Symonds: By 2019-20, Gwent police will have seen a 26% cut in its core Government grant compared with 2010-11. Why do this Government keep making it more difficult for Gwent police to keep my constituents safe?

Nigel Adams: I remind the hon. Gentleman that the 2019-20 settlement provides total funding of up to £14 billion, and it is an increase of up to £970 million on the previous year. I would also politely remind him that the Labour party voted against that increased funding.

Industrial Strategy

6. **Chris Evans** (Islwyn) (Lab/Co-op): What recent discussions he has had with the Welsh Government on the effect of the industrial strategy on the Welsh economy. [909427]

The Secretary of State for Wales (Alun Cairns): The industrial strategy provides a platform for the Welsh economy to thrive, and we have been working closely with the Welsh Government to ensure that we make the most of the opportunities available. We are already delivering a wide range of projects in Wales, such as through the industrial strategy challenge fund, for which Wales is scoring well above its population share.

Chris Evans: If you will allow me, Mr Speaker, I would like to pay tribute to my parliamentary next-door neighbour, Paul Flynn. The unique, unforgettable parliamentarian he was will be missed by all in this House.

I wonder whether the Secretary of State is concerned by the news that the Welsh Automotive Forum says that once Honda stops production in Swindon, 12 companies based in Wales will be affected by that decision. If he is worried, what will he do for those small and medium-sized enterprises to open up new markets?

Alun Cairns: The hon. Gentleman has raised an important point. I was in Japan last week when the ambassador received the news. It is necessary to recognise that this is nothing to do with Brexit; it is about changing market habits and about Honda's changing approach. We have already been in touch with the Welsh Automotive Forum and are engaging positively with its members. The hon. Gentleman is right about the number of companies, but the exposure is more limited than it might initially suggest.

Stephen Crabb (Preseli Pembrokeshire) (Con): In terms of the industrial strategy, does the Secretary of State think that the chronic M4 congestion around Newport, which snarled up the England rugby team coach last Friday, was part of a cunning plan to give Wales the edge, or just a consequence of 20 years of failure on the part of a Welsh Labour Government, who cannot build a road?

Alun Cairns: My right hon. Friend is absolutely right. Even the Welsh coach, Warren Gatland, said to Eddie Jones that he would never have travelled through Newport at that time of day because of the congestion in the area. That might be light-hearted, but the reality is that the problem is causing serious reputational damage to Wales.

The plan is available and makes a positive recommendation, and the money is available from the Treasury. I wish that the Welsh Government would just get on and deliver the road.

Liz Saville Roberts (Dwyfor Meirionnydd) (PC): I am sure the House will join me in welcoming the serendipity of the alignment of stars whereby in every year ending in “9” since 1949, Wales has beaten England.

Wylfa Newydd was a key development underpinning north Wales growth deal projects. Now that Hitachi has pulled the plug on Wylfa, what is the Secretary of State doing to secure additional funding, specifically infrastructure investment, over and above the £120 million currently committed by the Government?

Alun Cairns: The hon. Lady has asked an important question, but Hitachi has paused the project and is maintaining the development consent order. It has not pulled the plug. When I met the chairman last week, he was keen to continue to engage. We will look open-mindedly at the north Wales growth deal, but it is of course a matter for local authorities and businesses to submit bids to me so that I can consider them in due course.

Liz Saville Roberts: What assessment has the Secretary of State made of the potential use of Crown Estates revenue income from Wales, or other Treasury funds to support the development of energy infrastructure, and specifically to develop the tidal stream energy sector in Pembrokeshire, Llŷn and Ynys Cybi?

Alun Cairns: The hon. Lady has given some excellent examples of projects that could well gain support through the north or the mid Wales growth deal or the Swansea city deal. Those are the sorts of projects that I should like to explore, but of course they are bottom up. Working with the hon. Lady and with local partners, I shall be happy to see what we can do.

Journey Times: Chepstow to Gloucestershire

7. **David T. C. Davies** (Monmouth) (Con): What recent discussions he has had with the Welsh Government on plans to reduce journey times between Chepstow and Gloucestershire. [909429]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Nigel Adams): We have regular discussions with the Welsh Government about cross-border roads, including the proposed A48 bypass around Chepstow. We know that a bypass could improve journey times between Chepstow and Gloucestershire as well as reduce air pollution, and we look forward to working with the Welsh Government to deliver this vital piece of infrastructure.

David T. C. Davies: There are times when a drive through Chepstow resembles the rush hour in Lagos or Mexico City. Will Ministers therefore do everything that they can to encourage the local authorities in Gloucester, the Welsh Government and the Department for Transport to work with Monmouthshire council to deliver that bypass as soon as possible?

Nigel Adams: There is no greater champion and voice for Chepstow than my hon. Friend. The Government are dedicated to improving transport infrastructure across Wales, for instance by providing a new relief road. We

have abolished the tolls over the Severn, and I know from personal experience on Saturday that Chepstow could do with a bypass.

Mr Speaker: I call Ian C. Lucas.

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

Mr Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must resume his seat. He is a fine man and Slough is a very good place, but it is a long way from Chepstow or Gloucestershire. If the inquiry consists of one sentence and relates either to Chepstow or to Gloucestershire, I will hear it. If it is about Slough, he must remain seated. Blurt it out, man.

Mr Dhesi: Thank you, Mr Speaker. The western rail link to Heathrow will significantly reduce the journey time between Wales and the airport. The Government committed themselves to the link in 2012. When will it finally be built?

Nigel Adams: The hon. Gentleman—who has been incredibly creative in getting his question in under Chepstow—will be pleased to hear that we are continuing to engage with the Department for Transport on this vital project.

F-35 Contracts

9. **Greg Hands** (Chelsea and Fulham) (Con): What discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the potential effect of F-35 contracts on (a) industry in and (b) exports from Wales. [909431]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Nigel Adams): Again there is no stronger voice for Wales than that of my right hon. Friend, who has a long-standing interest in Wales. Yesterday I met the Minister with responsibility for defence procurement, my hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Stuart Andrew) to discuss the F-35 contract. The recent announcement puts Wales right at the centre of the global F-35 partnership. It is the largest defence programme in history.

Greg Hands: It was a great pleasure to visit the F-35 factory in Fort Worth in the summer of 2016, and of course the F-35 has a huge UK content to it, so does my hon. Friend agree that these contracts show the immense contribution being made by the Welsh defence industry to the UK economy and exports overall?

Nigel Adams: The aerospace and defence industries are in very good health in Wales. In the financial year 2017-18, the UK Government spent £960 million with the Welsh defence industry and commerce; that is up from £946 million. This supports an estimated 6,300 jobs in Wales and the half a billion pound F-35 contract is to be welcomed right across this House.

Ian C. Lucas (Wrexham) (Lab): Will the Minister meet with aerospace businesses such as Tritech, Magellan and Solvay in Wrexham to ensure that in the event of a no-deal Brexit we maximise spend within the UK to benefit our businesses?

Nigel Adams: I certainly would agree to meet with the aerospace industry. I have already visited a number of companies. I am also committed to holding a roundtable on this very subject and I am more than happy to meet the hon. Gentleman as well to discuss this further.

12. [909434] **Gareth Thomas** (Harrow West) (Lab/Co-op): Given the huge challenges that the steel industry and car manufacturers face in Wales, as well as in the rest of the UK, even at this late stage, would it not be better if the Secretary of State and the rest of the Government committed Britain to staying in the customs union?

The Secretary of State for Wales (Alun Cairns): The hon. Gentleman raises this issue on the European Union. He voted against the Prime Minister's deal. That makes no deal far more likely. The only way to secure a smooth, orderly exit from the European Union is to support the Prime Minister's deal when the meaningful vote comes back to this House.

Mr Speaker: Since the hon. Member for Ceredigion (Ben Lake) is conscious that he has a question on the Order Paper, he can have it.

RNLI New Quay

13. **Ben Lake** (Ceredigion) (PC): What recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Transport on the future of the RNLI lifeboat in New Quay. [909435]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Nigel Adams): I thank the hon. Gentleman for his work on this important issue. The UK Government do not anticipate that the RNLI's decision to replace the all-weather lifeboat with the Atlantic 85 vessel will have an impact on its capability to co-ordinate search and rescue in Cardigan bay.

Ben Lake: I thank the Minister for his answer. He will be aware that the decision to remove the all-weather lifeboat from New Quay has caused considerable concern in Ceredigion and further afield. May I ask him to again raise this matter with the Department for Transport and press for detailed reassurances that the removal will not diminish search and rescue capabilities in Cardigan bay?

Nigel Adams: I am more than happy to work with the RNLI and to meet the hon. Gentleman to discuss his concerns to ensure there is proper and correct lifeboat coverage in Cardigan bay.

PRIME MINISTER

The Prime Minister was asked—

Engagements

Q1. [909472] **Mr Virendra Sharma** (Ealing, Southall) (Lab): If she will list her official engagements for Wednesday 27 February.

The Prime Minister (Mrs Theresa May): May I first say that the UK is deeply concerned about rising tensions between India and Pakistan and urgently calls for restraint on both sides to avoid further escalation? We are in regular contact with both countries urging dialogue and diplomatic solutions to ensure regional stability. We are working closely with international partners, including through the UN Security Council, to de-escalate tensions and are monitoring developments closely and considering implications for British nationals.

Mr Speaker, I understand that Eve Griffiths-Okai in your office retires at the end of the week. She has worked for four Speakers and I am sure that the whole House will want to join me in wishing her the very best for the future.

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

Mr Sharma: I thank the Prime Minister for her initial response. In the face of her total failure to secure the agreement of this House, when will the Prime Minister call time on this farce, extend article 50 and put her deal versus remain back to the people?

The Prime Minister: First, I made a statement and answered 82 questions on these issues in the House yesterday. We will be bringing the meaningful vote back by 12 March. As I said yesterday, if that meaningful vote is rejected again by the House, we would have a vote in this House on 13 March on whether the House accepts leaving without a deal on 29 March. If the House rejects leaving without a deal on 29 March, there would be a vote on a short, limited extension to article 50. On the hon. Gentleman's final point, I continue to believe that it is right for us to deliver on the result of the referendum that took place in 2016.

Q2. [909473] **Julian Knight** (Solihull) (Con): The 2017 Birmingham bin strike led to mass fly-tipping across the borough border in my beautiful town of Solihull. With the threat of another strike ever present, will the Prime Minister join me in urging Birmingham City Council to do what often seems to be beyond it—namely, to be a good neighbour and sort out these strikes, which seem to be just a taster of what would happen under a hard-left Labour Government?

The Prime Minister: Obviously, this is a matter for Labour-controlled Birmingham City Council to resolve: rubbish piling up on the streets because of the failure of the Labour council to get a grip. Not only does it show what a hard-left Labour Government would be like; it shows all of us that, under Labour councils, you pay more and get less.

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Lab): There is an urgent question coming up on Kashmir, but I will just say that from our side of the House we strongly support rapid dialogue between India and Pakistan in order to reduce the tension and deal with the root causes of the conflict before more lives are lost.

I also join the Prime Minister in wishing Eve a very happy retirement, Mr Speaker. She has been absolutely brilliant in your office over the many years of people rushing in and out and making totally unreasonable demands. She has always sorted it out. Could you pass on to her the thanks of lots and lots of Back Benchers over many years?

The Bank of England forecasts that growth for this year will be the slowest in over a decade. Does the Prime Minister blame her shambolic handling of Brexit or her failed austerity policies for this damaging failure?

The Prime Minister: First, I think the right hon. Gentleman should have seen the report that actually showed the expectation that in this country over the coming year we will have higher growth than Germany.

He talks about the economy, so let us just say what we see in the economy under a Conservative Government: more people in work than ever before; unemployment at its lowest level since the 1970s; borrowing this year at its lowest level for 17 years; and the largest monthly surplus on record. Conservatives delivering more jobs, healthier finances and an economy fit for the future.

Jeremy Corbyn: I know that the Prime Minister is very busy—I understand that—and she possibly has not had a chance to look at the Bank of England forecasts, which suggest that there is a one in four chance of the UK economy dipping into recession. Manufacturing is already in recession, car manufacturing has declined at the steepest rate for a decade—down 5% in the past quarter alone—and Honda, Jaguar Land Rover and Nissan have announced cuts to either jobs or investment in recent months. Does she blame her shambolic Brexit or her Government's lack of an industrial strategy for this very sad state of affairs?

The Prime Minister: I have just explained to the right hon. Gentleman the positives in the economy and the consistent quarter-by-quarter growth that we have seen under this Government. What do we know would be the worst thing for the economy in this country? It would be a run on the pound, capital flight and £1,000 billion of borrowing under a Labour Government.

Jeremy Corbyn: As manufacturing industry declines, it is skilled well-paid jobs that are lost. But the Prime Minister is right—there is something that is increasing, and that is the income of the top fifth richest people in this country, which went up by 4.7% last year while the incomes of the poorest fell by 1.6%. With the poorest people worse off, will the Prime Minister now commit to ending the benefit freeze, or does she believe that rising poverty is a price worth paying?

The Prime Minister: Perhaps it might again help to look at some of the facts. The top 1% are paying 28% of income tax, which is higher than at any time under a Labour Government, income inequality is lower than that which we inherited from a Labour Government, and the lowest earners saw their fastest pay rise in 20 years through the national living wage. The Conservatives are building a fairer society and delivering for everyone.

Jeremy Corbyn: Some of us cannot forget that it was the Conservative party that so opposed the principle of the national minimum wage from the very beginning. Perhaps the Government could start by tackling the scourge of low pay in their own Departments. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Ministry of Justice pay some of their central London workers as little as £7.83 an hour, and they have been on strike again this week, hoping to get a London living wage. Will the Prime Minister intervene and ensure that they do get the London living wage so that they can continue doing their valuable work for both those Departments?

Low pay means that many workers have to claim universal credit just to make ends meet. This month, the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions admitted that universal credit is driving people to food banks. Is it not

time to stop the roll-out and get it right, or does the Prime Minister believe that rising poverty is a price worth paying?

The Prime Minister: No. I am not sure whether the right hon. Gentleman is repeating his previous question, but he talks about universal credit. We have made changes to it as we have rolled it out as we have seen how it has been operating. In my first months as Prime Minister, we cut the taper rate so that people could keep more of what they earn. Since then, we have increased allowances to 100% of a full monthly payment, we have scrapped the seven days' wait, meaning that people get their money sooner, and we have brought in a two-week overlap for people on housing benefit. When we were making all those changes to universal credit to benefit the people who receive it, why did the Labour party oppose every single one of them?

Jeremy Corbyn: Can I just give one example of what is happening? Take the food bank in Hastings, which is represented by the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, where demand went up by 80% after universal credit was rolled out, and the Trussell Trust said that a significant proportion of referrals are related to benefit changes, delays or sanctions. It is a huge increase in food bank use.

Some 4.1 million of our children are growing up in poverty, and the Resolution Foundation said last week that UK child poverty was on course to hit record levels. Will the Prime Minister act to prevent that? Will she start by ending the two-child limit? Will she end the benefit cap? Will she restore the 1,000 Sure Start centres that have been lost under her Government?

The Prime Minister: We want to ensure that we have a welfare system that is fair not only to those who need to use it, but to all the hard-working taxpayers whose taxes actually pay for the welfare system. The right hon. Gentleman talks about child poverty, but absolute child poverty is at a record low. We know that a child growing up in a home where all the adults work is around five times less likely to be in poverty than a child in a home where nobody works. Under this Government, the number of children in workless households is at a record low. So, when the right hon. Gentleman stands up, will he recognise that work is the best route out of poverty and welcome the fact that we now have more people in work than ever before—3.5 million more than in 2010?

Jeremy Corbyn: It clearly is not working, because so many people who are themselves working very hard, some doing two or even three jobs, have to access food banks just to feed their children. The Prime Minister used to talk about the “just about managing.” Well, they are not managing anymore. Income inequality—up. In-work poverty—up. Child poverty—up. Pensioner poverty—up. Homelessness—up. Austerity clearly is not over. People on low incomes are getting poorer, while those at the top are getting richer. The economy is slowing, manufacturing is in recession and this Government's shambolic handling of Brexit—[*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman will not be shouted down. It is not going to happen. The attempt is foolish and it demeans the House. Stop it. Grow up.

Jeremy Corbyn: Austerity clearly is not over. People on low incomes are getting poorer, while those at the top get richer. The economy is slowing, manufacturing is in recession and this Government's shambolic handling of Brexit is compounding years of damaging austerity. Their policies are driving people to food banks and poverty in the fifth richest economy on this planet. Are any of these burning injustices a priority for the Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister: Manufacturing is not in recession, and what the right hon. Gentleman says about the lowest earners is not the case. If he had listened to my earlier answer, he would know the lowest earners have seen the highest rise in their pay for 20 years as a result of the introduction of the national living wage—the national living wage introduced by a Conservative-led Government.

If the right hon. Gentleman is talking about actually helping people who are in work, let us talk about the fact that we have cut income tax to help people to keep more of what they earn. We have frozen fuel duty to help people for whom a car is a necessity, not a luxury. Since 2010, those measures have saved working people £6,500.

From the way the right hon. Gentleman talks, one might think that he would have supported those measures. But what did he do? No, he voted against them over a dozen times. That is the reality: it is working people who always pay the price of Labour.

Q5. [909476] Stephen Crabb (Preseli Pembrokeshire) (Con): For rural areas, access to emergency care is hugely important, with distances and journey times crucial. Does the Prime Minister therefore agree with me and the 40,000 Pembrokeshire people who signed the petition against proposals to remove accident and emergency services from the local hospital that the Welsh Government need to look again and ensure that communities such as mine are not left with second-class services that put lives at risk?

The Prime Minister: I thank my right hon. Friend for raising this issue. Obviously I recognise the concern those people feel, particularly those who live furthest away from the planned new hospital. As he says, health is a devolved matter for the Labour Welsh Government, but I urge them to consider fully the impact of the changes on local residents. We want to ensure that people can access the services they need, wherever they live in the United Kingdom.

Ian Blackford (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP): I am sure the House will want to join me in welcoming the president of the Dutch Senate and the Dutch parliamentarians who are with us. Goedemiddag. Hartelijk welkom, dames en heren.

Some 100,000 jobs in Scotland are under threat from a no-deal Brexit. The Scottish Government's top economic adviser has warned that it could create a recession worse than the 2008 financial crisis. The Prime Minister must rule out no deal right here, right now. Why is she still blackmailing the people of this country?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman might not be surprised if I point out to him that there are only two ways to ensure that no deal is taken off the table. *[Interruption.]* It is no good SNP Members shaking

their heads or muttering from a sedentary position. They need to face up to the fact that we will not revoke article 50 because we are leaving the European Union, so the only way to take no deal off the table is to vote for the deal.

Ian Blackford: I think it will be for Parliament to decide, and of course there are other options: we can extend article 50 and we can have a people's vote. The Prime Minister should look at the faces of her colleagues; she is fooling no one. Parliament will not be bullied into a false choice between accepting her very bad deal or no deal at all. MPs from Scotland must now decide: will they stand up for Scotland or will they stand up with the extreme Brexiteers on the Tory Benches? Today, the Scottish National party will move an amendment to rule out no deal in any and all circumstances. Scottish MPs can back the SNP or betray voters in Scotland. Will the Prime Minister finally end this Brexit madness and vote for the SNP amendment tonight?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman talks about an extension to article 50 or a second referendum, but that does not solve the problem—it does not deal with the issue. The issue is very simple: do we want to leave with a deal or without a deal? That is the question that SNP MPs and every other MP will face when the time comes. He then talks about betraying voters in Scotland. I will tell him what has betrayed voters in Scotland: an SNP Scottish Government who have raised income tax so that people in Scotland are paying more in income tax than people anywhere else in the UK; an SNP Scottish Government who have broken their manifesto promise and raised the cap on annual council tax increases for homeowners; and an SNP Scottish Government under whom people are facing the prospect of an extra tax for parking their car at their workplace. And all of that—*[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. There is a fest of undignified arm-waving, and bellowing, Mr Kerr, from a sedentary position. Calm yourself, man. Take some sort of soothing medicament that you will find beneficial.

The Prime Minister: And all of that in a year in which the Scottish Government's block grant from Westminster went up. The people betraying the people of Scotland are the SNP Scottish Government.

Q6. [909477] James Cleverly (Braintree) (Con): Yesterday, we heard of the horrific antisemitic attack on an elderly Jewish gentleman in north London. Tonight, right hon. and hon. colleagues from across the House will be breaking bread with the Community Security Trust, a charity that exists to defend against antisemitic violence. Does my right hon. Friend agree that we can never be blasé about antisemitism, we can never be tolerant of antisemitism, and the Labour party can never be too apologetic about antisemitism?

The Prime Minister: First, I join my hon. Friend in recognising the work done by the Community Security Trust. It does such important and valuable work throughout the year, and I am pleased that the Government are able to support the work it does. He is absolutely right to say that one can never be too apologetic about antisemitism, but I think what we have heard sums up Labour under

its leader: it loses the hon. Member for Liverpool, Wavertree (Luciana Berger) and it keeps the hon. Member for Derby North (Chris Williamson). That tells us all we need to know about the Labour leadership: they are present but not involved. Perhaps if the Labour leader actually wants to take action against racism, he would suspend the hon. Member for Derby North.

Q3. [909474] **Layla Moran** (Oxford West and Abingdon) (LD): One homeless person dying—[*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady must be heard.

Layla Moran: One homeless person dying on our streets is enough for national shame, yet the latest figures show that in 2017 nearly 600 died. In that same year, the Vagrancy Act 1824 was used more than 1,000 times to drag homeless people before our courts. Crisis, Centrepoin, St Mungo's and MPs on both sides of this House agree that it is time to scrap this law. Will the Prime Minister consider meeting us and the charities so that we can make the case for why we should not wait one more day?

The Prime Minister: As I think I indicated in Prime Minister's questions last week, the number of people sleeping on our streets has gone down for the first time in eight years, but of course there is more to do. On the wider issue of homelessness, there is more to do in terms of building more homes, and we are doing that. I will ensure that the Minister from the relevant Department meets the hon. Lady to discuss the matter.

Q8. [909479] **Robert Neill** (Bromley and Chislehurst) (Con): Residents of Northpoint House in Bromley in my constituency have aluminium composite material cladding on their building. They are paying out £5,000 a week for a waking watch, repairs and remediation will cost £3 million, and their fire brigade enforcement notice expires on 30 April. The flats are valueless, so the residents cannot raise the money against them. Despite personal intervention by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, for which I am grateful, the freeholders and the developer refuse to accept liability. Under the circumstances, will the Government accept that it may be necessary to intervene directly to ensure that the innocent flat-owners are not out of pocket?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend raises a very important issue. I know that, as he said, he has been in touch with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, as well as the Treasury. As I have said previously, we fully expect building owners in the private sector to take action, make sure appropriate safety measures are in place, and not pass costs on to leaseholders. We have written to all relevant building owners to remind them of their responsibilities. They must do the right thing; if they do not, we are not ruling anything out. I should also point out to my hon. Friend that local authorities have the power to complete works and recover the costs from the private owners of high-rise residential buildings. I am sure that a Minister from MHCLG would be happy to meet my hon. Friend to continue to discuss this matter, to ensure that the residents are given the peace of mind they need by the action being taken.

Q4. [909475] **Caroline Lucas** (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): The Government have just decided that in the event of a no-deal Brexit, imports of medical supplies are to be handled by the same company that forced hundreds of restaurants to close because it was incapable of delivering chicken to Kentucky Fried Chicken. It is horrifying that the Prime Minister's stubbornness is literally putting people's lives at risk through bargain-bucket supply deals. What guarantee can she give patients who are watching us now, looking at the pantomime and farce in this House, that they will be able to get their vital medicines when they need them in the event of that no-deal Brexit?

The Prime Minister: The Department of Health and Social Care is taking the steps necessary to ensure that medicines are available. We have been clear before that it is not necessary to stockpile and that patients should not be stockpiling medicines. Medicines will be available. If the hon. Lady is so concerned about the impact of no deal—

Caroline Lucas indicated dissent.

The Prime Minister: It is no good the hon. Lady shaking her head. There is a very simple answer: if she does not want no deal, she should support the deal.

Q11. [909482] **Robert Halfon** (Harlow) (Con): Yesterday, *The Sun* newspaper reported on proposals for a £1.6 billion post-EU fund for deprived areas in the north, predominantly in seats held by Opposition MPs. Will my right hon. Friend ensure that money from the fund is available to constituents like mine in Harlow, where we have significant deprivation and disadvantage?

The Prime Minister: We will be introducing a fund to ensure that our towns can grow and prosper. The details will be announced in due course by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government. I can confirm to my right hon. Friend that Harlow, and indeed other towns across England, will be able to propose ambitious plans to help to transform their communities. Of course, we will work with the devolved Administrations and in Northern Ireland to ensure that towns in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland also benefit from town deals.

Q7. [909478] **Sir David Crausby** (Bolton North East) (Lab): As a former shop steward and works convenor, I completely understand the need to approach the cliff edge in order to secure a deal, but rational negotiators never go to the edge, hold hands and jump into the abyss. When will the Prime Minister recognise that constructive discussions should take place without the nuclear option of mutually assured destruction?

The Prime Minister: Constructive discussions are taking place. This House was clear on what it wanted to be changed in relation to the withdrawal agreement and the deal that we had brought back from the European Union, and we are making progress and having exactly the constructive discussions the hon. Gentleman talks about.

Q14. [909485] **George Freeman** (Mid Norfolk) (Con): Public trust in politics is dangerously low. Failing to honour and deliver the EU referendum result cannot be an option. I campaigned to remain, but I am

100% committed to leaving; the question is how. Most of my voters in Mid Norfolk said that they wanted to be in the Common Market, not a political union. Given the clear warnings from the life science and agriculture sectors—key industries in Norfolk—about the danger of no deal, I welcome the Prime Minister's decision to give this sovereign House the vote and ask that if the House votes against, she will consider the European Free Trade Association instead of the backstop, giving us the Common Market 2.0 that most British voters want.

The Prime Minister: As I said yesterday, in answer to a question from, I think, our right hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Robert Halfon), the first aim of the Government and my first aim is to bring back a deal that can command support across the House in a meaningful vote, such that we are able to leave with a deal. The arrangements within the political declaration have significant benefits in relation to issues such as customs, but they also provide for us to have an independent trade policy and to bring an end to free movement. My hon. Friend talks about trust in politics, but I believe that those were important elements of what people voted for in 2016 and it is important that we deliver on that.

Q9. [909480] **Helen Hayes** (Dulwich and West Norwood) (Lab): The Prime Minister previously committed to a meaningful vote on her Brexit deal but had to be forced by the courts to hold it. She then committed to that meaningful vote in December, but pulled it at the last minute. When her deal fell to the worst Government defeat in history, instead of listening to MPs, she carried on regardless, so I ask her: what guarantee, other than her word, will she give this House that we will be able to vote to stop a no-deal Brexit before 29 March?

The Prime Minister: I set out clearly in my statement yesterday and I have repeated it in answer to a question today, the process that the Government will follow. The Government policy is to leave with a deal. We are working to ensure that we can bring back that deal. The hon. Lady talks about the rejection of the meaningful vote and not listening to Parliament, but the constructive discussions that I am having with the European Union at the moment are exactly about listening to Parliament—[*Interruption.*] It is all very well the shadow Trade Secretary, the hon. Member for Brent North (Barry Gardiner), shouting, “Nonsense!” He might not have noticed that on 29 January this House voted by a majority to say what it wanted to be changed in the withdrawal agreement, and that is what we are working on.

Sir John Hayes (South Holland and The Deepings) (Con): Little moves us more than the death of a child and for bereaved parents that grief is beyond words. Action speaks louder, which is why I have championed, inspired by the hon. Member for Swansea East (Carolyn Harris), the Children's Funeral Fund. Will the Prime Minister tell us when the good work of her Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Charnwood (Edward Argar), will come to fruition and the fund will begin to bring support and solace? We cannot mend broken hearts here, but those who have loved and lost deserve better than delay and doubt.

The Prime Minister: I thank my right hon. Friend for his question and for the work that he has done on this issue with the hon. Member for Swansea East. It is accepted across the House that it is not right that grieving parents have to worry about how to meet the funeral costs when they have lost a child. As he knows, we have confirmed that parents will no longer have to meet the cost of burials or cremations. Fees will be waived by local authorities and paid for by the Government. The relevant Ministries have been working on the most effective way to deliver this, and I can confirm that the fund will be implemented by the summer.

Q10. [909481] **Bambos Charalambous** (Enfield, Southgate) (Lab): In the past few months in my constituency, a 98-year-old man was killed in an aggravated burglary, an Asian couple were robbed, held hostage and beaten in their home, schoolchildren were mugged at knifepoint, and a spate of burglaries were committed across Enfield Southgate. My constituents do not feel safe. Does the Prime Minister recognise the severe consequences of underfunding our police service, and will she commit to restoring funding for community policing to pre-2010 levels?

The Prime Minister: Of course we recognise the concerns about serious violence, which is why my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has brought forward measures such as the Offensive Weapons Bill and set up the serious violence taskforce. In relation to funding for the police, the Metropolitan police will receive up to £2.5 billion in funding in 2019-20, which is an increase of up to £172 million on 2018-19. If the hon. Gentleman also wants to ask questions about funding for police in London perhaps he should speak to the Labour Mayor of London.

Justine Greening (Putney) (Con): With the Government's review of higher education still under way, does the Prime Minister agree that the reintroduction of maintenance grants is one outcome that could clearly aid social mobility for more disadvantaged students?

The Prime Minister: I recognise that my right hon. Friend has been, and continues to be, a huge champion for social mobility. She is asking me to provide a solution to higher education funding and student finance before the Augar report has been received and published. All I can do is assure her that Philip Augar and his panel are working on the report and we will look seriously at the proposals they bring forward.

Q12. [909483] **Mr Stephen Hepburn** (Jarrow) (Lab): In my constituency of Jarrow there is a wonderful young lady, four-year-old Harriet Corr, whose life would improve dramatically if she had access to the cystic fibrosis drug Orkambi. It is available in Ireland and many other European countries, and is due to become available in Scotland. Will the Prime Minister intervene personally in the negotiations between the NHS and Vertex to ensure that Harriet's family and many other families are not forced to leave their homes and move elsewhere?

The Prime Minister: I am sure the whole House will recognise the concerns of Harriet and her family. We want to ensure that patients have access to the most

effective and innovative medicines, but obviously at a price that represents value to the NHS. NHS England has proposed its best ever offer for a drug. This offer is the largest ever commitment of its kind in the 70-year history of the NHS, and would guarantee immediate and expanded access both to Orkambi and the drug Kalydeco for patients who need it. We have been closely following the discussions, and the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has offered a meeting with the global chief executive officer of Vertex, NHS England and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence in an effort to move the situation forward for the benefit of patients.

Mr John Whittingdale (Maldon) (Con): Is my right hon. Friend aware that five years ago today Russian special forces seized the Government building in Crimea and raised the Russian flag? Will she confirm that the UK Government remain committed to the restoration of Ukrainian sovereignty over Crimea, and will she look at strengthening sanctions against Russia until that can be achieved?

The Prime Minister: I am happy to give my right hon. Friend that confirmation. This was an illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia, and we have been doing everything we can to ensure that the appropriate sanctions are imposed that will have an impact. We have been one of the voices around the EU Council table that has been advocating the roll-over of sanctions at every stage and ensuring that, as we look at the actions of Russia here and elsewhere, we enhance those sanctions and rightfully put pressure on those who are responsible.

Q15. [909486] **Angela Crawley** (Lanark and Hamilton East) (SNP): The Scottish Government have used their powers to increase carer's allowance to the level of jobseeker's allowance, yet this top-up is being undermined because carer's allowance is regarded as income under universal credit. If carer's allowance is meant to help cover the extra costs incurred by providing care, why are carers on universal credit being penalised?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Lady knows full well the way in which universal credit operates to encourage people into work, but I will ask the Minister in the relevant Department to write to her on this matter.

Rebecca Pow (Taunton Deane) (Con): Thousands of young girls—including, sadly, some from Taunton Deane—are purchasing so-called quick-fix diet and detox products that are often endorsed by celebrities on social media, something for which these celebrities can be paid thousands of pounds. NHS chiefs say that some of these products can have highly detrimental health effects and are heaping work on our mental health services. In Eating Disorders Awareness Week, and following this morning's excellent Westminster Hall debate secured by my hon. Friend the Member for Angus (Kirstene Hair), will the Prime Minister agree that the irresponsible and unsafe endorsement of such products should be addressed?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend raises an important issue. I am sure that all Members have had constituency cases where they have seen the devastating impact that eating disorders can have on individuals, and on their families and friends. The Government have been taking

steps over the past few years. In 2014 we announced that we were investing £150 million to expand eating disorder community-based care for children and young people, and 70 dedicated new or extended community services offer care as a result. As my hon. Friend said, young people may be encouraged to take products because of celebrity endorsement. The celebrities involved should think very carefully about the impact that these products can have in effecting eating disorders, which devastate lives.

Nigel Dodds (Belfast North) (DUP): The Prime Minister, and indeed the entire House, know the conditions under which her withdrawal agreement will have a majority. The whole House, and indeed the country, now know that as a result of yesterday's events the prospects of the Prime Minister being able to achieve the necessary changes have been undermined and her negotiating position has been weakened. That is the reality of the situation. Can we have an assurance, in terms of any possible extension—and I would be interested to know what the Prime Minister thinks the purpose of the extension would be—that she will continue to focus on getting those legally binding changes? Hopefully, during any future negotiations, she will not be undermined in the way that she has been so far.

The Prime Minister: First of all, we are continuing to press for those legally binding changes. Those are the discussions we have been having with the European Commission. It is what I have spoken to every European Union leader about over the last 10 days or so. It is what I was speaking to people about at Sharm El Sheikh over the weekend as well. The right hon. Gentleman talks about the extension to article 50. Can I be very clear again? The Government do not want to extend article 50. The Government's policy is to get the legally binding changes so a deal can be brought back to this House, and this House can support the deal, and we can leave on 29 March with a deal.

Mrs Anne Main (St Albans) (Con): Unlike some Ministers who cannot normally take the view that the Prime Minister's word is binding, I do take the Prime Minister's word as being binding. Can I ask that she reiterates our manifesto commitment to leave with a deal or to leave with no deal, and that is our commitment?

The Prime Minister: Indeed, I have always said that no deal is better than a bad deal. I think we have actually got a good deal from the European Union. It provides for citizens' rights; it provides certainty for business with the implementation period; it ensures that we have, in the political declaration, the arrangements for customs in the future—for no tariffs, no quotas and no rules of origin; and it covers a number of other areas that I think will indeed be positive for this country. There is an issue that the House wants to see changed. That is what we are working on in relation to the Northern Ireland backstop. I want us to leave with a deal. I want to be able to bring back a deal that this House can support.

Ms Marie Rimmer (St Helens South and Whiston) (Lab): Violet Grace Youens was walking home from nursery with her grandma on 24 March 2017. She was hit by a stolen car driven erratically and at 83 mph in a

30 mph zone. The driver and accomplice immediately left the scene, and the driver absconded from the country. Tragically, four-year-old Violet Grace died in her parents' arms the following day and her grandma suffers with life-changing injuries. The offenders have since been sentenced to tariffs that do not fit the gravity of the crimes.

In October 2017, the Government published a response to the consultation on driving offences and penalties relating to causing death or serious injury. They confirmed proposals to increase the maximum penalty for causing death by dangerous driving from 14 years' imprisonment to life, along with other tariffs for serious driving offences, and stated that Government would bring forward proposals for reform of the law as soon as parliamentary time allows. Today, after just one week, the public petition "Violet Grace's Law" stands at more than 74,000 signatures. The Government are repeating the same response—

Mr Speaker: Order. This is a matter of the utmost sensitivity. I respect that, and that is why I am allowing the hon. Lady to go way beyond the normal length, but she must now put a question with a question mark—one sentence to wrap it up very well. Thank you.

Ms Rimmer: Prime Minister, when do the Government truly intend to bring forward the changes for the reform of the law?

The Prime Minister: First of all, I am sure that the feelings of the whole House will be with Violet Grace's family that this terrible tragedy has occurred. I know from a constituency case that I had the concern that parents, family members and others have when they see

somebody who has caused a death in this way by their driving being sentenced to a tariff which they feel is less than it should be. The Government have taken this very seriously—that is why we have had the consultation—and we will indeed bring forward our proposals when parliamentary time does allow. But I will ask a Minister from the Department for Transport to meet the hon. Lady to discuss this matter with her.

Mr Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con): Mr Speaker, I do not know whether you were as surprised as I was yesterday that, yet again, the media had verbatim reports of the Cabinet meeting straight after it. In fact, there were references to colleagues in front of me as kamikaze pilots. Prime Minister, to sort this issue out, would it not just be easier to televise Cabinet meetings? [*Laughter.*]

Mr Speaker: I want to hear the Prime Minister's answer. This is a very important question.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, when you did a thumbs-up after that question, I was not sure whether that indicated that you had a view on the televising of Cabinet meetings. My hon. Friend has tried to approach that issue in various ways. I seem to remember that last time he asked me about this, it was not about televising Cabinet but sending his CV in to be a Cabinet Minister. Perhaps these are linked—perhaps he wants to sit round the Cabinet table and be on television all the time.

Mr Speaker: Well, we never knew that the hon. Member for Wellingborough (Mr Bone) had such ambitions, but maybe it lurks within him—who knows? For my own part, I was merely acknowledging welcome and friendly visitors to the House.

Jammu and Kashmir

12.47 pm

Debbie Abrahams (Oldham East and Saddleworth) (Lab) (*Urgent Question*): To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the security and humanitarian situation in Kashmir, in the light of the escalating tensions between India and Pakistan.

The Minister for Asia and the Pacific (Mark Field): I understand that the Prime Minister referred to this during Prime Minister's Question Time. The UK is deeply concerned about rising tensions between India and Pakistan. Understandably, there has been huge interest in this rapidly developing situation. The House will understand that it would not be appropriate for me to comment in detail on reportage at this time, as the situation evolves.

We understand that on 14 February, at least 40 paramilitary Indian police officers were killed in a suicide attack in India-administered Kashmir. The Pakistan-based militant group Jaish-e-Mohammed claimed responsibility for that attack. India-Pakistan tensions, which were already at a high level, rose significantly following the attack, and both countries publicly exchanged heated rhetoric. On Tuesday 26 February, Indian and Pakistani news reported that Indian jets had crossed the line of control between India-administered and Pakistan-administered Kashmir. There have been reports of further ceasefire violations across the line of control overnight, and the situation remains unclear but fast developing.

The Foreign Secretary spoke to his Indian and Pakistani counterparts on Monday to discuss the situation, and we are in regular contact with both countries at senior levels to encourage restraint and to avoid escalating tensions further. We are monitoring developments closely and considering the implications for British nationals. I will be speaking to both the Indian and Pakistani high commissioners this afternoon and will continue to press for the importance of restraint. We urge both sides to engage in dialogue and find diplomatic solutions to ensure regional stability. We are working closely with international partners, including through the United Nations Security Council, to de-escalate tensions.

India and Pakistan are both long-standing and important friends of the United Kingdom. We have many and significant links to both countries through sizeable diaspora communities. As a consequence, we enjoy strong bilateral relations with both nations. The UK Government's position on Kashmir remains that it is and must be for India and Pakistan to find a lasting political resolution to this situation, taking into account the wishes of the Kashmiri people. It is not for the UK to prescribe, intervene or interfere with a solution or to act as mediator.

I know that the House has previously raised concerns about the humanitarian and human rights situation in both India-administered Kashmir and Pakistan-administered Kashmir. We continue to monitor the situation, and we encourage all states to ensure that their domestic standards are in line with international standards.

Debbie Abrahams: Thank you, Mr Speaker, for granting this urgent question. I am grateful to the Minister for his response, but this has been an ongoing situation

since independence in 1947, and successive Governments have failed, in dealing with the issues associated with Kashmir, to help facilitate peace alongside our international allies.

As the Minister has said, he is aware of the recent aerial attacks from India and then from Pakistan, following on from the militant attack in the Pulwama district of Jammu and Kashmir and the death of the 40 Indian troops. This is a proscribed group in Pakistan. I understand that it is said to be apparently based there, but as I say, it has been proscribed by Pakistan. I am grateful to the Minister for reporting on the action he has already taken and the dialogue he has already had with counterparts in the high commissions for both India and Pakistan, and I would be grateful if he reported back once he has had meetings on this, because it is a very fast-moving situation.

The Minister mentioned the UN Security Council. What specific action has been decided on there? India has said that airstrikes in Balakot in north-western Pakistan yesterday were in response to the militants' attack and killed a large number of militants, but Pakistan has said there were no casualties. Will the Minister clarify these reports? Today, Pakistan claims to have shot down two Indian jets when they entered Pakistani airspace, and the Indian news agency Asian News International has reported that a Pakistani jet has also been shot down on the Pakistan side of the line of control. Again, if the Minister could expand on some of this information, that would be very helpful.

In the light of the escalation in military action, will the Foreign Secretary be altering his travel advice to UK citizens? The Minister knows there is large Kashmiri diaspora in the UK, many of whom have families still based there, and their safety is a real concern for them. As I say, the escalating tensions have had a profound effect on our communities. What assurance can he give them that the UK Government are doing all they can not just to de-escalate tensions now, but to work towards a sustainable peace in the region?

Both India and Pakistan are nuclear powers. This is not just an issue for the region; it is an issue for the whole world. As the chair of the all-party group on Kashmir, I have repeatedly reiterated our commitment to supporting a process of peace and reconciliation in the region, but the UK Government need to step up and help to facilitate this, alongside our international partners. We have a vital role to play, as I say, not just in de-escalation, but in terms of a sustainable peace, and I urge the Minister to do all that he can to do this.

Mark Field: I thank the hon. Lady for her calm and wise words. May I say that I appreciate she has a busy day today already, with huge amounts going on near her own constituency following the large-scale fires? We are very grateful for her work, and we all recognise as Members of Parliament that we are sometimes torn between important international issues that are close to our hearts and dealing with those that may seem very parochial. None the less, I am very grateful for her words—her words of calm.

On the UN specifically, the hon. Lady is right that this is a UN issue of some urgency, simply because obviously both Pakistan and India are nuclear nations. It is therefore all the more important that we try to tone or dial down some of the rhetoric and, dare I say it,

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some of the actions we have seen in recent days. I think there are many friends of India and of Pakistan—and of Kashmir—not just here in the UK but across the world who are doing their best to try to calm this down.

The hon. Lady will I hope appreciate, in relation to the clarification she has requested on some of the reports—she made reference to reports of Indian planes having been shot down over the last 24 hours—that I do not want, and I hope she will understand why, to be drawn into comment on this because it is a fluid situation and many of these reports are unconfirmed. I therefore think that the most important thing, as I say, is to try to produce a slightly calmer approach.

On the issue of travel advice that the hon. Lady requested, we are very closely monitoring the situation, and we shall keep our travel advice under constant review and update it regularly—not just in Kashmir, but obviously in other countries. I should say to the hon. Lady that, as it happens, I am going to be in the region on a long-prearranged trip—provided we get out of this place, anyway, with Brexit votes later on. I am hoping to go to India tomorrow morning for three days. This is obviously a fast-moving issue, and I will speak not just with our high commissioner out in New Delhi, but obviously with counterparts both there and in Mumbai.

Bob Blackman (Harrow East) (Con): I congratulate the hon. Member for Oldham East and Saddleworth (Debbie Abrahams) on securing this urgent question about this very tense situation, and I thank the Minister for his solid answers thus far. Clearly, the escalating tension emanates from the terrorist suicide attack by Jaish-e-Mohammed on 14 February. This group is based in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and in Pakistan, so clearly the answer to this is that Pakistan has to take action to dismantle the terrorist camps and organise so that the terrorists are brought to justice. Will my right hon. Friend tell the Pakistani high commission to own up to its responsibilities and make sure that the terrorists face justice?

Mark Field: I have a lot of respect for my hon. Friend, who takes a great interest in these issues. However, I think he is making some categorical statements that are not entirely supportable at this point. As I say, I think it is important for all of us as Members of Parliament with significant diasporas—I know that there is a predominantly Indian diaspora in his own Harrow East constituency—to try to calm feelings and to de-escalate some of the concerns, not least as this is a fast-moving situation.

It is fair to say, however, that Jaish-e-Mohammed has claimed responsibility for the 14 February attack. The UK will continue to support a listing of that organisation and indeed of its leader, Masood Azhar, under UN Security Council resolution 1267. The organisation itself has been listed by the UN since 2001, and Masood Azhar is the head of that organisation. However, I think it is very premature to start making categorical statements about any involvement by Pakistan in this issue. We will obviously keep this under review, and as I say, I will endeavour to speak with both the Indian and Pakistani high commissioners this afternoon to ask them for any updates on the situation.

Emily Thornberry (Islington South and Finsbury) (Lab): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for granting this urgent question. I want to thank my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham East and Saddleworth (Debbie Abrahams) for securing it, and my hon. Friends the Members for Bradford West (Naz Shah) and for Bolton South East (Yasmin Qureshi), who I know also sought an urgent question today.

At the outset, let me make it quite clear that we condemn the despicable terror attack carried out in Pulwama on 14 February, and I believe that we speak on behalf of the whole House when we do so. India has been absolutely right to take action against the terrorist group responsible and to urge Pakistan to follow suit. It is also high time that China lifted its veto so that the UN can designate the head of JeM as a global terrorist.

Will the Minister join me in urging the Indian authorities, at national and regional level, to protect those innocent civilians of Kashmiri origin who have faced reprisals across India following the Pulwama attack? On the airstrikes and dogfights of the last two days, will the Minister of State join me in calling for immediate talks between India and Pakistan to de-escalate that crisis, but also in urging them to put an immediate stop to any military activity that risks escalating it further? We have heard both sides claim that their actions have simply been designed to send a message, but it is all too easy in those situations for messages to be misinterpreted and for grave and fatal mistakes to be made.

Finally, will the Minister of State join me in asking both India and Pakistan to think first and foremost of the innocent people of Kashmir, who are literally caught in the middle of this crossfire and have been so for 70 years? Their human rights have been serially abused, their humanitarian needs have been neglected, and their own wishes about their own future have been treated as unimportant. No one in India, Pakistan or this country wants yet another generation of Kashmiri children growing up facing the same cycle of instability, violence and fear that has afflicted their parents and grandparents for decades. Only peaceful dialogue can break that cycle. All parties must commit to engaging in that dialogue.

Mark Field: The right hon. Lady is absolutely right that we want a broad-based dialogue, and that the whole House condemned the original attack that took place on 14 February. I have to say that the concern about China's veto is unfortunately not isolated to issues around Kashmir. There are other areas, not least in relation to the Rohingya population from Burma, on which, as she knows, the prospect of a veto and of a lack of co-operation does not make life easy within the UN Security Council. There are other organisations, such as the European Union and the UN Human Rights Council, through which we will try to utilise as much muscle as we can, again in collaboration with other countries, to try to bring about the peaceable progress to which she refers.

The right hon. Lady also raised the humanitarian situation. We recognise that there are and have been long-standing human rights concerns in both Indian-administered and Pakistani-administered Kashmir. We believe that any allegation of human rights abuses is of great concern and has to be investigated thoroughly, promptly and transparently. I reassure the House, as I

did the Members here who were at the meeting of the all-party parliamentary group on 23 January, that we will continue to raise issues relating to Kashmir, including human rights, at all opportunities with the Governments of both India and Pakistan.

I reiterate the right hon. Lady's words. It is important for us, given the importance of the diaspora that we have here, to make it clear, as she rightly says, that the worst of all worlds would be many more decades of deprivation and humanitarian problems in Kashmir. To intervene or interfere, or to try to mediate in a broader way, is not necessarily the role for the United Kingdom. Our role, not least because of that diaspora, is to at least try to present that there must be a better future for future generations of Kashmiris than the last 70 years. We need to focus more attention on the future, rather than past. I very much hope that one way in which our diaspora here can make a contribution is to try to help to build up industry, to provide some prosperity for future generations of Kashmiris.

Tom Tugendhat (Tonbridge and Malling) (Con): I am grateful that my right hon. Friend the Minister is in the Chamber to respond to this important urgent question from the hon. Member for Oldham East and Saddleworth (Debbie Abrahams). I am very concerned, as many of us are, about the issues that have led to such violence in Kashmir over the past two weeks.

I understand that my right hon. Friend will not play a part as a negotiator or mediator, but will he at least do his best to get around the UN General Assembly and other members of the Security Council and encourage those who are friends of both countries to help them to get together and talk, at least in the margins and the quiet corridors, so that when they get to the actual talks, there is a conversation to be had? Will he also ensure that those members of the UK population with connections to Kashmir are able to support their families and those who may have been cut off or in any way harmed by the economic shocks affecting the region at the moment?

Mark Field: We shall do our level best. My hon. Friend is absolutely right that active conversations will take place within the UN corridors of both New York and Geneva. I should perhaps say that this goes beyond simply friends of Pakistan and India. The realisation is that this is an extremely serious situation involving two nuclear powers in that part of the world, and that it is therefore in everyone's interest to see a de-escalation, but with an eye towards trying to solve some of the underlying problems for the longer-term future.

Unfortunately for the man to my right, my hon. Friend the Member for Pendle (Andrew Stephenson), it is the fate of Government Whips that they do not have a chance to say very much—[*Interruption.*] I am sure that you look forward for that reason to the day I am elevated—or maybe demoted; whichever way one looks at it—to the Whips Office, Mr Speaker. On a serious note, I am well aware that my hon. Friend does a huge amount of work on this, not least because one of the main towns in his constituency, Nelson, has a significant Kashmiri population. I know that that applies to many Members on both sides of the House.

Douglas Chapman (Dunfermline and West Fife) (SNP): I thank the hon. Member for Oldham East and Saddleworth (Debbie Abrahams) for raising this important urgent

question. I also thank the Minister for his measured response to the situation to date. However, the House will be concerned about the rise in conflict in that region, especially when the nations involved have access to nuclear weapons. Will the Minister ensure that the serious concerns raised in the House are relayed directly to the Governments of Pakistan and India at the highest level, and that the Foreign Office strains every sinew to make sure that both parties act with responsibility and restraint, and that it insists that escalation is not an option?

Many Members have mentioned positive and meaningful talks taking place. In order to protect the civilian populations on both sides of the border, and indeed within Kashmir, we need to ensure that these populations are not put at any further risk. I know that the Government are focused on other matters at the moment, but I hope that the Minister, or the Foreign Secretary, will be able to keep us up to date with developments on a regular basis.

Mark Field: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his constructive words. He is right that this requires a nimble diplomatic approach. I have to say that I have encountered over the last two mornings a blizzard of diplomatic telegrams from Islamabad, New Delhi and, of course, New York recognising the huge amount of work going in from our diplomatic service in trying to keep open lines of communication and trying to speak to individuals in the military and at the political level. We will do our level best as this situation evolves and we are able to say more, and with more certainty, to ensure that the House is kept fully informed.

Mr Speaker: The right hon. Member for Broadland (Mr Simpson) just entered the Chamber carrying, as per usual, a book. I note in passing something of which the right hon. Gentleman will be well aware. In his party, which used to be my party, it was frequently said that to be seen carrying a book was dangerous, but to be seen reading it was fatal.

Mr Keith Simpson (Broadland) (Con): I do both. [*Laughter.*]

Mr Steve Baker (Wycombe) (Con): I absolutely condemn the perpetrators of the initial act of violence, but I also condemn airstrikes in retaliation for what really could have been a crime, rather than an act of war. Thousands of my constituents will be alarmed about the prospect of escalation because they have families on not only one but both sides of the line of control. Will the Minister join me in saying to the evil people who perpetrate acts of violence for political causes that they defeat their own ends by the revulsion and horror that they cause?

Mark Field: I know full well that my hon. Friend has a significant Kashmiri population in his constituency, not least because I have had the chance to meet some of them in recent weeks. He is absolutely right: it is entirely self-defeating. In many ways, we all want to see some sort of normalcy within the Kashmir area, whether under Pakistani or Indian administration. Above all, the clearest way for that to happen is if there is stability in that region, which would allow for economic prosperity. One only has to look close at hand to our situation in Northern Ireland. It was when the worst of the troubles

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of the 1970s and '80s were behind us that we were able to see some progress and international investors could be comfortable about being able to build businesses in that country. That is the great prize if we can de-escalate some of these long-standing issues within Kashmir.

Yasmin Qureshi (Bolton South East) (Lab): Until his election, Prime Minister Modi was banned from entering the United Kingdom for his part in the Gujarat massacre, which resulted in more than 2,000 Muslim deaths. As Prime Minister, he has pursued a divisive, right-wing, Hindu nationalist agenda that has inflamed tensions in both India and occupied Jammu and Kashmir. Instead of pointing fingers at Pakistan for the Pulwama attack, when will Prime Minister Modi look at his own record of persistent state violence and gross human right abuses, as highlighted by both the UN and all-party parliamentary Kashmir group reports, which caused the rise of the home-grown insurgency in Kashmir?

Mark Field: I understand the hon. Lady's heartfelt passion, but let me just say this: that is not relevant to the present situation. We all know we are in a pre-election period in India, and that is one of the factors of concern. We want to see a de-escalation at the earliest possible opportunity to avoid the sorts of issues to which she refers. She will appreciate that from the perspective of the Foreign Office we want to remain strong friends on all sides. To start condemning, in the way she proposes, would only undermine our position of trying to bring both sides together.

Theresa Villiers (Chipping Barnet) (Con): May I ask that the Government recognise the severity of the terrorist threat faced by India in relation to Kashmir, and that our Government offer support where the Indian Government take measures they feel are necessary to protect the security of their citizens?

Mark Field: We will offer support to all Governments who look to protect their civilian populations, but we will do so in a way that is managed, manageable and not focused on an overreaction to what has happened. I appreciate that, as my right hon. Friend rightly says, the attack on 14 February was one of the very worst single episodes for some decades, but equally we would like to see restraint on both sides, recognising the importance of having a secure region to ensure that civilian populations are properly protected.

Naz Shah (Bradford West) (Lab): Just last week, I returned from leading a delegation of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association to Pakistan, during which I met the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister assured the delegation of his commitment, reiterating that he wants a peaceful resolution through diplomacy. I am sure the Minister is aware that the central issue in this crisis is Kashmir. While the people of Kashmir are not given their right to self-determination they will not be free, nor can we truly expect to see long-term peace between India and Pakistan. Does the Minister agree that now is the time to change our policy position on Kashmir and play a central role in helping to resolve the issue that we played a part in creating when leaving the region as a colonial power? Will he consider making an application to the United Nations Security Council on this matter?

Mark Field: I must say—the hon. Lady will recognise this—that I do not agree with her prescription that we should try to intervene. The reality of the situation, as I am sure she is well aware, is that if the UK Government were to offer to mediate or feel that it is our place to interfere, we would simply lose credibility, particularly with the Indian Government. We would therefore end up not being able to play the role we do in trying to ensure a de-escalation of tensions. Our long-standing position is, and must continue to be, for India and Pakistan to find a political resolution to the situation in Kashmir through their own efforts, taking into account the wishes, as she rightly says, of Kashmiri people. If we were to intervene, interfere, prescribe a solution or purport that we can somehow be a mediator, I think that would very much undermine our position on all sides.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr Speaker: I was going to call the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr Baker), but he now seems very pre-occupied with—[*Interruption.*] We have already heard the fella. I should not have forgotten so quickly. I will remind myself of the eloquence of his contribution in due course.

Mr Shailesh Vara (North West Cambridgeshire) (Con): The Minister is taking a very fine line, trying to sit on the fence, effectively, mindful that there are diasporas from both Pakistan and India living in this country. He is treading a very fine line in his answers. However, where it is abundantly clear that the terrorists are living in one particular country, will he give an undertaking to this House that the British Government will make it absolutely clear to that host country that it should not be tolerating terrorists who are engaging in activity in another country and that they must face the full force of law?

Mark Field: My hon. Friend will recognise that, as a diplomat or a Foreign Office Minister, sometimes the most effective way to make an argument to our counterparts is not through megaphone diplomacy. There are robust private conversations that will take place. I do not want to go into detail as to what they will say, but let me just say this. We do understand that there is a need and a desire for any country to act proportionately to secure its borders, people and military, but the idea that the UK should be seen to be robustly on one side of this battle rather than another would be entirely self-defeating. I think it is in the interests of us all to take a calm approach. Of course, we will not in any way do anything other than criticise terrorist organisations. That is one reason why the organisation Jaish-e-Mohammed has been subject to a UN listing for almost 20 years and has been proscribed in the UK for that period of time.

Mr Speaker: My profuse apologies to the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr Baker), on whose every word, as he knows, I ordinarily hang. My attention was momentarily distracted, and I apologise to him.

Faisal Rashid (Warrington South) (Lab): I must express my grave concern and alarm at the ongoing escalation of the conflict between India and Pakistan in disputed Kashmir. War will benefit no one, least of all the people of Kashmir. As of yet, however, there are no signs of a

serious—I emphasise that word—international attempt to put an end to this crisis. Does the Minister agree that the international community must do more and act now to put an end to these senseless acts of military violence? If so, what steps will his Government be taking to achieve that outcome?

Mark Field: I thank the hon. Gentleman. As I mentioned earlier, we are working as rapidly as we can within all international organisations. If I may touch on a point I did not address earlier about the UN, we are working within the UN. This is a major issue, not least because of the fact that these are two nuclear powers. I suspect there will be a move to de-escalate and negotiate as far as possible. I know from discussions with our US counterparts that they are also expressing concerns. Ultimately, I believe it must be for the Kashmiri people to find a way forward. I appreciate that there is a lot of history. The worry is that a lot of things can be said and done now that could be very difficult to forget. The prize for the future is to try to achieve a more peaceable solution. Ultimately, that must come from the hearts of those who are in Kashmir, whether of Pakistani or Indian origin.

Victoria Prentis (Banbury) (Con): Like my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr Baker), I have many thousands of constituents who are very worried about family members in Kashmir. I was heartened by what the Minister of State had to say about his robust conversations on human rights with both sides. Does he agree that there is perhaps more we can do as a nation to help investigate human rights abuses and ensure that truth is brought to the forefront, rather than the great deal of misinformation we are hearing at the moment?

Mark Field: Yes, I very much agree with my hon. Friend. She will be aware that any allegations of human rights abuses are concerning and need to be investigated thoroughly, promptly and transparently. She will also be aware that our single biggest Department for International Development budget is in Pakistan. Human rights concerns are part and parcel of the money that is spent out there, trying to build up capacity and capability to ensure that such human rights issues are properly dealt with.

Hilary Benn (Leeds Central) (Lab): The whole House will support the Government and the United Nations in their efforts to get India and Pakistan to draw back from further conflict, but does the Minister agree that it is the people of Kashmir who are both the victims and spectators of their own future because of the failure of those two countries to reach an agreement on what will happen? Above all else, the people of Kashmir want the chance to live in peace and security, and to have the right to determine their own future, as they were promised over 70 years ago when it was suggested that a referendum might be held. That, of course, has never taken place.

Mark Field: I am not sure I would recommend a referendum to anyone in the current circumstances—certainly, it would not be wise for the UK—but the right hon. Gentleman makes a very serious, fair point. We continue to raise human rights issues and to look at this in a humanitarian sense. To add my responses to one or two other contributions, we noted the findings of the

Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights reports and are particularly concerned about allegations of human rights abuses and violations in both India and Pakistan-administered Kashmir. I make it clear that we will continue to raise these issues with the Government in New Delhi.

Andrew Griffiths (Burton) (Con): I draw the House's attention to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests; as the former chairman of the all-party Kashmir group, I visited the region. Many thousands of constituents are concerned for family, friends and loved ones in the region and have contacted me to raise their concerns. Does the Minister agree that this situation is worrying on two levels—first, because we have two nuclear powers squaring off against each other, and secondly, because the people on the ground in Kashmir are the ones who are suffering? Given that we have heard about the documented evidence of human rights abuses, does he not agree that the right course of action might be for us to send observers, perhaps with our EU colleagues, to make sure that there are no human rights abuses on the ground in Kashmir?

Mark Field: I know that my hon. Friend is also a former officer of the all-party beer group—I wondered whether he was going to express that interest today. Again, he makes a serious point about having observers, whether at an EU or UN level. We will do our level best, particularly as this situation develops, to ensure that the international community has a chance to see what is going on on the ground in order to de-escalate the tensions.

Stella Creasy (Walthamstow) (Lab/Co-op): Further to the answer that the Minister has just given, he set out his fears of somehow being seen to take sides. Let me tell him that the community in Walthamstow, who are desperately concerned about the situation in Kashmir, want him to stay on the side of human rights. He spoke about the importance of the work that the UN can do in investigating these cases. He has also told us that he is going to have phone calls this afternoon with both the Pakistani and Indian representatives. Will he commit now to raising directly the importance of them allowing the UN to go to the region and investigate, so that finally, when we talk about allegations, we can show the truth and the people of Kashmir can have justice?

Mark Field: I thank the hon. Lady for her question, and I will be only too happy to commit to making that pledge, as it were, in the telephone calls that I will have later this afternoon. I talk about not taking sides, but the side we take is obviously with the people of Kashmir to try to ensure that lives that have been so blighted can thrive. The danger with being seen to take a side on this issue is that we will lose any leverage or credibility with one or other of the Governments concerned. We are well aware that there is a large diaspora in this country, but this is not simply about there being a diaspora here; it is about doing the right thing as well, and these human rights issues are clearly of grave concern. As I said, I will commit in my conversations not just today, but in the days to come, to ensure that the voice that she puts across—

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mark Field: I am amazed I am so popular—it is great to see. I will ensure that that voice is properly heard.

Mr Speaker: Opposition Members' concern, I say to the Minister, is for the knee muscles of Government Back Benchers buoying up and down in eager expectation of their opportunity to be called.

Rehman Chishti (Gillingham and Rainham) (Con): Apart from being the chair of the all-party group on Pakistan, I was born in Kashmir, and in the 2005 earthquake, I lost 25 relatives, including my grandfather. Muzaffarabad is very near the line of control. The people of Kashmir want peace, prosperity, human dignity and to be masters of their own destiny. As the Minister says, our long-standing position is in line with the 1948 United Nations resolutions 47 and 39, which the United Kingdom signed up to, saying that we will support the people of Kashmir's right to self-determination. That being the case, will the Minister please push for that at the United Nations and, as other colleagues have said, for a United Nations human rights fact-finding mission? Whatever it says and whoever it finds against—the Indian or Pakistani sides—we will all accept it.

Mark Field: I thank my hon. Friend for his comments. As I said, we note the findings of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights reports, which are deeply concerning. We will make sure that these are brought up in international committee, both in New York and in Geneva.

Mr Chris Leslie (Nottingham East) (Ind): The attack in Srinagar was absolutely atrocious, and the prospect of descending into a tit-for-tat exchange is immensely depressing. As the Minister knows, this is an incredibly serious issue. I speak as the former chair of the all-party Kashmir group. Last year, we published our report on our inquiry into the human rights situation, as the Minister knows, because he heard a recent presentation on that. I hear what he says about Government policy, but we have a responsibility to help to support confidence-building measures. We have a legacy responsibility in that region of the world, and the UK has an obligation to lead and show the way forward for human rights and peace in this area.

Mark Field: I take on board what the hon. Gentleman says and support the idea that there is a leadership role, not least within the UN Security Council, where clearly, long-standing connections between the UK and both India and Pakistan will be brought to bear. We will continue to be in the closest possible contact at senior level in both India and Pakistan to try to avoid escalation and ensure regional stability. Part of that is obviously about the capacity building to which he refers. I think he will understand that quite a lot of work goes on both in India and Pakistan to try to ensure that this is brought to bear and hopefully make lives better for all concerned.

Mr Philip Dunne (Ludlow) (Con): My right hon. Friend referred to the discussions and channels that are being used through diplomatic routes both with the UN and directly, and it is very fortuitous that he happens to be visiting the region in the next few days. Before he goes, will he also engage with the Ministry of Defence

to encourage senior military leaders and Ministers to engage with their counterparts both in India and Pakistan to make sure that there are senior-level military-to-military back channels between the two armed forces, so that they can help to avoid the accidental escalation of conflict?

Mark Field: I thank my right hon. Friend for his comments. He, of course, was a Defence Minister and will understand that those back channels exist. Clearly they are not always entirely avowed, but the UK has back-channels with both the Indian military and the Pakistani military, and I am well aware that conversations have already taken place and will no doubt continue at pace.

Ruth Smeeth (Stoke-on-Trent North) (Lab): This is the latest chapter in a horrendous story for the people of Kashmir, as I am sure the whole House agrees. What efforts is the Minister making to ensure that day-to-day communication with the diaspora community is ongoing so that they know what is happening to their friends and family in Kashmir?

Mark Field: I very much understand the hon. Lady's concerns. The picture is very confused at the moment, and I wish we could confirm more what is happening on the ground. Part of the reason that I have not been able to be as expansive as I would like is simply that there are conflicting reports of what is happening. Obviously, we will do our level best to ensure that as many of the diaspora, who must be increasingly worried about the wellbeing of their relatives close at hand, are kept as informed as possible in the circumstances. When I am in the region, I will make sure that we express that.

Jack Brereton (Stoke-on-Trent South) (Con): I thank the hon. Member for Oldham East and Saddleworth (Debbie Abrahams) for securing this urgent question. Like many hon. Members, I have a significant community of Kashmiris in my constituency, who are extremely concerned. I am also the senior vice-chair of the all-party Kashmir group. Does the Minister agree that we must condemn the use of violence and the abuse of human rights wherever it occurs and by all parties in Kashmir?

Mark Field: I agree entirely. We do, and will continue to do so.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi (Slough) (Lab): Those of us of south Asian ancestry were overjoyed recently at the opening of the Indo-Pak border—an historic and commendable decision by both Governments—so that Sikhs and others could pay homage at the final resting place of the founder of the Sikh faith. We had hoped that there would be further border openings, but simultaneously we expressed concern that terrorist attacks or abuse of human rights would once again sow the seeds of hatred and division. Does the Minister agree that we need to impress upon both nations the need to urgently de-escalate tensions, and that we need to work with them to find lasting, sustainable peace for the long-suffering but wonderful Kashmiri people?

Mark Field: I thank the hon. Gentleman, who always speaks with such calmness about such matters. I have had strong dealings with him on a number of issues, at

both ministerial and constituency levels. I entirely endorse what he said. I think we all want to see a regularisation of the situation, with as much access as possible for those who are currently living in India, or currently in Pakistan to be able to go to homelands that their forefathers lived in.

Zac Goldsmith (Richmond Park) (Con): I declare an interest as a friend, admirer and former relative of the new Prime Minister of Pakistan. Does my right hon. Friend share my view that everything we have seen so far from the new Prime Minister demonstrates an absolute commitment to tackling extremism and terrorism? Does he agree with the new Prime Minister's words, shortly after he was elected, that the surest route to peace between India and Pakistan in the long term is to increase and expand the trade movements between the two countries?

Mark Field: I could not agree more. I had a chance to meet Imran Khan, at a time when he was regarded as a potential kingmaker, when I visited KP—Khyber Pakhtunkhwa—the region where his party was the strongest, back in 2017. Obviously, he has arrived at a pivotal time in India-Pakistan relations, with an imminent Indian election, and with all the financial issues concerning Pakistan, which have inevitably taken up quite a lot of his time in his first few months as Prime Minister. Yes, his rhetoric has always been in favour of peace, but he has also shown recognition that having the broadest range of friends across the world is the surest way of seeing prosperity and normalcy in all parts of Pakistan.

Imran Hussain (Bradford East) (Lab): Perhaps there is a point on which we can have agreement across the House while, as we sit here today, the drums of war beat once more between two nuclear powers. Surely we must now, in this House, realise our ethical, moral and historical duty to help to provide peace and stability in that region. The central issue, as hon. Members have said, is Kashmir; and the voice that has gone unheard for over 70 years is that of the sons and daughters of Kashmir, who, in the face of oppression, violence and persecution, continue to look towards this House for justice. So, Minister, now is the time to move away from gesture politics and towards finding a concrete resolution, fulfilling our international obligations to actively support the birthright of the sons and daughters of Kashmir, which is self-determination.

Mr Speaker: Order. Could I just very gently say, and I say it in a convivial spirit to the hon. Gentleman, that the erudition of his inquiry was equalled only by its length, and that has been emblematic of the exchanges on this urgent question—nodding assent to which is provided by the right hon. Member for New Forest West (Sir Desmond Swayne). It would be a pity if we took an hour on an urgent question with only about 30 quizzers, because that really should not happen.

Mark Field: I think he is suggesting that I am at least 50% to blame for that as well.

I respect deeply the passion of the hon. Member for Bradford East (Imran Hussain). I hope he does not feel that gesture politics is involved here. We shall do our level best to bring parties together. While I have always said that there is a set policy that we will not have an

official mediation, please be assured that we are doing our level best to bring people together. The one message I would give to the hon. Gentleman is that we need to try to de-escalate and calm some of the passions that we shall see within our own country in the weeks and months ahead. It is in the interests not just of all Kashmiris, but of stability within the UK as well.

Mr Marcus Jones (Nuneaton) (Con): Over decades, people have been subjected to violence, oppression and human rights abuses in Kashmir. The events of recent weeks will only compound the challenges and divide people more, rather than bringing a solution in Kashmir. Will my right hon. Friend and the Government do all that they can to use UK influence to bring dialogue between India and Pakistan, to try to prevent the escalation of these issues and the terrorism that is going on, so that we can start again to focus more on dealing with the issue of how Kashmir determines itself?

Mark Field: I thank my hon. Friend for his comments. He is aware that we are trying to do our level best, precisely along the lines that he has suggested. May I just say this to the House? Interestingly, when I speak to many of my Indian, and indeed Pakistani, constituents, they often marvel at the fact that, on my very first visit to India back in 2003, I had the chance to go to both Srinagar and Jammu. The tragedy, in many ways, is that it is a beautiful part of the world and would offer tremendous opportunities not just for tourism; it would be an amazing place for many, many people with Kashmir in their hearts to visit. That is the great prize—to ensure that things are normalised. We know that a painstaking diplomatic approach will be required to bring about that normalisation, so that the beauty of that part of the world may become obvious to many, many people.

Julie Cooper (Burnley) (Lab): The Minister's focus on the human rights of the people of Kashmir is genuinely welcome, but the fact remains that the humanitarian crisis has been raging in Kashmir for decades, largely ignored by this country and the rest of the world. Hon. Members throughout the House, from all parties, have repeatedly asked for us to take a leading role and to bring diplomatic peace talks to the forefront. Does he agree that it is a terrible shame that it takes an escalation of violence between two nuclear powers to achieve what, hopefully, will be a wake-up call for the British Government?

Mark Field: I am sorry that the hon. Lady thinks this is a wake-up call. This is something that is close to all our hearts, not least because there are significant numbers of diaspora and their many Members of Parliament raise these issues, whether in parliamentary questions or in urgent questions such as today's, and indeed with the all-party parliamentary group, which I know she attended only a few weeks ago.

Let us be candid. What is particularly serious here, as one or two hon. Members have said, is that we are now dealing with two nuclear powers. The issues of Kashmir were not in a nuclear-to-nuclear state until Pakistan acquired nuclear capability, 25 to 30 years ago. That is why the matter is of particular seriousness. That is not to say that a huge amount of work has not been going

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on behind the scenes for many years. Obviously, it becomes a lot more high-profile with all that is happening now.

Robert Courts (Witney) (Con): I know that the Minister will not want to comment on the claim and counterclaim around aircraft being shot down and around the specifics of pilots having been captured, but would he perhaps agree that the chances of a calm dialogue between the parties will be much increased if treatment of each other's personnel is seen to be humane?

Mark Field: I entirely agree. I cannot speculate other than on reports that have come through and I will not go into any great detail on those, but I very much hope that, if there are military captured on either or both sides, they will be dealt with and treated within the Geneva convention and in a humane way.

Jim McMahon (Oldham West and Royton) (Lab/Co-op): I do not think any fair-minded person would expect the Government to take the side of Pakistan or India, but we are absolutely expecting the Government to step up and give a voice to the people in Kashmir. In the pursuit of power by aggression, it is always everyday people who pay the ultimate price, and too many people have had their lives on hold for generations. This matters to people in Oldham West and Royton, with a large heritage in that country; when this happens, it happens to their parents, their sons, their daughters, their brothers and sisters. They are just reaching out to the UK Government to say, "Give us a hand. Bring people together, convene and use that role in a positive way."

Mark Field: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his comments. We will do all that we can, along the lines that I have suggested. This is a very fluid situation, and obviously the most important thing is to de-escalate the tensions because they are at a very worrying level. He is right to point out, however, that there are underlying issues that also need to be dealt with.

Tracy Brabin (Batley and Spen) (Lab/Co-op): We have all been appalled by this terrorist attack. As has been said, communities like ours across the country are deeply concerned. Many of my constituents have families and friends in the region, and a member of my staff is currently trying to get there to attend a family wedding. Does the Minister agree that any reprisals against entirely innocent Kashmiri civilians elsewhere in India must stop, and will he make it clear to his Indian counterparts that, while we understand their anger, they must ensure that innocent people are not harmed when responding to this horrific attack?

Mark Field: I shall be happy to express those direct concerns when I speak to the Indian high commissioner later today.

Kate Green (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab): May I echo the comments of colleagues? Because of our history in the region, and because of our influence and close relationships with both India and Pakistan, Kashmiri families in my constituency look to the United Kingdom to take a leading role both in the immediate and dangerous conflict that we see before us now, and in bringing long-term peace, justice and freedom to Kashmir.

Mark Field: I am sorry, but as the hon. Lady will appreciate, we are just covering the same old ground. I well understand that each and every Member here wants to have his or her say for a range of reasons—often because of the diaspora, but often as well because they feel passionate about the relations between India and Pakistan. I suspect that there is little new that I can add, but I thank her for her words.

Afzal Khan (Manchester, Gorton) (Lab): We all condemn all forms of terrorism, and I think we all understand that war is not an option. Many of us have raised this matter multiple times in the House, but have received the same response from the Government time and again. This is an issue between India and Pakistan, but recent events reveal that it is not just an issue between those countries: it desperately requires international attention. The British Government need to facilitate talks and to play a greater role in de-escalating the dangerous level of tension between the two countries. I should like them to do more at a human level to ensure that there is an international investigation of what has happened, and to move towards the core issue, which is the issue of Kashmir.

Mark Field: The hon. Gentleman always adopts a measured tone, which I think is important for all our constituents. He should be assured that a great deal of work has already been done by the United Nations in the last fortnight since the latest phase of escalation. Obviously, the events of the last couple of days have been a great worry and there is concern about what may come to pass, but a huge amount of work is going on behind the scenes diplomatically. The UK has an important, although by no means exclusive, part to play at the United Nations, and we shall continue to bring that to bear.

Alison Thewliss (Glasgow Central) (SNP): My constituent Madni Ahmed Tahir is one of my many constituents with Kashmiri roots, and has family in Kashmir. Can the Minister explain in a bit more detail what travel advice will be offered to my constituents, and what consideration his colleagues in the Home Office will give to visa applications that are currently in progress?

Mark Field: As the hon. Lady will recognise, those applications are a matter directly for the Home Office, but there will clearly be liaison between the two Departments. We are closely monitoring the situation relating to travel advice, on an hour-by-hour basis, as we become aware of confirmation of what is happening on the ground. We will keep that advice under constant review, and will update it on the website regularly.

Paula Sherriff (Dewsbury) (Lab): Let me say, at the risk of repeating what has been said by other Members, that we constantly hear of human rights violations in occupied Kashmir, and we cannot be bystanders. What efforts is the Minister making to ensure that a thorough, transparent inquiry into these crimes is commissioned?

Mark Field: The hon. Lady will be aware that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights produced a report recently. She will forgive me if I do not try to say any more now on the Floor of the House. I will try to write to her, if I may,

providing a list of the actions that have been taken over the past 12 months and an account of what we propose to do in the months to come.

Mohammad Yasin (Bedford) (Lab): I must say that I am very disappointed with the Minister's response so far. His Government are failing to take the necessary responsibility. This issue is far more serious than he and the Government are suggesting. Tensions are high, and two nuclear countries are on the verge of another conflict. Kashmiris have been dying since 1947. Will the Government take some real action and show some responsibility? Will they put both India and Pakistan at the table, so that they can resolve their issues through dialogue?

Mark Field: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my earlier answers on this matter. Successive Governments have clearly tried to work on it on a bilateral basis, which I think has been more helpful. A huge amount of work goes on. Our high commissions in both New Delhi and Islamabad, and other staff, work closely together in trying to do what can be done on the ground in Kashmir but, as I said at the outset, it is not our role to bring both parties to the table in the way that the hon. Gentleman suggests, and I think that trying to do so would be entirely counterproductive.

Mr Speaker: Eloquence and brevity combined? Mike Gapes.

Mike Gapes (Ilford South) (Ind): While we should not exaggerate the influence that the British Government could have at this time, is it not nevertheless important for us, as a nuclear-weapon state, to do what Jack Straw did in 1999 during the Kargil crisis, when the role of the British Foreign Office was central to ensuring that it did not escalate into an all-out nuclear war?

Mark Field: The hon. Gentleman is right: the issue of being a nuclear state makes the situation particularly serious at the moment, and it is one of the reasons why I think the international community will want to have a part to play. He clearly has some knowledge of and interest in the foreign affairs of 20 years ago, and if he feels that there are important lessons to be learnt from what happened at that time that we could bring to bear on this crisis, I should be happy to speak to him about them.

Darren Jones (Bristol North West) (Lab): I declare my interest as the recently appointed co-chair of Labour Friends of India.

The Minister has spoken today about the direct involvement of the Government with embassies and through the United Nations Security Council, but what work should the Commonwealth be doing to bring about stability in the region?

Mark Field: I think that one of the most important things the Commonwealth can do—I am sure its Secretary General will have it very much in her mind—is bring people together and keep lines of communication open. The hon. Gentleman will be well aware that leading figures in the Commonwealth, in both India and Pakistan,

have a political or an NGO-related background. We want to have as much dialogue as is possible in these very trying circumstances.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I thank the Minister for his deep interest in this matter. As chair of the all-party group for the Pakistani minorities, I visited Pakistan in September last year as part of a cross-party delegation to inquire into human rights and the persecution of Christians and religious minorities. We met the regional president of the Pakistan-Kashmir province, who made us aware of attacks on and killings of Pakistan Kashmiris, including the sexual abuse and rape of women. The president told us that the United Nations had a key role to play. What discussions has the Minister had with the UN to bring about a peace process?

Mark Field: Discussions about the current issue have taken place at the UN with our head of mission. If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, rather than giving a glib and quick answer here, I will write to him in detail about precisely what has happened in recent months.

Alex Norris (Nottingham North) (Lab/Co-op): Members of the Kashmir diaspora make an extraordinary contribution across our communities, nowhere more so than in Nottingham. They will understand, as I do, the Minister's reluctance to pick a side, as he puts it, but will he be absolutely clear with the House and make a solemn commitment that when it comes to working through international organisations—especially the UN—when it comes to human rights and when it comes to humanitarian aid, the British Government will not be found wanting?

Mark Field: I hope the hon. Gentleman will feel reassured that that is very much the British Government's approach. It is important that we work together on this, not just in the context of the urgent question but in the context of APPGs. I hope that we can work across Parliament, because we will have an even stronger voice if we speak as one. There will of course be disagreements at the margins, but if we can speak as one for Kashmir and Kashmiri people, our voice will be all the more effective in dealing with our Indian and Pakistani counterparts.

Gareth Snell (Stoke-on-Trent Central) (Lab/Co-op): I heard what the Minister said about not wishing to be seen to take a side and that he does not believe it is the UK's role to bring together the Indian and Pakistan sides to form a compromise, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham West and Royton (Jim McMahon) pointed out, what the Kashmiri community both here and in Kashmir are looking for is a friend and ally who will speak up for them in the international forums, so may I ask the Minister what specific actions he will take inside the UN to make sure it fulfils its responsibility to speak up for that minority community?

Mark Field: I would not wish the hon. Gentleman to misunderstand the situation: we are a friend for all Kashmiris, and we are a friend of that region and indeed a strong friend for India and Pakistan internationally on this and related issues. It is a fluid situation and therefore I cannot go into specifics regarding the UN other than to say that feverish conversations are taking

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place there, albeit while trying to instil a sense of calm. I am sure this matter will be formally dealt with at the UN General Assembly, as well as at the Security Council in the days to come.

Chris Stephens (Glasgow South West) (SNP): The prime minister of Kashmir was in Glasgow last weekend discussing with a cross-party group of political representatives there the situation in Kashmir. The prime minister of Kashmir is in London today—he cannot return home because of closed airspace. Will the Minister meet him today—he will be in Parliament from 4 o'clock onwards, I understand—to hear directly from the direct representative of the Kashmiri people?

Mark Field: The hon. Gentleman refers to the prime minister of Kashmir. The Foreign Office deals only with those whom we formally recognise. I am not sure of all the facts of this situation, but if he is not an individual we formally recognise, this is not a matter that I can pursue. No doubt, the hon. Gentleman will fill me in on the details in due course. I already have phone calls lined up with the high commissioners for Pakistan and for India during the course of this afternoon and will have other conversations as well.

Mr Paul Sweeney (Glasgow North East) (Lab/Co-op): There have been worrying reports emerging in the last few minutes that the Indian and Pakistani armies are now engaged in heavy artillery exchanges at several locations on the line of control in western Kashmir, so the situation appears to be escalating rapidly. The Minister has undertaken to communicate with both sides in the conflict and understand the situation; will he commit to the FCO updating this House within the next 24 hours on the latest position and the actions the FCO will be taking to de-escalate it, in particular addressing the UN Security Council on this issue?

Mark Field: We have the mechanism of urgent questions to deal with such matters, and if there is an update we will want to make the House aware of it at the earliest

possible opportunity. I hope to be in the region in the next 24 hours, so that might not be done in quite the timeframe the hon. Gentleman has in mind, but we will do our best once facts are established to inform the House of what is going on.

Martin Docherty-Hughes (West Dunbartonshire) (SNP): Because of the conflict global markets are now trading lower, with Asian investors seeking sanctuary in either the yen or the Swiss franc. Can the Minister give UK investors assurances about their investments within the region? I do not have a huge Indian or Pakistani diaspora, but one UK-born citizen from Dumbarton, Jagtar Singh Johal, is in an Indian jail, held arbitrarily without trial for over 500 days by the Indian republic. Through the fog of impending war, can the Minister, to whom I am grateful for going to India, remind the Indian state of its duty to uphold the rule of international law in border affairs and in human rights for UK nationals in its jails?

Mark Field: The Johal case has been raised on the Floor of the House, and as the hon. Gentleman is well aware, we have met on two or three occasions in the Foreign Office on this matter. I pledge to bring it up in my discussions in New Delhi that I hope to undertake on Friday.

It would be unwise to say anything about the international markets. Suffice it to say that I very much hope that businesses, particularly those where the diaspora is engaged in Kashmir and the region, will feel confident in the longer term that they are doing the right thing by engaging as fully as they are.

This urgent question has taken a long time—well over an hour—and I am struck by how passionate many Members are about this issue, and not just those with significant diaspora communities. This is obviously a fast-moving, fluid situation and I am sure we will come back to the House at some point to discuss it further. The one big message for all of us is to do all we can in our communities to de-escalate and calm the understandable passions that have been raised.

Planning (Affordable Housing and Land Compensation)

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

1.55 pm

Helen Hayes (Dulwich and West Norwood) (Lab): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to define affordable housing in relation to household incomes; to amend the law relating to land valuation and compensation; and for connected purposes.

Our post-war planning system is a framework for managing change in our towns and cities and ensuring that new development meets the needs of local communities, for brokering and mitigating the gap between individual private interests and collective community needs, and for redistributing the scarce resource of land. Local plans safeguard land for particular purposes, including housing, employment, education, and community uses. Our heritage protection regime and national parks protect the buildings and landscapes that communities value. Planning policies seek to ensure that affordable housing is delivered and that across many dimensions of design, from building height to energy performance standards, new buildings take due account of their surrounding community and wider environment. Despite that, our planning system, deregulated and modified in recent years, too often fails to deliver against either the promises it makes or the real and pressing needs of local communities.

In a wider political environment characterised by a lack of trust in politics, our planning system is part of the problem. Every time a new housing scheme is delivered in which even the “affordable” homes are far out of reach of local people in housing need, every time a new building starts to look shabby after just a short time and every time planning permission is granted but nothing happens on the site for years, trust is eroded a little more. It is time to restore a vision of planning as the key to meeting the needs of local communities while also safeguarding their interests for future generations, and it is time for planning to step up and play its full part in helping to restore trust in democratic processes.

We need an agenda for reform, and I want to set out today two reforms—of the definition of affordable housing and of the rules around land values and viability—that could make an immediate difference. My Bill, which is supported by Shelter and the Town and Country Planning Association, seeks to reform our planning system to deliver the fair outcomes communities desperately need and to accelerate the delivery of genuinely affordable social housing.

The housing crisis is the single biggest practical issue facing communities across the whole country. The critical challenge for our planning system is to deliver the genuinely affordable social homes that are urgently needed in so many places, but there are some major problems that limit the effectiveness of our planning system and work in favour of landowners against the interests of communities.

Too many of the current mechanisms designed to deliver fair outcomes from the planning and development process essentially amount to shutting the door after the horse has bolted. Local planning authorities are

required to negotiate affordable housing contributions with a definition of “affordable” that has no relationship to income, and the price of land, which is a key determinant of how many affordable homes are considered “viable”, can be hugely inflated by landowner expectations of a right to “hope value”—future speculative value based on planning permissions which the landowner does not own and has not realised, and which are not confirmed in law.

Our planning system is in need of major reform. The Government’s definition of affordable housing includes homes to buy at up to £450,000 and homes to rent at up to 80% of market rent. I and my party support the delivery of affordable entry-level homes to buy, and although I believe that there are ways to deliver these homes that are more effective and give better value for money than the Help to Buy scheme, my Bill does not cover homes for sale; it addresses the definition of affordable homes to rent.

Market rents vary across the country. Westminster council warned in 2013 that 80% of market rent would require a household income of more than £100,000 to sustain a tenancy on a three-bedroom home, while a two-bedroom home in Southwark in the same year would require £44,000—more than double the average household income in the borough.

The role of affordable housing has always been to meet the needs of those who cannot afford to rent or buy housing in the private market, yet the current definition has completely broken the ability of the planning system to deliver sufficiently for those in the greatest housing need. The figures bear this out. Over the past 10 years, the number of social homes built each year has fallen from around 30,000 to 6,400. At the same time, the number of so-called affordable homes at up to 80% of market rent has increased to 47,000. With 1.25 million families on the waiting list for social housing, there is no justification for a policy that fails to deliver homes that are affordable to households with low incomes. My Bill re-establishes the link between the definition of affordable and income, replacing the current definition of up to 80% of market price with a definition of

“no more than 35% of net household income for lowest quartile income groups in each local authority area”.

Just as important as the definition of affordable homes is the cost of the land on which they are built. Despite reforms introduced last year, which were welcomed, our planning system still affords landowners the right to the future value of development rights or planning permission, which are granted by and in the gift of the planning authority. This so-called hope value dramatically inflates the cost of land, and inflated land prices make it much more difficult for councils to buy land in order to deliver social housing.

In a recent example in south London, a site with an existing use value of £5 million was put on the market at £25 million on the assumption that it could be developed for housing. It was later withdrawn from the market on the expectation that the value would rise even further, setting back the delivery of any housing at all on that site by years and making it almost impossible to deliver affordable housing, even by the current broken definition. This inflation of value either places sites far beyond the reach of councils and housing associations or requires a significant quantum of private homes to be built to

[Helen Hayes]

cover the costs—homes that either push up density to levels that are unacceptable to the surrounding community or are built at the expense of genuinely affordable homes.

The current viability rules were developed to encourage and stimulate building in a recession, but they have evolved to become something quite different: a quasi-scientific basis for negotiation between developers and councils, with the overt objective on the part of developers of reducing their obligation to build affordable housing. The current system enables this to happen, as viability arguments can justify an appeal against refusal, and cash-strapped councils are reluctant to risk having to pay the applicant's appeal costs if they lose. These negotiations are often not between equals, as councils struggle to resource the expertise they need to interrogate developers' figures, and they also slow down planning, often taking years to resolve, creating great uncertainty and frustration.

It is vital that our planning system provides certainty and transparency, and puts an end to speculation on land values that prevents land from being used to deliver new homes. While landowners should receive fair compensation, coded in law, they should not be entitled to speculative value that does not arise from any action or effort on their part. My Bill creates a new requirement in planning law for local planning authorities to have a duty to include a policy in their local plans to capture betterment values where they arise, formally establishing a legal duty in the planning system to capture land value to be used for the benefit of communities and creating a strong justification for councils to argue for the resources they need to engage in viability discussions on equal terms with applicants.

Finally, my Bill seeks to specify in law the key factors used for viability testing in relation to planning decisions, including placing explicit limitations on the expectations of developer profit and land values for compulsory purchase, providing greater certainty and transparency for both landowners and communities. Specifically, my Bill would: amend section 19 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, as amended, and add to it a statutory definition of an affordable home for the purpose of all planning decisions; make further changes to sections 14 to 16 of the Land Compensation Act 1961, as amended; and introduce a new statutory definition of the key factors used for viability testing in relation to planning decisions.

In the context of a national housing crisis, our planning system must be able to deliver the genuinely affordable homes that communities need. More than this, communities must be able to trust that it will do so, and that the promises made in local plans and in planning applications will not be watered down later on the ground of viability. My Bill will reform our planning system to place community need at its heart and increase the speed and quantum of affordable housing delivery to address the housing crisis. I am grateful to Members from across the House who have indicated their support for the Bill, and I commend it to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Ordered.

That Helen Hayes, Mr Clive Betts, Rosie Cooper, Emma Dent Coad, Ms Harriet Harman, Mr George Howarth, Norman Lamb, Caroline Lucas, Jess Phillips, Andy Slaughter, Alex Sobel and Sir Gary Streeter present the Bill.

Helen Hayes accordingly presented the Bill.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 22 March, and to be printed (Bill 344).

Points of Order

2.5 pm

Peter Dowd (Bootle) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. In relation to the next item, the Supply and Appropriation (Anticipation and Adjustments) (No. 2) Bill, we have had no amendments to the law in relation to the Finance Bill, Opposition days are as rare as rocking horse dung, we have a Prime Minister who has got dipping and diving off to an art form, and now we are nodding through £242 billion-worth of current expenditure and £39 billion-worth of capital. Can you advise how the House could better hold this Government to account for the way in which they are spending the hard-earned cash of taxpayers?

Mr Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his point of order, the answer to which, in essence, is twofold. First, the procedure for the treatment of supply and appropriations Bills is contained in Standing Order No. 56 on page 52 of the Standing Orders—a fact of which I suspect the hon. Gentleman, who is well read, is keenly aware—so procedural propriety has been observed, whatever his disquiet or consternation might be. Secondly, the estimates day debates on important matters took place yesterday, when those matters were addressed by the House. The hon. Gentleman has made his point in his own way with some alacrity, and it is on the record for colleagues to study.

Sir Edward Leigh (Gainsborough) (Con): Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker—

Mr Speaker: Well, I am not sure that there is a further point to be made to that, but there is a cheeky grin etched upon the contours of the right hon. Gentleman's face, which suggests to me that he is about to have some parliamentary fun. Far be it from me to seek to deny the right hon. Gentleman, who is a distinguished Lincolnshire knight.

Sir Edward Leigh: Further to that point order, I just wanted to remind the House that the Procedure Committee has ensured in its report that estimates days now actually deal with estimates and talk about money, whereas before, when I rose to talk about estimates, I was ruled out of order. We are now holding an inquiry into setting up a Budget Committee, so the House is trying to make progress on getting better oversight of public expenditure. This is just to inform you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: That is a noted reform that has occurred, in response to representations from Members on both sides of the House. In making that point—that public

service information notice, if you will—the right hon. Gentleman gives me the opportunity to reference the Procedure Committee. He cited it, but he was far too modest to mention the fact that he is a distinguished ornament of it and a contributor on a continuing basis to its work.

SUPPLY AND APPROPRIATION (ANTICIPATION AND ADJUSTMENTS) (NO. 2) BILL

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 56), That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Question agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Question put forthwith, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time and passed.

Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. The Supply and Appropriation (Anticipation and Adjustments) (No. 2) Bill and the reform of the estimates process came in response to the introduction of the ridiculous English votes for English laws procedures, but they represent the supply element of the confidence and supply arrangement. I may not be looking properly, but I do not see any Members from the Government's confidence and supply partners in the Chamber, so is the vote that we have just had actually valid?

Mr Speaker: There is no requirement for any particular hon. Member to be present at any given time. The vote remains valid. Whether the hon. Gentleman, who rejoices in the celebrity of his status as his party's Chief Whip, is satisfied with the process is a matter for him, but it is a quite different matter from the question of orderly conduct and procedure, which have been observed.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE (TODAY)

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Speaker shall put the questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the motion in the name of the Prime Minister relating to the UK's withdrawal from the EU not later than 7.00pm; such questions shall include the questions on any amendments selected by the Speaker which may then be moved; the questions may be put after the moment of interruption; and Standing Order No. 41A (Deferred divisions) shall not apply.—
(Wendy Morton.)

UK's Withdrawal from the EU

Mr Speaker: I have provisionally selected the following amendments in the following order: (a) in the name of Leader of the Opposition, the right hon. Member for Islington North (Jeremy Corbyn); (k) in the name of the right hon. Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Ian Blackford); (c) in the name of the right hon. Member for Meriden (Dame Caroline Spelman); (b) in the name of the hon. Member for South Leicestershire (Alberto Costa); and (f) in the name of the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper).

I remind the House that reference may be made in debate to any amendments on the Order Paper, including those which I have not selected. Under the terms of the business motion just agreed to, the debate may continue until 7 pm, at which time the question shall be put on any amendments that may then be moved. To move the motion, I call the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office.

2.12 pm

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office (Mr David Lidington): I beg to move,

That this House notes the Prime Minister's statement on Leaving the European Union of 26 February 2019; and further notes that discussions between the UK and the EU are ongoing.

It is a pleasure, as always, to return to the Dispatch Box to debate European policy matters and to see the familiar cast of colleagues on both sides of the House. I start by making it clear that the Government's political objectives remain to leave the European Union in accordance with the referendum decision of 2016, to do so in an orderly fashion that protects jobs, living standards and investment in this country, and to do so by means of a formal withdrawal agreement under article 50 that includes clear protections for European Union citizens living in the United Kingdom and United Kingdom citizens in the 27 other EU countries, that provides for a financial settlement, and that ensures that there is no hard border on the island of Ireland. We look forward to negotiating a deep and special partnership on trade, security and political co-operation with the European Union—a community of democracies that will remain not only our closest geographical neighbours, but key partners friends and allies in the world.

Sir William Cash (Stone) (Con): I thank my right hon. Friend, with whom I have been debating such matters for the best part of 30 years, for giving way. As for this community of democracies, how can he justify article 4 of the withdrawal agreement, which would subjugate the United Kingdom and require us to pass primary legislation to achieve that objective when the decisions that would be imposed on the constituents of every single Member in this House, by virtue of what goes on in the Council of Ministers, will be decided by 27 other member states? We will not even be at the table and will not have even so much as a transcript. Is that not a complete travesty of democracy?

Mr Lidington: No. As my hon. Friend says, he and I have been debating European matters for about 30 years—time flies when one is enjoying oneself—but I think

his criticisms would have force if they were describing a situation that was intended to be permanent. All that is covered in article 4 of the withdrawal agreement are the arrangements that are necessary to govern the winding down of this country's membership of the European Union and the residual obligations that derive from that over a period of months.

Charlie Elphicke (Dover) (Con): In recent days, a number of statements have been made by several different Ministers that have left me somewhat puzzled about, first, Her Majesty's Government's policy and, secondly, the policy on collective responsibility. Is my right hon. Friend able to provide some clarification to assist the House?

Mr Lidington: The Government's policy is what the Prime Minister set out in her statement yesterday and is summarised in the words that I have just spoken. The approach to collective responsibility is set out clearly in the ministerial code.

Sir Edward Leigh (Gainsborough) (Con): On a more positive note, in order to get the withdrawal agreement through, which we should all want, does my right hon. Friend agree that it is not necessary to unpick it? Under international law, we could have a conditional interpretative declaration stating that the backstop is not permanent. If we get that and if the Attorney General changes his mind, will my right hon. Friend join me in urging all my Brexiteer colleagues to vote for this agreement, because the choice is no longer perhaps between an imperfect deal and no deal, but between an imperfect deal and no Brexit?

Mr Lidington: I agree with my hon. Friend. We all wish my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney General well in his continuing talks with representatives of the European Commission.

Frank Field (Birkenhead) (Ind): I am immensely grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for giving way. Is he aware that the atmosphere in this debate is changing from a massive concern about crashing out and the damage that might do, to, among those of us who want to leave, a worry that we will get no Brexit at all? Therefore, may I through him tell the European Research Group that the choice that we will face when the Prime Minister's deal comes back is whether we have the certainty of some deal or, as the right hon. Member for Gainsborough (Sir Edward Leigh) said, no deal at all?

Mr Lidington: The right hon. Gentleman accurately encapsulates the decision facing every hon. Member, from whichever political party or grouping they come.

Tom Brake (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD): I thank the right hon. Gentleman for giving way, because this may help us later in the debate. Can he provide some clarity about whether the Government will in fact support amendment (b), tabled by the hon. Member for South Leicestershire (Alberto Costa)? As I understand it, the hon. Gentleman has been sacked for doing so, but the Home Secretary is supportive of the amendment. I am confused, so will the right hon. Gentleman set out where the Government stand on the issue?

Mr Lidington: This may not be the first or last time that the right hon. Gentleman has been confused, but he will have to contain his excitement until I deal with the amendments that have been tabled.

Hilary Benn (Leeds Central) (Lab): Will the right hon. Gentleman clarify something following the Prime Minister's statement yesterday? If the Prime Minister's deal is defeated when it returns to the House and if leaving with no deal is also defeated, will the time period in the motion proposing an extension of article 50 that will be brought on 14 March be amendable by the House?

Mr Lidington: Whether a motion is capable of amendment and which amendments are in order is, of course, always a matter for the Chair, rather than for Ministers, but I would point out that, in addition to the opportunities for amendment that would arise on such a motion in the normal course of events—I cannot predict at this moment how the Chair will rule—the obligations on the Government in the circumstances that the right hon. Gentleman describes in respect of section 13 of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 will also remain.

Lady Hermon (North Down) (Ind): The Minister will be well aware that we are approaching the 21st anniversary of the signing of the Belfast/Good Friday agreement on 10 April, just days after we are due to brexit. I had assumed, and I want him to confirm this, that in the light of the Government's repeated emphasis on their commitment to the Belfast/Good Friday agreement throughout the Brexit negotiations, and rightly so, the Government have been busy organising and planning a significant event to mark their commitment to the Belfast agreement. Will he shed some light on that anniversary event?

Mr Lidington: The detail of any event to mark this anniversary would be a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to announce. What I can say to the hon. Member for North Down (Lady Hermon) is that the Government, and I personally, regard the achievement of the Belfast agreement and the development of the peace-making and peace-building process in Northern Ireland as one of the most signal political achievements of successive Governments of different political parties in this country during my career in this House.

I remember being called to a meeting in John Major's office with other Government Back Benchers when he first reported on the message he had received from back channels to Sinn Féin-IRA about the prospect of a process opening up, and I know how much he, Tony Blair, Gordon Brown, David Cameron and my right hon. Friend the present Prime Minister have committed themselves to that process. I believe that every hon. Member of this House will share that commitment.

Tommy Sheppard (Edinburgh East) (SNP): Does the Minister agree that the phrase "Government policy" implies not just the offering of a choice to the House but an expression by the Government of a preference as to the outcome of that choice? If he does agree, will he

inform today's debate by saying what the Government's policy will be on either voting for a no-deal Brexit or extending article 50?

Mr Lidington: The hon. Gentleman is asking me to speculate about hypothetical events. My energies and the Government's energies are focused on achieving a negotiated agreement with the European Union behind which a majority of hon. and right hon. Members would be prepared to rally.

Stephen Doughty (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op): In relation to the Minister's answer to the Chair of the Select Committee on Exiting the European Union, my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn), the Prime Minister was very clear yesterday that, if the House voted for an extension, she would bring forward the necessary legislation to change the exit date commensurate with that extension. Can the Minister provide some more clarity? Is he talking about, for example, bringing in a statutory instrument immediately after such a vote to make it happen? Or is he talking about some other way of changing the date? It would be helpful to have some clarity on that point.

Mr Lidington: I will come to that point when I address the amendment in the name of my right hon. Friend the Member for Meriden (Dame Caroline Spelman).

Dr Andrew Murrison (South West Wiltshire) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree, further to the point made by the hon. Member for North Down (Lady Hermon), that a good way to commemorate the signing of the Good Friday agreement would be to encourage the European Union to define what it means by "temporary," as listed in article 1(4) of the Northern Ireland protocol? Without some certainty on that, it is difficult to see how the withdrawal agreement is compatible with the Good Friday agreement.

Mr Lidington: I agree that the question about the definition of "temporary" is important, particularly in the light of the position, which the European Union has consistently taken in its negotiations with us over the past two years, that a withdrawal agreement negotiated under the terms of article 50 cannot be a secure legal basis for the creation of a permanent partnership with a third country.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr Lidington: If the House will forgive me, I have given way quite a lot and I want to move on to the substance of my speech.

At the end of this afternoon's debate, this House will have a choice on the Government's motion and the various amendments that Mr Speaker has selected, but by 12 March, at the latest, the House will have a more important choice when we bring back a second meaningful vote. There has been a lot of speculation, and we have already heard it in the debate this afternoon, about what should happen if the House declines to vote for a deal. Let me start by saying why I am confident that the Prime Minister will be able to put before the House a deal that it can support, and why this House should support such a deal.

[Mr Lidington]

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister spoke yesterday of the extensive work that has been taking place to make good on this House's call for legal changes to guarantee that the Northern Ireland backstop cannot endure indefinitely. The House endorsed an amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale West (Sir Graham Brady) on 29 January. Since then, the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, the Attorney General and I have been engaging in focused discussions with the EU, with the different institutions of the EU and with member state Governments to find a way forward that would work for both sides. We are making good progress in that work, with constructive discussions taking place this week.

As hon. Members will also have heard, there have been discussions on the political declaration, including additions or changes to increase the focus and ambition of both sides to deliver the future partnership, which we both seek, as soon as possible. The ideas we are putting forward in those discussions are not simply the Government's; they reflect the intensive dialogue we have had with Members on both sides of the House. I have met the right hon. and learned Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Keir Starmer) once and am keen to do so again, as he knows, and I have met colleagues from other political parties and colleagues representing all shades of opinion on this country's relationship with the European Union.

Mr Owen Paterson (North Shropshire) (Con): My right hon. Friend is being very generous in giving way. Before he moves on to the question of alternative arrangements, he and the Brexit Secretary are to be strongly congratulated on getting the European Union to accept the need to set up a taskforce of experienced officials on the European side and the UK side to work up the arrangements proposed by our working group. Will he guarantee that, once those proposals are accepted, there will be a commitment in the treaty that is legally binding and will commit the Government and the European Union to a definite and definitive date by which those arrangements will be implemented?

Mr Lidington: My right hon. Friend has been championing this approach for a long time. I am grateful to him and to other Conservative colleagues for their detailed discussions with my right hon. Friend the Brexit Secretary and others about the alternative arrangements to ensure the absence of a hard border in Northern Ireland. Let us not forget that the term "alternative arrangements" features in both the withdrawal agreement and the political declaration, so it is already a known concept in the documents that have previously been agreed.

This has led to the consideration of a joint work stream with the European Union that will take place during the next phase of our negotiations. Our objective is to ensure that we have a set of alternative arrangements that can be used even in the absence of a full future relationship deal at the end of the implementation period. The EU has agreed to prioritise what will be an important work stream in the next phase, but we will also be setting up domestic structures to take advice from external experts, from businesses that trade with

the European Union and beyond, and from colleagues across the House. This will be supported by civil service resources and £20 million of Government funding.

Kate Hoey (Vauxhall) (Lab): The right hon. Gentleman mentions a hard border and the backstop. Does he understand why the Irish Government last week produced a Bill, which is going through Parliament, to deal with any problem arising if we happen to go out on World Trade Organisation terms, yet there was no mention of any infrastructure and any hard border? How come the Irish Government can do that, but we are saying that the hard border is such a huge issue?

Mr Lidington: It is for the Irish Government to explain their policy. We will also have to deal, as I am assuming they will, with the reality of the plans that the European Commission published in December, in which it stated plainly that from the day the UK departs the EU, in the absence of a transitional period, as provided for under the withdrawal agreement, the full *acquis* in terms of tariffs and regulatory checks and inspections would have to be applied. One striking thing about that Commission publication was that it made no specific reference to, or provided no exemption for, the situation in Ireland. That is something for the Government of Ireland to take up with the European Commission, but it is part of the legal and political reality with which Governments are also dealing.

Joanna Cherry (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): I wish to pursue the question asked by the right hon. Member for North Shropshire (Mr Paterson). Would I be correct in understanding that these discussions that are going on about the backstop relate purely to the next phase of the negotiations and what can be done in relation to the political declaration, and do not involve any question of opening up the withdrawal agreement and changing its force? That is right, is it not? If we look at the Prime Minister's statement yesterday, we see that it was all about the next phase—a "work stream in the next phase", as the right hon. Gentleman just said. Will he clarify that: it is not about opening up the withdrawal agreement?

Mr Lidington: Let me be clear that when the Attorney General has been talking to representatives of the European Commission this week and when my right hon. Friend the Brexit Secretary has been talking to them, they have been talking about changes to the overall terms of the agreement to facilitate our orderly departure from the European Union.

Anna Soubry (Broxtowe) (Ind): I thank the right hon. Gentleman for what he did yesterday with the publication of the summary of the no-deal papers—let me put it that way. My question to him is: why are the Government only now, after two and a half years, looking at these alternative arrangements, given that the Select Committee on Northern Ireland Affairs did an enormous amount of work on finding some alternatives—they travelled the world—but came to the conclusion that there are no alternatives some considerable time ago?

Mr Lidington: I thank the right hon. Lady for what she said about the papers published yesterday. I thought she was being uncharacteristically unfair to the Government

in her criticisms about not dealing with this earlier. A lot of official and ministerial time has been spent in the past 18 months examining some of these things. One problem that was identified, which still confronts us today and which we are talking to the European Commission about in the context of these discussions about alternative arrangements, is that we have to deal not only with the problem of the technology itself and making sure there is technology that is fit for purpose, but with the fact that, on the sort of model that has been discussed, we would need to see a significant number of derogations by the EU from its normal arrangements. So there are legal, and not just technical, problems that would have to be overcome.

Geraint Davies (Swansea West) (Lab/Co-op): Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that because the political declaration is legally non-binding, any concessions he gives on a level of alignment in respect of the single market, a customs union, standards and the environment are intrinsically changeable in the future, and that the only safeguard in place to prevent a slash-and-burn approach by a future Tory Government is the backstop itself?

Mr Lidington: I place rather more faith in this House than the hon. Gentleman would appear to do, because I do not think there is any appetite in Parliament for what he described as a “slash-and-burn approach” to standards.

We believe that our deal is the right one for this country and no better one is available on the table. I also believe, as do the Government, that leaving with our deal is better than leaving without a deal.

Mr John Baron (Basildon and Billericay) (Con) *rose—*

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

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

Mr Lidington: I will give way to my hon. Friend, as he tried valiantly to persuade you to accept an amendment, Mr Speaker, but was unsuccessful.

Mr Baron: Unfortunately, amendment (j) was not selected, but I am sure my right hon. Friend will agree that the Government will have no problem in accepting in principle, and I look forward to hearing about that. Many of us who have wished the Prime Minister well recognise that compromise is required on both sides in these negotiations. The transition period is not brilliant but the backstop does have to be sorted out in respect of its indefinite nature. In recognising that, is the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster at all concerned that the next steps as outlined by the Prime Minister yesterday might make a good deal less likely, because the EU may hope that Parliament does its work for it by taking no-deal off the table and extending article 50?

Mr Lidington: I genuinely do not fear that, because what I am finding increasingly in my conversations with politicians in different parts of Europe is that they want this issue sorted out. Frankly, they have politics of their own. They have important decisions to make on a range of subjects: the future of the eurozone; the negotiation

of a multi-annual financial framework without a UK contribution; the tensions that exist between some of the central European and western European powers within the EU; and the continuing problem of the very large-scale movement of people from Africa into southern Europe. It would be a mistake for hon. Members to think that the leaders of the other 27 countries spend every waking hour thinking and worrying about Brexit matters.

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

Angus Brendan MacNeil *rose—*

Dr Wollaston *rose—*

Mr Lidington: I will give way to the right hon. Gentleman, for old times' sake. Then I will come back to the hon. Gentleman and then the hon. Lady, and then I will move on.

Mr McFadden: The right hon. Gentleman is being typically generous in giving way to Members from all parts of the House. He was just referring to the position of other member states. Yesterday, the Prime Minister told us, for the first time, that she would countenance an extension to the article 50 period, but today President Macron of France is quoted as saying:

“We would support an extension...only if it was justified by a new choice of the British”.

He continued:

“we would in no way accept an extension without a clear objective.”

Is it not the case that if there is to be an extension, it must be an extension with a purpose, rather than for two or three months of the same parliamentary gridlock?

Mr Lidington: I agree with the right hon. Gentleman, and I do not think that what he has just said is any different from what the Prime Minister or other Ministers have been saying at this Dispatch Box for several months.

Angus Brendan MacNeil: Unfortunately, my amendment (g), which sought to end the whole charade by revoking article 50, has not been accepted, and we have a series of Brexit-enabling amendments before us. I want to take the Minister back to his point about the concessions he is looking for from the European Union on borders. We know that the technology has not been invented and the idea is that we have derogations—so this involves concessions. If the EU is going to give concessions on that border, it will have to give them on every border, and the EU has multiple borders. So why would it not be doing this already? The reason is that we are back to UK pie-in-the-sky, fantasy thinking here—I hope the right hon. Gentleman accepts that.

Mr Lidington: The flaw in the hon. Gentleman's logic is that it should be welcome to any Government or supranational authority such as the European Commission if technology and systems are available that streamline border processes, whether we are talking about the border between Northern Ireland and Ireland, the border across the short straits, or other external borders of the European Union with third countries.

Dr Wollaston: I am glad that the Government have published at least the summary of the no-deal consequences, and hope that they will go much further and publish the detail. Has the Minister seen the detailed paper published in *The Lancet* this week about the health consequences of no deal? If he has not seen it, will he assure me that he will look in detail at those consequences? No responsible Government could inflict that kind of pain on their people.

Mr Lidington: I have not seen that particular paper but I will make sure that I look at it and draw it to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. I hope it is of some reassurance to the hon. Lady that the Secretary of State has been making these preparations one of this very top priorities. He wrote to the leaders of the healthcare and pharmaceutical sectors in December last year, and the NHS executive is working hard to make sure that contingency arrangements are in place to ensure that supplies of medicines continue to be available.

Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): I want to be a little bit helpful. In response to the right hon. Member for Wolverhampton South East (Mr McFadden), the Minister basically said that he did not see any difference between what President Macron has said and what the Prime Minister said yesterday. There is a huge difference. The Prime Minister said yesterday that she would use an extension for more dither, delay, faffing and kicking the can down the road; President Macron is saying that there has to be a purpose to a delay. The purpose that is gaining more and more credibility across the House is precisely to put this matter to a public vote.

Mr Lidington: The hon. Lady does not characterise the Prime Minister's words yesterday accurately at all. The Prime Minister could not have been clearer in many appearances at this Dispatch Box that in every conversation we have had with the European Commission or with Heads of member state Governments, they have said that were we at any stage to seek an extension of article 50, they would want to understand for how long one was being sought and the purpose for which it was being sought, so I do not think that anything President Macron said today came as a shock to us.

Stephen Kinnock (Aberavon) (Lab) *rose*—

Mr Lidington: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I will try to give way to him later, but I hope he will let me move on for the moment.

The Government believe that leaving with our deal is better than leaving without a deal. Members who have seen the summary paper published yesterday, and other sources, too, will know that there is no avoiding the fact that an abrupt departure from the European Union without an agreement of any kind would lead to a shock to our economy, and that it would not be possible for a Government, even with the most meticulous planning of arrangements in this country, to mitigate and plan entirely for what might happen outwith our own jurisdiction. In those circumstances we would, for example, be reliant on the readiness of the authorities in France and elsewhere to introduce streamlined checks and procedures, or on the readiness of the European Commission to allow a short-term derogation from its normal rules and practices.

As a responsible Government, we have therefore been taking appropriate steps to minimise that disruption and have published extensive information to ensure the country is prepared. We have published and updated 106 technical notices and contacted the 145,000 businesses that trade with the European Union to help them to prepare for no-deal customs procedures.

It is a fact that as long as this House is unable to agree to an alternative course of action and get behind a particular agreement on exit from the European Union, businesses and individuals will have to plan for and take action as well. The Government have taken and will continue to take steps to provide businesses and citizens with advice to help them to make preparations to mitigate the potential impacts of a no-deal Brexit. The paper published yesterday showed that there are more actions that businesses should consider taking and which the Government urge them to plan for as necessary.

Gareth Johnson (Dartford) (Con) *rose*—

Antoinette Sandbach (Eddisbury) (Con) *rose*—

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

Mr Lidington: I will give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Gareth Johnson) first, then to my hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury (Antoinette Sandbach) and to the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper), and then I will move on.

Gareth Johnson: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for giving way; I think the whole House appreciates his generosity. As he knows, the meaningful vote needs to return to this House by 12 March. If that vote falls, we will presumably move on the following day to debate whether to rule out no deal. Will my right hon. Friend and other members of the Government vote in favour of that or against it?

Mr Lidington: I do not blame my hon. Friend for having a good try, but one thing I have learned in my years here, and which has perhaps been reinforced by my observation of events in recent weeks, is that although I may at some stage wish to give advice to my right hon. Friends the Chief Whip and the Prime Minister about whipping for any actual or hypothetical motion, I will do it not from the Dispatch Box but in private instead.

Antoinette Sandbach: I am sure my right hon. Friend will be aware that a lot of small businesses have not put in place no-deal preparations. Many of them may have been misled or given the impression by comments made in this House that tariff-free trade may be available for 10 years under article 24 of the general agreement on tariffs and trade. The document published by the Government makes it crystal clear that those GATT 24 provisions are not available. I encourage my right hon. Friend to make that clear so that small businesses in my constituency and throughout the country do not rely on what they may think has been publicised as an option when it is not one.

Mr Lidington: My hon. Friend makes a good point. Our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Trade has publicly rebutted the arguments

about article 24 of the general agreement on tariffs and trade, and the reference in the paper published yesterday was a reference to his remarks. The Government are stepping up their communications to business about that point. We accept that in this country, and also among our major trading partners, such as France and Germany, it tends to be small and medium-sized enterprises that for all the obvious reasons do not have the capacity to spend a lot of time monitoring what Governments are saying, and therefore may be further behind in their planning than the larger companies. We will do our utmost to try to communicate better with them.

If I may move on—

Yvette Cooper *rose*—

Mr Lidington: I beg the right hon. Lady's pardon. I shall give way to her, then I would like to address the various amendments that have been selected.

Yvette Cooper: The question from the hon. Member for Dartford (Gareth Johnson) is so important, because businesses are still worrying and having to move money, jobs and assets abroad because they do not know what is going on. The Minister could give those businesses huge clarity by simply saying that the Government will vote against no deal if it comes to a vote on 13 March. This is really important, because we need to know the status of the commitments that the Prime Minister made yesterday. The Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union has previously dismissed motions passed by this House. He said in reference to previous motions against no deal:

"Frankly, the legislation takes precedence over the motion"—
[*Official Report*, 14 February 2019; Vol. 654, c. 1070]

and he also said that the Government's policy continued to be to leave with no deal on 29 March if a deal was not passed by this House. Will the Minister confirm that as a result of the Prime Minister's statement yesterday, that policy has now changed, and that Government policy is at least to be bound by the will of this House if no deal is passed by 13 March, rather than simply to leave without a deal?

Mr Lidington: The short answer is yes, but I will flesh that out when I respond in more detail to the selected amendments. The words that the Prime Minister used yesterday were ones that had been discussed and agreed at the Cabinet meeting yesterday morning. On the right hon. Lady's earlier question to me, I think she is leaping too lightly over the fact that, before we get into any debate or motions about how we respond to a potential decision on exiting without a deal, it is the Government's clear intention to bring forward to this House a motion on a revised deal and to invite the House to support that. I will be supporting the Government when that vote is brought forward, just as I supported the Government on the previous meaningful vote. That decision will remain the earliest possible opportunity for this House to end the uncertainty that businesses and individuals are now experiencing, as she rightly said.

Mr Kenneth Clarke (Rushcliffe) (Con): With the greatest respect, I think the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Gareth Johnson) and the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford

(Yvette Cooper) is absolutely key to understanding what the Prime Minister said yesterday. I entirely understand that my right hon. Friend is retreating, as the Prime Minister does, to the argument that the aim is to get a withdrawal agreement, and I support what he says on that. If it does not get a majority—it was defeated by 230 at the first attempt—the key thing to know is whether the Government will actually vote in favour of an extension, or whether they will vote in favour of leaving with no deal. The Cabinet must have considered that when they sorted out their differences yesterday in what was, no doubt, a perfectly private, orderly and good-humoured meeting.

Mr Lidington: My right hon. and learned Friend is asking me to comment on a hypothetical whipping decision on a hypothetical vote that the Government do not wish or intend us to confront. We will be voting as a House in favour of the revised deal, which will reflect elements that this House, on 29 January, said it wanted to see changed in order to be able to support the withdrawal agreement wholeheartedly. Exactly the same challenge that my right hon. and learned Friend has posed would be posed in respect of any hypothetical event on the Bill tabled by the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper). At this stage, it is too early to make those assertions on a hypothetical situation. What we are focused on, and where our energies lie, is negotiating an agreement with our partners in the European Union that delivers on the conditions that this House set when it passed the amendment in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale West (Sir Graham Brady).

Mr Marcus Fysh (Yeovil) (Con) *rose*—

Mr Lidington: I will give way one last time to my hon. Friend, and then I will make some progress, otherwise I will never get on to the amendments.

Mr Fysh: I am very grateful to my right hon. Friend. Just before he moves on, I would like to ask one question about the no-deal advice paper. When was it prepared, and why did it not mention the use of the transit system, which means that goods can be delivered into Europe without having to be stopped and checked at Calais?

Mr Lidington: Instructions were given to draft that paper following the previous debate during which the right hon. Member for Broxtowe (Anna Soubry) agreed to withdraw the amendment in her name calling for the publication of Cabinet papers, following an assurance given from the Dispatch Box by the Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Chris Heaton-Harris). I then spoke to the right hon. Lady to ascertain the information that she wanted. What we have produced is a thorough document, which I am satisfied can be traced in all details to documents that have gone before Cabinet or Cabinet Committees. Internally, I have been able to footnote every assertion made in that paper. We took the words of the right hon. Lady's amendment in seeking material that had been given to Cabinet and to Cabinet Committees, and the content of the document was determined by that categorisation.

Anna Soubry *rose*—

Mr Lidington: As I have referred to the right hon. Lady, I will give way to her and then I will make some progress.

Anna Soubry: The right hon. Gentleman is, as ever, being very generous. It is very important to make this clear. I took a sample of the many papers from which this document has been compiled, and I can assure the House that, from my reading of the contents of those papers, it is an accurate and fair summary. Furthermore, the original document that I was given was then edited and updated—that is how up to date it is. I am confident about that. I now want the detail, but that is another matter.

Mr Lidington: I am very grateful to the right hon. Lady for that.

I will, if I may, move on to the various amendments that have been tabled. Let me move straight to amendment (f) in the names of the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford and my right hon. Friends the Members for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin) and for Meriden (Dame Caroline Spelman).

Mr Speaker: Order. Just before the right hon. Gentleman starts on this important process of critical analysis, to which we all look forward with eager anticipation, I simply point out to him that, as I am sure he is aware, he is currently on 44 minutes. [*Interruption.*] A snip, I know, but it is 44 minutes.

Mr Lidington: I will try to restrain my appetite to take further interventions, Mr Speaker.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister set out three clear commitments to the House that should provide reassurance and clarity about the way forward. First, we will hold a second meaningful vote by Tuesday 12 March at the latest. Secondly, if the Government have not brought forward a further meaningful vote, or if we have lost such a second meaningful vote by Tuesday 12 March, then we will, in addition to the Government's obligations—I stress that this is in addition to, not in place of them—table a neutral, amendable motion under section 13 of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 to be voted on by Wednesday 13 March, at the latest, asking this House if it supports leaving the EU without a withdrawal agreement and a framework for a future relationship on 29 March this year. The United Kingdom will leave without a deal on 29 March only if there is explicit consent in this House for that outcome.

Thirdly, if this House, having rejected leaving with the deal negotiated with the EU, then also rejects leaving on 29 March without a withdrawal agreement and future framework, the Government will, on 14 March, bring forward a motion on whether Parliament wants to seek a short, limited extension to article 50. If the House votes for an extension, the Government will seek to agree that extension approved by the House with the EU and bring forward the necessary legislation to change the exit date commensurate with that extension. The Government are committing themselves to bring forward—and therefore to support—such legislation. These commitments all fit the timescale set out in the private Member's Bill in the name of the right hon. Member

for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford. They are commitments made by the Prime Minister, and the Government will stick by them, as we have stuck by previous commitments to make statements and table amendable motions by specific dates.

Sir Oliver Letwin (West Dorset) (Con): May I say that I enormously welcome the fact that my right hon. Friend has reiterated all that from the Dispatch Box? I have personally had no cause ever to doubt that what the Prime Minister states from the Dispatch Box will be anything other than fully fulfilled, but my right hon. Friend repeating it today is helpful, as were the remarks of my right hon. Friend the Brexit Secretary earlier this morning. In light of those remarks, it is my view that there is not a necessity to proceed in the way in which the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) and I, with many others, would have wished to proceed in relation to amendment (c) and the Bill referred to in it.

Mr Lidington: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that intervention.

Yvette Cooper: If the Government were to bring forward legislation in accordance with a vote in Parliament, would they—as I presume—vote for that legislation? Will the right hon. Gentleman also explain what the circumstances would be if there were a disagreement between the Government and the EU about either the length or terms of the extension? Would the Government bring it back to Parliament for a further vote, rather than simply dismissing it and deciding to shift to no deal instead?

Mr Lidington: As the right hon. Lady knows, the Prime Minister said that an extension would be short and limited. It is clearly a fact of law that any extension to the article 50 period would have to be agreed with all the other 27 Governments; that just reflects the treaties. It logically follows that if the Prime Minister has committed the Government to bring forward legislation in those circumstances to comply with what would be the will of the House, the Government would therefore support such legislation.

Liz Kendall (Leicester West) (Lab): With the greatest respect, the Minister did not answer the other question from my right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper)—what will the Government do if the EU does not want to agree to a short, time-limited extension? Will they come back to the House with a different proposal? [*Interruption.*] This is a serious matter. Government Members shake their heads, but we need to know. If the EU were to turn down the extension, what would happen? Would we crash out with no deal or would we have another chance perhaps to ask for a longer extension?

Mr Lidington: In the absence of either an agreement to extend article 50, to leave with a deal or to revoke article 50 all together, the default legal position under the treaties is that the exit date is two years after article 50 has been triggered; that is a matter of European law. The hon. Lady asks a perfectly serious question. I do not believe that the other Governments of the European Union have either an economic interest or a strategic

interest in seeing a chaotic departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union. My belief is that there would be a negotiated agreement in those circumstances. But as I said earlier, the new obligation that the Prime Minister announced yesterday is in addition to the ones that would already flow in those circumstances as a result of section 13 of the withdrawal Act—that is, section 13 as modified by the two amendments successfully moved by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr Grieve). Therefore, the matter would come back to the House and there would be an opportunity for right hon. and hon. Members to table amendments to urge particular courses of action.

Nick Boles (Grantham and Stamford) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mrs Anne Main (St Albans) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr Lidington: I am conscious of the concern about time that you expressed, Mr Speaker, but I will briefly give way to my hon. Friend the Member for St Albans (Mrs Main) and then to my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham and Stamford (Nick Boles).

Mrs Main: I have listened very carefully to just about every debate on this topic, and I understand that the European Union would give an extension only if it thought there was a reasonableness behind the request; I can perfectly understand that. Will my right hon. Friend tell me what rationale we would give to ask for this very short and limited extension, given that the House will have already rejected the newly negotiated deal? I cannot think what else could happen in those couple of months that would be helpful.

Mr Lidington: My hon. Friend is asking me to go deeper into the realms of hypothetical speculation. Tempting though that is, all I can say is that a lot would depend on where we had got to in the negotiations, the reasons for which the House in these hypothetical circumstances had rejected the revised agreement and so on.

Nick Boles: Nobody has a better understanding of these issues than my right hon. Friend and there is nobody whose word I would trust more completely at the Dispatch Box. But this is very important detail, and he has referred to the fact that the Prime Minister made commitments yesterday that replicated the provisions in the draft Cooper-Letwin Bill, which we are hoping not to have to move as a result. Now, that Bill very specifically sets out what would happen if, having consulted with Parliament and received Parliament's approval, the Government proposed an extension to the European Union and the European Union came back and said, "We're not happy to grant that extension, but we suggest a different length of extension."

The Bill makes provision to come back to the House with whatever had been negotiated with the European Union to seek the approval of the House for that actual extension, and it is extremely important that we have that same provision confirmed here today at the Dispatch Box. If we do not, I for one will feel bound to continue with the process of supporting amendment (c) in the name of my right hon. Friend the Member for Meriden (Dame Caroline Spelman), and then tomorrow supporting the Bill. If we can have that reassurance from the

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster that the House will get a chance to approve whatever final extension length is agreed between the Government and the European Union—if it were different from the one to which the House had previously consented—I will be happy.

Mr Lidington: The straight answer is yes, of course. Frankly, I just do not see any circumstance in which, if a period had been agreed with the European Union or had the potential to be agreed, the Government would not bring this back to the House. Were the Government not to bring it back, it would be brought back anyway under the provisions of section 13 in the way in which I described in response to an earlier intervention, so I think I can give my hon. Friend that clear reassurance on that point.

Sir Oliver Letwin: I thought that that answer was extraordinarily helpful. I agree with my right hon. Friend entirely that the provision actually already exists under section 13, but I think that his confirmation of the attitude of the Government to that matter settles the thing.

Mr Lidington: I am very grateful to my right hon. Friend for that intervention.

Stephen Doughty: The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster is extremely generous and I also take his word very seriously. He did not quite answer my earlier question about the legislation on the extension that he and the Prime Minister have made repeated commitments to bring forward. What would be the form of that legislation? Would it be possible, for example, for the dates to be changed? As my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn), who chairs the Exiting the European Union Committee, also asked, how would such disputes be dealt with?

Mr Lidington: I do not think that I can go into detail on the legislation at this stage. It would depend a bit on what the outcome of the negotiations with the European Union itself had led to. If it were secondary legislation, clearly there are the normal constraints on amendments. Equally, if it is secondary legislation, it is sudden death in both Houses; both Houses have a veto over secondary legislation. The section 13 provisions do give the House a safeguard that there is always that additional opportunity to bring forward and vote on concerns that the House feels are being overlooked.

Let me turn to amendment (c). I am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset for indicating that he thought that this amendment would not now need to be pressed to a vote. If the House will allow me, in the light of his comments, I do not propose to go into detail about this amendment, but if it is brought up further in the debate, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State can respond to those points when he winds up.

I now want to refer to amendment (b) in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for South Leicestershire (Alberto Costa). On citizens' rights, he has succeeded in an endeavour that some might have thought was impossible in persuading both the Leader of the Opposition and my hon. Friend the Member for North East Somerset (Mr Rees-Mogg) to share the honours as lead signatories to an amendment. All Members of this House are aware of how vocally and passionately my hon. Friend the Member for South Leicestershire has campaigned

[Mr Lidington]

on the issue of citizens' rights for many months now. This is an area that the Government take extremely seriously. We have consistently put citizens' rights first in our negotiations. It was one of the very first parts of the withdrawal agreement to have been agreed and had negotiations completed with the European Union. Of course, the best way to guarantee those rights, both for our citizens in the EU and EU citizens here, is to vote in favour of the deal, as my hon. Friend did in January.

But there is a lot of uncertainty surrounding no deal. That is why the Government have already committed that the rights of the 3 million EU citizens living in the UK will be protected in any scenario. EU citizens resident here by 29 March would be able to apply for the EU settlement scheme to secure their status. The Home Office has already granted more than 100,000 applications under that scheme and such people will continue to have access to social security and healthcare as before.

Also lying behind my hon. Friend's amendment is concern about the rights of UK nationals living elsewhere in the EU. In the absence of a deal, this would be a matter for the EU and its member states. Despite the welcome progress made by some member states, there are other areas where the offer to UK nationals, in our view, falls short. Access to healthcare is a particular concern. The Government, led by the Foreign Secretary, are seeking solutions to address these issues through bilateral contacts with member state Governments at the same time as seeking a common EU-wide approach. We should not, though, underestimate the challenge in reaching a joint UK-EU commitment, as the amendment calls for, to ring-fence the agreement on citizens' rights. The European Union has been very consistent in saying to us that its legal mandate is clear that nothing is agreed until everything is agreed, and that its view, if these issues were not addressed in the withdrawal agreement, is that there are significant legal problems for the EU in protecting these rights since, in those circumstances, some of these issues would fall within the competence of member states and not of the EU institutions.

Despite those challenges, we do share with my hon. Friend the common goal of protecting the rights of citizens in the event of no deal. So in view of the fact that our political objectives are the same, the Government will accept his amendment today, and following this debate—assuming that the House endorses the amendment—we will take up with the Commission the arguments embodied in it to seek clarification of the EU position on ring-fencing the citizens' rights parts of the withdrawal agreement and to see whether it can be persuaded to change the position that it has adopted hitherto.

Heidi Allen (South Cambridgeshire) (Ind) *rose*—

Joanna Cherry *rose*—

Richard Graham (Gloucester) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr Lidington: No. I am conscious that I am disappointing a number of hon. Friends and other hon. Members, but otherwise there is a danger that my speech and associated interventions are going to take up pretty well all the time available for debate today.

I will move on to amendment (k) and then amendment (a). Amendment (k), in the name of the leader of the Scottish National party in Westminster, wills certain ends without any means. It asserts a determination not to leave the European Union without a withdrawal agreement and future framework under any circumstances and regardless of any exit date. It is therefore asserting a power to override what is actually in the European Union treaties but can have no effect in terms of European law and the implications of the article 50 process. While I understand the political motives behind amendment (k), the problem with it is that it ignores the legal reality that, once article 50 has been triggered, the only ways in which to avoid what the amendment seeks to avoid are to agree a deal or to revoke article 50 altogether and commit this country permanently—in good faith, to use the terms of the Court of Justice judgment—to membership of the European Union for the future. For those reasons, the Government cannot accept it.

I have also seen and studied the amendment tabled in the name of the Leader of the Opposition. I would urge Opposition Members to look at what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said in her reply to the right hon. Gentleman, because on each of the five points detailed in the amendment, I believe the Government's deal provides the right answer for the people of the United Kingdom. Let me briefly take each of those five points in turn. First, the amendment instructs Ministers to seek a permanent—

Pete Wishart (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. The Minister has now been on his feet for over an hour. Is there anything that you could think of doing from the Chair to exhort him perhaps to reach his peroration?

Mr Speaker: Well, it has been 63 minutes. The Minister for the Cabinet Office is known for the intellectual approach that he adopts, which includes analysis in copious detail of propositions advanced by other colleagues, but I feel sure that he is nearing that peroration, which is keenly anticipated.

Mr Lidington: It is the hon. Gentleman's hon. Friends, as well other colleagues across the House, who have been seeking to intervene, and if somebody intervenes on me, I think, in justice, they deserve a considered response to the point that they have made.

Amendment (a) instructs Ministers to seek “a permanent...customs union”, but the political declaration already provides for the benefits of a customs union—no tariffs, quotas or checks on rules of origin. At the same time, the political declaration says that rather than trying to seek a voice in EU trade deals, the UK should have an independent trade policy. Beyond the label of “permanent...customs union”, it is not clear to me what outcomes the Labour amendment is seeking that the political declaration does not offer.

Secondly, the amendment instructs Ministers to seek “close alignment with the single market”,

but the EU has already said that the deal provides for the closest relationship possible outside the single market, and frictionless trade in goods and agrifood is one of our key negotiating objectives. The truth is, looking at the EU position, that it has said that completely frictionless trade is possible only if we stay in the single market. That would mean accepting both free movement and

EU state aid rules in full—things that the Labour party's leadership has said it does not want to see. That is why, I assume, its amendment is ambiguous about what a “close” relationship really means.

Thirdly, the amendment instructs Ministers to seek “dynamic alignment on rights”. We are committed to ensuring that leaving the EU will not lead to any lowering of standards in relation to workers' rights. We are prepared to commit to giving Parliament a vote on whether it wishes to follow suit in the future whenever EU standards in areas such as workers' rights or health and safety are judged to have been strengthened.

Fourthly, the amendment instructs Ministers to seek “participation in EU agencies”. The political declaration sets out how we aim to participate in EU programmes in a number of areas and have the closest possible relationship with EU agencies in the heavily regulated sectors.

Fifthly, the amendment instructs us to seek “agreement on the detail of future security arrangements, including” participation in specific EU tools and measures. Anybody who has listened to the Prime Minister speak from the Dispatch Box, whether as Home Secretary or Prime Minister, can be in no doubt about her commitment to the closest, most effective possible partnership now and in the future between police and law enforcement agencies in this country and those in other parts of the European Union.

The amendment ignores the very real negotiating challenge of the EU's position. It says that, as a third country outside the Schengen area and without free movement, there would be restrictions on the UK's ability to participate in some EU tools and measures. We do a disservice to the House if we do not recognise the reality of that negotiating challenge.

The deal that the Government have negotiated provides the best way forward for this country to build its future relationship of friendship and deep partnership with the EU outside membership of the European Union. With the work that the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State and the Attorney General are undertaking to get the changes that this House has asked for to the Northern Ireland backstop, I believe we can come back with a deal that the House should be willing—indeed, eager—to endorse. That way, we will be able to deliver a result that honours the outcome of the 2016 referendum but does so in a way that protects the jobs, prosperity and security of citizens in every part of the United Kingdom.

3.21 pm

Keir Starmer (Holborn and St Pancras) (Lab): I rise to support amendment (a) in my name and the name of the Leader of the Opposition. It is two weeks since we last voted on a Government Brexit motion, but nothing has changed. The Government are no closer to making progress, and that is clear from the Prime Minister's statement yesterday and underlined by the absurdly limited motion before us today. The motion tabled by the Prime Minister states that the House “notes” her statement of yesterday and

“notes that discussions between the UK and EU are ongoing.”

The Government do not even dare lay a motion reflecting the decisions of 29 January, as they did last time. They are frightened to lay a motion even setting out what has already been agreed—namely, the so-called

Brady amendment—and the rejection by this House of no deal as an acceptable outcome. The statement and motion just seek to buy another two weeks and note what they are doing, all of this with just 30 days to go.

One thing that has changed is the acceptance of the amendment tabled by the hon. Member for South Leicestershire (Alberto Costa). I want to ask some questions about that, because yesterday the Prime Minister appeared to rule out accepting that amendment. This morning, the Home Secretary was before the Home Affairs Committee, and he was questioned by the hon. Member for Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East (Stuart C. McDonald). The Home Secretary said, “What's wrong with the amendment? Nothing.” “So is the Government supporting it now?” “Yes, what do you mean ‘now’? When was the Government not supporting it? When did you hear that?” “Yesterday.” “From who?” “The Prime Minister.” “Did you?” [HON. MEMBERS: “Shambles!”] Well, that is a vignette of how Brexit has been going. The question that the House is struggling with is why the hon. Member for South Leicestershire has been forced to resign when the Government are accepting his amendment.

Last time we had this debate, I set out the sorry history of the Government's delays in recent months, and I do not intend to repeat that.

Lady Hermon: I am grateful to the right hon. and learned Gentleman for allowing me to intervene. I thought he was going to mention the other significant change, which is the Labour party's policy on a second referendum. As he will know, the Prime Minister warned in January this year that a second referendum could “damage social cohesion”. Does the Labour party believe that the Prime Minister was wrong about that, or is it prepared to take that risk?

Keir Starmer: I am grateful for that intervention. I will deal with it. I will come to the background and the amendment we have tabled, and I will answer that intervention. If I do not, I will take another intervention to ensure that I do.

There is, it seems, an expectation that between now and 12 March there will be a change to the deal, and I do not think that that is going to happen. Why? Because there has been no progress at all since the vote was pulled on 10 December. That is 79 days ago. That was when the Prime Minister said, “I'm going to seek changes. I know what the House wants.” No progress has been made since the meaningful vote was lost on 15 January, 43 days ago, and no progress has been made since the Brady amendment of 28 January, 30 days ago.

For all the talk of discussion here and in Brussels, the stark truth is that not one word of the withdrawal agreement or political declaration has changed since it was signed off on 25 November last year—not one word. That is 94 days—three months—ago. The expectation that all of that will change in the next 14 days seems extremely unlikely, and it is not going to be fulfilled. When the Prime Minister went off to do that, I said she was building an expectation that she would not be able to fulfil, and I fear that that is what we are heading for.

The deal today is the same as it was three months ago, and it is that basic deal that will be put before us again on 12 March. It may have some warm words around it, and the Attorney General may be asked to

[*Keir Starmer*]

say what those warm words mean, but the withdrawal agreement will be exactly the same in two weeks as it is now. We have to face up to that and stop deluding ourselves that it will change in the next 14 days. There are serious consequences if the deal does not go through because it is precisely the same, which is why there has been such questioning this morning about what happens next.

The deal has not changed because the Government have made three central demands. First, they have asked for a unilateral exit to the backstop. That has been roundly rejected every time it has been asked for, and the deal was signed off 94 days ago. Secondly, they have asked for a time limit to the backstop. That has been roundly rejected every time it has been asked for, and it was on the table 94 days ago. The only other ask is that the backstop be replaced by alternative arrangements. The EU's response to that to the Government has been, "Well, what are you proposing? What are these alternatives, so that we can discuss them?" Nothing has been forthcoming.

We learned from the Prime Minister's statement and the Minister for the Cabinet Office that a joint workstream will be considered by the EU and UK, which will be an "important strand". I do not doubt that a joint workstream on alternative arrangements is a good idea. I do not doubt that any country would seek to streamline any checks at the border whatever the arrangements, irrespective of Brexit. That workstream will apparently work until the end of next year. The announcement that that workstream is in existence is hardly a breakthrough. The idea that the deal that was so roundly rejected is now going to go through because there is a workstream on alternative measures seems to me unlikely, and that is why we have to get real about what is actually going to happen in two weeks' time, and it is why we predict that we will be left with exactly the same deal.

On the alternative arrangements, the Minister for the Cabinet Office says that those words are used elsewhere in the withdrawal agreement and the political declaration. That is true, but they are used only in two respects with two different meanings. One is that the alternative arrangements are the future relationship. That is one meaning provided in those documents, but that is not relevant to this discussion because if the future relationship is ready, there is no question of a backstop. We all know that.

The only other way in which alternative arrangements are actually used in the documents is in relation to the technology at the border making all the difference. We have been searching for that for some time. I do not doubt there will be advances in technology, but the reason the backstop was put in is that the assessment back in November was that there was no prospect of that technology being ready by the time the backstop would be needed, and therefore we needed the backstop. That was the conclusion.

Since I have been in this role, I seem to have spent quite a lot of my time standing on borders looking at lorries and people going across borders. I went to the main Sweden-Norway border to see what a border looks like where a country is in the EEA, and therefore has single market alignment and free movement, but is not in a customs union. It is a hard stop—with infrastructure, with security, with paperwork—and when

it works well, each stop takes 13 minutes. Those two countries are not operating the least efficient system that they can; they think they are operating the most efficient system that they can. I do not doubt it can be improved on, but I doubt that this workstream in the next few months is going to make the progress that many people in this House think is going to happen.

Mr Gregory Campbell (East Londonderry) (DUP): The right hon. and learned Gentleman has referred to spending a lot of his time standing at borders. When he was at the border in Northern Ireland, was he able to see the complete and total complexity of that border, with the hundreds of crossing points, and has he grasped the total impossibility of anyone anywhere constructing a hard border that could not be avoided with ease?

Keir Starmer: I was and I have. I have visited that border many times. I visited it with the Police Service of Northern Ireland many times when I was working there for five years—as it policed the area around the border, which has particular issues—and I have been there since on a number of occasions. I am well aware of the nature of that border. I am also well aware of the fact, in relation to that border, that it is a mistake to think that the only issue is, technically, how to get people or goods over a line in the road. That border is the manifestation of peace: it is a settlement between two communities. Therefore, the very idea that this is just a technical exercise does not understand the nature of that border.

Mr Dominic Grieve (Beaconsfield) (Con): It goes beyond that, does it not? The right hon. and learned Gentleman may share my anxiety that this issue seems to be consistently ducked. We have a pre-existing international treaty with Ireland that places obligations on us in respect of the border. I do worry, and he may share this anxiety, that in this House this is constantly brushed under the carpet, whereas as we are a rule-of-law state that believes in the international rules-based system, we cannot depart from that without renegeing on such obligations.

Keir Starmer: I am grateful for that intervention and I agree with it.

This is really the heart of it: we know what the problem is, we know what the House thinks about the backstop and we know that there is an unlikelihood that those problems are going to be addressed in the next 14 days. When the Prime Minister lost the first meaningful vote, she had a clear choice. Choice 1 was to plough on with the failed deal in the usual blinkered way, and eventually put the same deal back to us. That was option 1. Option 2 was to drop her red lines, and negotiate changes that were credible with the EU and could command a majority in this House. The Government have chosen the first course—blindly ploughing on, rather than really engaging—and, as we have seen from the last few weeks, that path leads nowhere.

That is regrettable, because there is an alternative, and I want to address amendment (a). We have set out this alternative repeatedly over recent months. It was set out in full in the letter from the Leader of the Opposition to the Prime Minister on 6 February, and it is spelled out in today's amendment (a). I remind the House that the focus of the changes we are calling for are to the political declaration, not the backstop.

The changes are to negotiate a permanent and comprehensive UK-wide customs union. That is the first part. Why is that important? Because it is essential for protecting manufacturing, particularly the complex supply chains, and to avoid the hard border in Northern Ireland. I know that those on the Government Front Bench have, like me, gone to many of the big manufacturing companies to discuss with them their complex supply chains and how anxious they are about protecting the customs union arrangements that allow them to do that. As I said, it is also essential to avoiding a hard border in Northern Ireland.

Dr Murrison *rose—*

Keir Starmer: I will just make this point and then I will give way.

The Prime Minister has pretended that her customs proposals achieve that. I listened carefully to what the Minister for the Cabinet Office said about amendment (a). He said that, under the political declaration, the benefits are already there, because it notes that the single customs territory in the Northern Ireland backstop obviates the need for rules of origin checks. So the political declaration notes the backstop, which is the contentious bit of the withdrawal agreement. I concede that that is a form of customs union, because under the backstop that single customs territory obviates the need for rules of origin checks. The declaration goes on to say—this goes to the heart of what the Minister for the Cabinet Office just said—that if we build and improve on that customs union for the future partnership, we can continue to avoid customs checks.

Let us unpick that. If we build on the backstop, which is the bit that, as I understand it, many Government Members do not like, we can avoid customs checks. So, the temporary backstop—hopefully never to be used; only an insurance policy—has to become permanent, turbocharged and the foundation stone of the political declaration in order to get the protection of a customs union. That is precisely what the political declaration says.

I am not sure that the Minister for the Cabinet Office has explained that to all the Members behind him. If his proposition is that the backstop is just a short-term, temporary measure, whereas it is actually an essential foundation of the political relationship, I think that might be met with a particular response. The pretence that the political declaration equals the same as a customs union goes against the Government's stated aim to be outside a customs union.

Mr Kenneth Clarke: I listened with care to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster's response to the five principles at the end of his speech. Did it seem to the shadow Minister that the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster disagreed with any of the five principles? I do not disagree with any of them. My right hon. Friend tried most of the time to demonstrate their compatibility with the political agreement. He might have hesitated, because in the Chequers policy the Government went beyond that and proposed a single market in goods—for about 48 hours. The shadow Minister raises negotiating points such as new trade agreements with other countries and what this would mean for freedom of movement, but all that will eventually be covered in the negotiations. Would it not help if Opposition and Government Front

Benchers agreed on these five principles? That might transform the atmosphere of the debate when we move on to the next stage of the negotiations after the withdrawal agreement has been agreed.

Keir Starmer: As has been alluded to, I am having discussions with Government Front Benchers, including the Minister for the Cabinet Office. I do not intend to disclose what has been said in confidence in those discussions. They will continue, and we will play our part in them. We are trying to set up the next meeting, which we will hold as soon as possible.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Keir Starmer: I will give way, but I want to finish answering this question. The point is that, unless and until the Prime Minister changes her red lines, it will be impossible to find any space for those negotiations to progress. I do not rule out something dramatic happening next week. The Prime Minister may come to the Dispatch Box and say she now understands that her red lines were the problem and that she is prepared to change them, but I do not think that that will happen. I have concluded that the Prime Minister will plough on with the deal that she put before us last time, and that she is not willing to drop her red lines, which would allow more fruitful progress in those discussions.

I say that without prejudice to the fact that those discussions will go on between now and 12 March. However, the fact that a date is already set for the deal to come back in two weeks' time makes me just a little cautious in suggesting that those discussions will bear fruit in those next two weeks.

Sir Oliver Letwin: I am very grateful to the right hon. and learned Gentleman for giving way. As he knows, I shall be voting for the Prime Minister's deal. I think something has changed, which he did not admit at the beginning of his speech: the circumstances of the past 24 hours. I think they may change minds on the Government Benches quite significantly and favourably. But if it does not pass, while I completely agree with him that under those circumstances the Government will need to look again at their red lines to try to get an agreement that is somewhere in the region of what he has been describing, will he also commit that the Labour Front Bench will exercise flexibility? My whole experience of dealing with coalition Government was that it takes two to tango. There has to be flexibility on both sides to get to an agreement.

Keir Starmer: I am grateful for that intervention. We are playing our part in those discussions with the Government and will continue to do so for as long as is necessary. I do not want to go into what we are discussing, but we will continue to do so as long as is necessary. I am just slightly cautious as to the likelihood that that will lead to a breakthrough in the next 14 days.

Sir William Cash: I must say that the right hon. and learned Gentleman is possibly generating more alarm than he realises. The idea that there is going to be some compromise between the two sides of the House on this question of the red lines raises a very simple question. Would the right hon. and learned Gentleman like to state, on behalf of the Opposition, that they would like to see the repeal of the repeal of the European Communities Act 1972?

Keir Starmer: I am grateful for that intervention, because what it demonstrates is the point I was trying to make about the customs union. If the Government Front Bench say our political declaration is in effect a customs union by a different name, because we are going to build on the backstop and make it permanent and turbocharge it, I suspect there will be a degree of opposition to that, if I have understood anything about the debates that have been going on here for some considerable time. That is where the difference is.

As for the repeal of the 1972 Act, I have always said—I stand by it—that repealing that Act and putting a date for leaving in the withdrawal Act was a mistake because of the transition period. I have always said that the Act we have passed will have to be repealed before it comes into force, and so it will. The implementation Bill White Paper specifically says it is going to be, as the hon. Gentleman well knows. In other words, between now and the end of March we have got to intercept the withdrawal Act that we have passed if there is going to be any order to leaving the EU and ensure that things like the ceasing of the jurisdiction of the European Court is changed. It was barmy to turn the European Court off at 11 o'clock on 29 March, which is the current law, because you cannot get on to transition. I always said that before that comes into force, if this is going to make any sense at all, it is going to have to be changed, intercepted and repealed. That is exactly what the implementation Bill will do. I am as sure as I possibly can be.

Dr Murrison *rose—*

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

Richard Graham (Gloucester) (Con) *rose—*

Keir Starmer: I am going to press on. I will just make some progress. I will give way in just a minute. I do not criticise the Minister for the Cabinet Office, because he quite rightly took interventions from a number of Members who really did want detailed answers, but I am going to try to make some progress. Otherwise, between the two of us, we really are going to get to the wind-ups before we anyone else has got in.

Let me move on to closer alignment with the single market. This part of the Brexit debate is too often ignored. How do we protect our service sector, which is of course 80% of our economy and 80% of our jobs? The second part of this package is also needed, alongside a customs union, to prevent a hard border in Northern Ireland. We recognise that if we are going to have closer alignment with the single market we need that to be underpinned by shared institutions and that would require accepting common obligations. What they are would be a matter of negotiation and how we stay aligned would be part of the negotiations. I am not pretending that that would be trouble-free.

The Minister for the Cabinet Office said that that is effectively there in the political declaration, as close as you can get. It is worth going back to the political declaration that the Prime Minister has put before us, because what it actually says is that we should achieve

“a level of liberalisation in trade in services well beyond the Parties' World Trade Organization (WTO) commitments”.

Well, you cannot aim much lower than that. To quote the former UK permanent representative, that is “about as unambitious as it can get.”

The third part of the amendment is

“dynamic alignment on rights and protections”.

That means UK standards keeping pace with evolving standards across Europe. Why is that needed? Because we cannot allow UK workers or consumers to see their rights lag behind those in the EU after we leave, or frankly, to allow future Governments to erode those rights. Again, the Minister for the Cabinet Office says, “Well, that is effectively there in the political declaration, or has been promised by the Prime Minister.” There is a world of difference between keeping up with evolving rights and a non-regression clause that simply says they will not drop behind a frozen level, so the answer from the Government simply is not strong enough. They are promising only non-regression—to freeze, not to keep pace. That is a world of difference, and it is no wonder that the trade unions were never going to sign up to that proposal.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister said, “Well, don't worry. What we'll do is that every time there is an evolution of rights in Europe, we'll come back here and see whether this House wants to keep up,” but she did not say, “My Government will vote to do so.” That would make a material difference, but she did not, so neither we nor working people are going to fall for that one.

The fourth and fifth elements are clear

“commitments on participation in EU agencies and funding programmes”

and an

“unambiguous agreement on the detail of future security arrangements, including access to the European Arrest Warrant.”

I do not doubt the Prime Minister's commitment on this. I worked with her when she was Home Secretary and I know how seriously she takes it, but I also know that the political declaration does not say that there has been any progress towards replica arrangements for the European arrest warrant. With the Prime Minister back in, I think, 2012 or 2013, we looked at what would happen if we fell out of the European arrest warrant arrangements and what the old extradition treaties were, and we were horrified by what we saw. Outside the European arrest warrant, it takes about 10 years to extradite someone from a country such as Italy to this country, and there are real-life examples of that. Using the European arrest warrant, it takes about 40 or 50 days. These are material differences and there is nothing in the political declaration along those lines. I understand the technical problems with Schengen and so on, but one of the barriers has been the determination that the European Court should have no role in anything at all in future, thus blocking progress in this area.

I am not pretending that the plan—the alternative—that we have set out is easy or painless to negotiate. I have never pretended that it will be the easiest negotiation in history, but I know that that kind of deal—delivering a close economic relationship with the EU—would prevent a hard border in Northern Ireland, reduce the pressure on the backstop and could be negotiated. The EU has said as much in recent weeks. We have heard in meetings with EU counterparts and in public that the customs union/single market alignment proposition is credible. The EU has said that it is a promising basis for negotiations, and to quote Michel Barnier:

“If the United Kingdom chooses to let its red lines change...then the European Union would be ready immediately to...respond favourably.”

I think it could be achieved. If the Prime Minister is serious about reaching out to the Opposition, she should engage with that proposal. It is clear from her response to the Leader of the Opposition and her blind insistence on seeking further changes to the backstop that that is not her intention, so today we put that plan to the House and ask for Parliament to help in delivering the basis for a credible Brexit offer.

Richard Graham: I have been listening with some interest to the right hon. and learned Gentleman's explanation of the five bullet points that are so important in the Leader of the Opposition's amendment, but most of them are fundamentally to do with the future phase of negotiations and are not specifically to do with the withdrawal agreement Bill. I am therefore still puzzled about what the major difference is between his party and the Government and why it cannot agree with the Government to secure the withdrawal agreement and get it through Parliament.

Keir Starmer: I think I acknowledged earlier that these points go predominantly to the political declaration and not the withdrawal agreement. Those two documents cannot be separated because they go together. *[Interruption.]* Well, an example of that is the customs union. The political declaration says that it builds on the withdrawal agreement; we cannot treat them as two separate documents, and the legislation that we will be voting on does not allow us to vote on them separately. But on the general proposition—do we accept that, for example, the backstop, whatever our concerns about it, is inevitable? The answer is yes. I said that when I stood here two weeks ago, and I make that clear again today.

Dr Murrison: But the Leader of the Opposition has said that he objects to the backstop because it will not be just permanent; it is potentially forever. Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman have any qualms about that at all? If he does not, he should be supporting the withdrawal agreement, since most of his amendment, especially point i., is contained within the backstop.

Keir Starmer: I tried to deal with that question last time I was at the Dispatch Box, but I will have another go. We do have concerns about the backstop. There are concerns about the exit arrangements. There are concerns that England, Wales and Scotland, on the face of it, will fall out of single market alignment when we are in the backstop. There are concerns about the protection of workplace rights, environmental rights, non-regression protections and so on, and the enforcement mechanism is not the same as it is for other provisions, such as procurement. So there are real, deep concerns. Notwithstanding those concerns, though, we accept, because of our commitment to the Good Friday agreement, that at this stage—two years in, with 30 days to go—a backstop is inevitable. I hope that makes that clear, but I do not accept that it is possible to separate the two documents and treat them as separate documents to be voted on separately. In addition, the legislation does not allow us to do so; it requires both documents to go through in order for us to move forward.

Mark Pritchard: Given that Labour party policy on a second referendum was different a week ago from what it is today, may I encourage the right hon. and learned Gentleman to be more optimistic? The Prime Minister

could indeed get changes to the backstop—a time limit, or a get-out clause for later on. If she does make those changes—if she is successful—given what the right hon. and learned Gentleman has just said, will he then support the Government in order that we avoid no deal?

Keir Starmer: I understand the point and the force with which it is put. Given the conversations that have gone on here and in Brussels, I have to say that I really do not see the prospect that after 94 days of trying, there will be a breakthrough in the next seven days. If there is, we must all come back to the House; there will be a statement from the Prime Minister and we will consider what she says. It will only be on the backstop, and we have accepted the inevitability of the backstop, so it would be more to try to solve a problem on her own Benches than with the Opposition.

However, I have always said that we will look at what the Prime Minister brings back. It was what we did when she brought back the deal in the first place. People invited me to commit beforehand that we would do this, that or the other, but I said I would wait to see what the deal was. I will faithfully wait to see, but at the moment I personally do not think that we shall be standing here in two weeks with significant changes, or any changes, to the withdrawal agreement. I will wait and see. I know that Members on the Government Benches want to be optimistic. My worry is that there is still the expectation of changes that will not happen, and therefore a lack of focus on what needs to happen next. That is why what the Prime Minister said yesterday was significant, because if the deal does not go through, obviously what happens next becomes deeply significant. However, we will faithfully look at whatever comes back and consider it.

A plan of the type that I have suggested is credible. It is a plan that is capable of negotiation, and it is one that the EU is prepared to negotiate. The only question now is, is the Prime Minister prepared to drop her red lines so that there can be a meaningful engagement with that alternative proposition? I invite hon. Members to vote for our amendment tonight, to ensure that that plan can form a consensus or a majority in this House to take us through to the next stage of the process.

I want to underline the commitment that we made on Monday, that if amendment (a) is defeated and the Prime Minister still refuses to negotiate a close economic relationship, Labour will support or table an amendment in favour of a public vote. That public vote would include a credible leave option and remain. It could be attached to the Prime Minister's deal—what I have called a lock against a damaging Tory Brexit—or it could be attached to any deal that managed to win a majority in the House of Commons.

Gareth Snell (Stoke-on-Trent Central) (Lab/Co-op)
rose—

Keir Starmer: I will deal with the earlier intervention. It was put to me earlier that we should not adopt that course because of the social unrest that it might cause. There are a number of answers to that. First, this comes at a stage when we are trying to prevent no deal, and I do not think that no deal is going to be orderly and smooth; I think it is going to lead to huge problems up and down the country. Secondly, I think it important for us not to exaggerate social disorder, because to do so can encourage social disorder, and I am really worried about that. I am not suggesting for one minute that

[Keir Starmer]

that was what the hon. Member for North Down (Lady Hermon) was doing—I take her interventions very seriously, as she knows—but I do not think we should casually say that there will be social disorder.

The third thing I want to say is this. I have been in this place for less than four years, but the idea that we would not take the right next step as a matter of principle because we thought that there might be social disorder is a very slippery slope.

Justine Greening (Putney) (Con): Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that if a Parliament simply guessed what version or outcome of Brexit people wanted, brought it about and then hoped that it was the right one for the British people, that would not be a pragmatic, sensible, sustainable or democratically acceptable way of proceeding?

Keir Starmer: I am grateful for the right hon. Lady's intervention for two reasons. First, I have been very hard on the Prime Minister, I think justifiably, for the fact that she set out the red lines without any discussion about them in Parliament, or even, I understand, in the Cabinet. It was her almost personal interpretation of the referendum. In my view, many interpretations could have been applied to it, but that was not one of them.

The second reason is important. I am not sure that getting a deal that is not really liked through the House at the last minute is going to settle anything. If, on a sweaty night in March, a measure goes through that no one really likes, the idea that that constitutes closure is very worrying. Of course, we are building up the expectation that if a deal goes through, that will be it, Brexit will be settled and it will all be over. We will still be in the foothills, because all that will happen after that will be the negotiations on the future relationship, which is so thin at the moment.

Mr David Lammy (Tottenham) (Lab): May I take up the point about social order? I have faced social disorder in my own constituency and rightly condemned it, however hard that condemnation was for some constituents to hear. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that some in our country on the hard right who are suggesting that there will be social disorder forget that this is the country that faced down Mosley at home and faced down Hitler and Mussolini abroad? We can never give in to hard-right pressure.

Keir Starmer: I agree wholeheartedly with my right hon. Friend.

Gareth Snell: I too agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Tottenham (Mr Lammy). Stoke-on-Trent was the city described by the British National party as the jewel in its crown, and we took no prisoners in fighting its members on the streets to rid ourselves of them.

My right hon. and learned Friend said that there could be a public vote on a deal versus remain at some point in the future. So that I can be clear about our party's policy, will he outline the nature of the deal that he would like to see on a ballot paper that would persuade him to vote for that deal rather than for remain? It appears to me that at the moment, Labour party policy is actually to revoke article 50 at pretty much any cost.

Keir Starmer: It is important to appreciate that at the moment, I am pressing an amendment that favours a Brexit deal. In our manifesto we said that, if elected, we would seek to negotiate. We said that we would “end Theresa May's reckless approach to Brexit”, and that we would

“scrap the Conservatives' Brexit White Paper and replace it with fresh negotiating priorities that have a strong emphasis on retaining the benefits of the Single Market and the Customs Union”, and we set out why that was necessary. We also said that we recognised

“that leaving the EU with ‘no deal’ is the worst possible deal for Britain”,

and that we would

“reject ‘no deal’ as a viable option”.

Pete Wishart: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Keir Starmer: I have not finished answering the question yet.

What I am putting before the House today is entirely consistent with what we said in our manifesto that we would seek to do. Therefore, the question will be whether we can carry that tonight.

Pete Wishart: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Keir Starmer: I have not finished answering the question, and it is an important question.

If that cannot be done, we will be faced in two weeks with what I think will be the Prime Minister's red-line deal or no deal. In our manifesto we rejected both, and in those circumstances we would either put forward or support a motion on a public vote with a credible leave option—when we tabled a Front-Bench amendment three or four weeks ago we spelled out that that deal or proposition would have to have the confidence of the House—with the other option being remain.

Joanna Cherry: I welcome the Labour party's movement towards a second referendum. Some people say a second Brexit referendum would be undemocratic, but does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree with Martin Wolf writing in the *Financial Times* today, who said:

“If democracy means anything, it means a country's right to change its mind”?

Keir Starmer: Yes, and I think that was repeated by the first Brexit Secretary on a number of occasions, although I am never quite sure whether I should quote the first Brexit Secretary—[*Interruption.*] Yes, or the second, but of course I listen carefully to the third every time, and look forward to seeing him yet again tomorrow morning at the Dispatch Box.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Keir Starmer: I am going to make some progress, as I have now been on my feet for 40 minutes.

We are putting forward a credible plan, and we are making it clear that if it is not carried and we are left with the option of the Prime Minister's deal on her red lines or no deal, then we will put down ourselves or support a motion in favour of a public vote in order to prevent a damaging Tory Brexit.

I had a section in my speech on extending article 50 and the amendment put down by others to that end. I hear what they say about that and commend their efforts to push the Government on this and to get the commitments we got yesterday and again at the Dispatch Box today. It would not have happened without a concerted effort by Members on the Opposition Benches, along with others across the House. It is extremely important that we now know that should the deal not go through on 12 March, there will be a binding vote on no deal—we have already had more than one indication where the will of the House is—and that if that does go through there will be a binding vote on extending article 50. In those circumstances, I urge all Members to support our amendment.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Order. Before I call the right hon. Member for Meriden (Dame Caroline Spelman), I have now to announce the results of today's deferred Divisions.

In respect of the question on the draft Official Listing of Securities Prospectus and Transparency (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, the Ayes were 317 and the Noes were 280, so the Ayes have it.

In respect of the question on the draft Employment Rights (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, the Ayes were 317 and the Noes were 260, so the Ayes have it.

In respect of the question on the draft Employment Rights (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, the Ayes were 318 and the Noes were 288, so the Ayes have it.

In respect of the question on the draft Employment Rights (Amendment) (EU Exit) (No. 2) Regulations 2018, the Ayes were 317 and the Noes were 288, so the Ayes have it.

In respect of the question on the draft Employment Rights (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) (EU Exit) (No. 2) Regulations 2018, the Ayes were 317 and the Noes were 260, so the Ayes have it.

Finally—I know the House is ahead of me on all of these matters, and I am merely reminding Members of the prodigious knowledge they possess on these important questions—in respect of the question on draft Financial Services Contracts (Transitional and Saving Provision) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, the Ayes were 318 and the Noes were 281, so the Ayes have it.

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

It will now be a very great relief to the House to hear Dame Caroline Spelman.

4.3 pm

Dame Caroline Spelman (Meriden) (Con): Thank you, Mr Speaker. To be honest, I was not expecting to be called quite so early in the debate, so I prepared a relatively short speech, having been conditioned by the time limits that have usually pertained in these debates. So I do not expect to detain the House for too long with my observations.

I begin by picking up where the right hon. and learned Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Keir Starmer), speaking for the Opposition, left off. In his final words he acknowledged that something important has changed. Indeed his colleague, the right hon. Member

for Birkenhead (Frank Field), intervened earlier in the debate to say that the atmosphere is changing, and I think he is right. The pragmatism and courage the Prime Minister showed yesterday in making her statement is a very important change. I also welcome the Brexit Secretary's recognition that, when my amendment carried on 29 January, Parliament demonstrated a clear majority against no deal. I listened very carefully to him speaking on the "Today" programme on Radio 4 this morning, when he set out that, if that majority should be restated, and if the meaningful vote did not carry before 12 March, Parliament would have an opportunity to vote on an extension to article 50 the following day. I am pleased to see that the will of Parliament will now be respected.

I absolutely agree with the deputy Prime Minister that the best way to avoid a no-deal Brexit is to vote for a deal. I did just that on 15 January and I will do so again when a deal is next put. I really do appeal to colleagues across the House to do the same. Agreeing a deal would help to ensure an orderly Brexit, which is essential to protect jobs. I have been absolutely consistent on my motivation on this issue, which is to protect the jobs and livelihoods of my constituents and those of my colleagues.

Peter Grant (Glenrothes) (SNP): The Prime Minister has indeed repeated ad nauseam that the way to avoid no deal is to vote for her deal, but is it not the case that the way to avoid Parliament voting against her deal would have been to talk to Parliament a year ago to find out what kind of a deal would be acceptable to the vast majority of Members of this House?

Dame Caroline Spelman: As an experienced former commercial negotiator—I know that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Jack Dromey) is one of those as well—I have learned that, in difficult negotiations of this kind, it is no good harping on about the past. We have to focus on the future and to be relentlessly optimistic and bring good will to the table.

Getting back to the subject that is closest to my heart, I sounded the alarm months ago about the risks to the car industry of a no-deal Brexit. Many workers in my constituency have already lost their jobs, and more recently we heard the sad news about Nissan and Honda. The loss of jobs is devastating, but far more will be risked if auto manufacturers leave these shores. The chairman of Unipart, John Neill, said in the weekend *Financial Times*:

"If we lose the automotive industry, we lose one of the most powerful drivers of productivity and a powerful source of industrial innovation".

The UK is now the ninth biggest manufacturing country in the world and we just cannot afford to lose this critical industry.

A no-deal Brexit threatens not only our car makers. Last night, representatives from the CBI, Next, Bosch, Ford, the TUC, Make UK—formerly the EEF—the Food and Drink Federation, the Investment Association and Virgin Media, to name but a few, spoke to a large number of MPs at an event in Parliament. All those organisations fear the chaos of a no-deal Brexit and implored parliamentarians to come together and agree a deal. Those colleagues who think that leaving without a deal is in the national interest must answer the concerns of the industries that millions of jobs depend on.

[*Dame Caroline Spelman*]

Chris Cummings, chief executive of the Investment Association, which represents firms collectively managing around £7 trillion, told MPs last night that £19 billion had left the United Kingdom since the referendum. The Investment Association can measure that, because it involves its members. The current run rate of this capital flight is approximately £2.4 billion each month, so the notion that no deal has already been priced into the markets is simply not true. The full consequences have not yet been accounted for.

The human cost of no deal is not just jobs and livelihoods today, which are very important, especially in constituencies such as mine; it will also impact the value of people's pensions and savings in the future. Having touched on pensions, I want to make a point that is relevant to amendment (b), which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has said that the Government will accept. Colleagues might recall that I have also sounded the alarm about the plight of UK pensioners living in other EU countries, and especially about the provisions for their healthcare. If the United Kingdom were to leave the EU without a deal, there are at present no provisions in place to ensure that their healthcare would be paid for. Given the size of the contingency fund of taxpayers' money that the Government have had to make available for the risk of a no-deal Brexit, I suggest to my right hon. Friends that some portion of that could be used to bridge the gap for UK citizens in Italy, Germany, France and Spain who are already receiving letters from the authorities warning them that their healthcare costs will not be covered from 29 March. That is a source of real anxiety and human cost to the people concerned.

Businesses cautiously welcomed the Prime Minister's announcement yesterday, which has the capacity to take away the threat of no deal on 29 March, and the director of the CBI described it as a "glimpse of sanity". She called on the Government to permanently rule out no deal to provide the certainty that business needs. That would de-risk the situation and create the space to secure a pragmatic deal. People often confuse risk with uncertainty, because a binary choice between a deal or no deal with 15 days to go is a high-risk situation, which creates uncertainty. The Prime Minister's pragmatic response yesterday helped to reduce that risk and creates the space to secure a deal.

The contingency planning for no deal has already cost business millions and the taxpayer billions. Pfizer alone has spent £90 million on no-deal preparations, and that money cannot then be invested or directed to the frontline, so jobs will be lost in the end. The Federation of Small Businesses reports that 85% of its members are not ready for no deal and, as somebody mentioned earlier, very small businesses do not have the capacity to prepare for a no-deal scenario in the same way as some larger ones can.

Last night's publication of the Government's assessment of the state of preparedness for no deal did not provide a lot of reassurance on that, so it is time to be pragmatic—the Prime Minister has taken a lead on that—and to deliver an orderly Brexit. We need to come together across parties to try to get a deal over the line. If we cannot do that, we will fail the nation.

If MPs cannot bring themselves to put the national interest first at a time like this, they should consider the risks we face to security, freight delays, air traffic control, visas, food, medicine and energy shortages, healthcare for UK citizens in the EU, scientific research and educational exchange. We have heard more and more about those things, and all that disruption is having and will have an impact on the people whom we represent. As demonstrated on 29 January, there is a clear majority to rule out no deal, and I expect that that majority will increase at the next opportunity. However, we cannot just stand against something; we must urgently build a consensus for a deal that we stand up for in the British national interest.

It is clear that businesses need a deal to deliver frictionless trade and customs co-operation. Are the parties really so far apart on some form of customs partnership? The 2017 Conservative party manifesto mentioned having a special relationship based on a customs arrangement, and the official Opposition are calling for a customs union, so I feel that we are within touching distance if there is a determined effort to reach a consensus.

Lady Hermon: I would be delighted to hear the right hon. Lady encourage those on the Front Bench to confirm that she and her right hon. and hon. Friends will be allowed a free vote in the event that the Prime Minister again does not win the meaningful vote if we have one before the middle of March. Will the Conservative Government allow Conservative Members to have a free vote in the event of a significant decision about taking no deal off the table?

Dame Caroline Spelman: I cannot commit the Government to that, but it is clear to the House that these are not normal political times. I do not envy the job of my party's Chief Whip, which must be one of the most difficult jobs on the planet at the moment. The main parties have difficulty in operating as we normally would, and much of what has been achieved has been achieved by building cross-party alliances. I think the public feel reassured when they see that happen, leastways my constituents and members of my party have told me that they like to see us working together in the national interest to try to bring about a resolution to this process, because we need it sooner rather than later.

With good will and determination, I believe we can get there and secure the new relationship with Europe for which people voted. I believe we will enjoy trading on preferential terms with our largest market, while being outside the constraints of the EU institutions to which many object today. That is what more than 17 million people voted for, and that reality is now within our grasp.

Whether Brexit is delivered on 29 March or is delayed for a few months—I am no great fan of an extended delay, as delay means uncertainty and will cost businesses money—it is up to us to back a deal that delivers certainty and protects prosperity and work. I therefore urge colleagues from all parties carefully to consider the amendments before the House today. More than that, as the debate continues in this place, we must now work more closely together than ever before to deliver Brexit.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for North East Fife (Stephen Gethins), who speaks for the Scottish National party, now has a possibly unrivalled opportunity to demonstrate, by comparison with his Front-Bench colleagues, just how brief he can be.

4.16 pm

Stephen Gethins (North East Fife) (SNP): Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Here we are for yet another debate and yet more votes as the clock ticks towards leaving the European Union on 29 March, and towards a no-deal Brexit and a cliff edge that everyone knows will be disastrous and damaging. From day one, this has been a lesson in gross irresponsibility, particularly from the Government.

Our amendment (k) is simple and straightforward: it would take no deal off the table altogether. The Prime Minister was uncharacteristically clear in her statement yesterday when she said we will have a vote on 13 March to take no deal off the table for the end of March. Our amendment simply goes one step further.

We know from public statements and from what we hear—Ministers will be well aware of this—that even members of the Cabinet and officials are warning of the devastation that no deal would bring. Everybody knows. This is not a negotiating tactic; it is simply a tactic to hold a fracturing Conservative party together. We have a Government in peacetime who we know are preparing for medicine shortages and food shortages, and who we know have discussed martial law and civil unrest. That is deeply disconcerting to everyone, and it underlines why no deal must be taken off the table.

Our amendment is not just something that the Scottish National party is calling for, and I am grateful to colleagues from the Green party, Plaid Cymru and the Liberal Democrats for backing it. I know that colleagues from the Labour party and the Conservative party are calling for it, too, including the right hon. Member for Meriden (Dame Caroline Spelman) in the previous speech. We must take no deal off the table altogether, which is why this is such a simple amendment.

Dame Caroline Spelman: I should have made it clear to the House that, having been reassured by what the Minister said today and by the consistency with which he said it, I will not be pressing my amendment.

Stephen Gethins: I thank the right hon. Lady for that clarification. The amendment standing in my name and that of my colleagues will be pressed to a vote, because we think that as the clock ticks we cannot wait for another two weeks. We have been waiting for “another couple of weeks” or for “another few days” for months and years now. This House needs to take a bit of responsibility for the situation in which we have been left, for which posterity and history will judge us.

On the way that history will judge us, let me talk about the human element of this. I do not want to embarrass the hon. Member for South Leicestershire (Alberto Costa), but I am going to say a few kind words about him. Three years ago, in Prime Minister's questions, he asked the Prime Minister not to make him vote against his parents' interests. We back his amendment about EU citizens, which he has rightly tabled. We back him, and we think he is doing a brave and decent thing. I note the remarks made by former colleagues of his

such as Lord Duncan of Springbank about how valuable they thought it was working for him. I hope I have not damaged his future political prospects too much by saying that, but I remark on the decency of what he is trying to do, his own personal situation and the bravery of what he has done today.

What I find incredibly striking is that we have a Government where collective responsibility is breaking down, where a Prime Minister remarks that she does not want a Cabinet full of yes-men because she cannot get collective responsibility and where Ministers have been able to say whatever they like, regardless of what Government policy is, yet you end up sacking a member of Government for agreeing with you. What kind of situation are we in? This is an extraordinary set of circumstances in which the Prime Minister fails to sack Cabinet members for disagreeing with her publicly but sacks a member of the Government whom she has agreed with, whom the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster agreed with at the Dispatch Box, although he is not in his place at the moment, and whom the Home Secretary found himself in agreement with this morning. That is an extraordinary state of affairs. Do not worry; I am sure that the hon. Member for South Leicestershire will return to disagreeing with us on other occasions, but I salute what he has done today and the way in which he has conducted himself, with a common decency that we too rarely see in this Brexit debate.

We get told about “Project Fear”, but it is not that when it is a matter of fact. One in three businesses is planning to relocate some of its operations and one in 10 has done so. The UK is seen as a bad choice for investment. The global chief investment officer at UBS Wealth Management has said:

“The consensus among those investors is that the UK is uninvestable at this point”.

That is not good for anybody. We also have a decline in our public services, where we are seeing a dramatic decline of 87% in the number of applications from European economic area nationals for UK registration, according to the Nursing and Midwifery Council. That is a crucial public service, where EU nationals fill gaps in the workplace to provide it. So much damage is being done by this threat of a no-deal. Our amendment is a simple one and I hope that Members will back it, because it is straightforward and it will help to take this away.

Mr Baron: The hon. Gentleman tends simply to ignore the fact that the British economy is doing well. We have record inward investment, record low unemployment and record manufacturing output, despite all the so-called “uncertainty”, and the doom and gloom that the SNP predicts. Do not forget that the predictions last time were so badly wrong that the Bank of England had to apologise very publicly for getting it so wrong.

Stephen Gethins: I find that this is the extraordinary thing. The hon. Gentleman knows I have huge respect for him—he and I served on the Foreign Affairs Committee together—but he is telling us that we cannot trust the Government's figures. Who can we trust any more if we cannot trust his own Government? Who can we trust when we are trying to make a judgment? Who can we trust when we are trying to make judgments about the future? We know that this is having a real impact, and I am going to come on to deal with some of this shortly.

[Stephen Gethins]

We are almost three years on from the EU referendum and I am not even entirely sure why we are doing this at the moment. I have just been reading that, apparently, Poundland is going to be doing burgundy and blue passport covers, and we could all have a choice—they will be a pound a go. Perhaps if the Government decide to buy one for everybody in the UK, we can all have our own choice and it will save us a lot of hassle and be a lot cheaper than crashing out of the European Union.

Let us not lose sight of the gross irresponsibility that has led us to this point. We have a minority Government who are failing to be a minority Government. Other European legislatures manage it, and the Scottish Government manage it. It is not always easy; it is difficult—

Hywel Williams (Arfon) (PC): And the Welsh Government.

Stephen Gethins: The Welsh Government do it. A minority Government must speak to the other parties and engage with the Opposition. We have a Government who are trying to run the show as if they have a majority of 100; for their information, they do not. They lost their majority at the last general election. We did not lose our majority at the last general election, but the Government did.

Let us not lose sight of where we are. It was the charlatans and chancers who backed vote leave on a blank piece of paper. They did not have the decency, courtesy or democratic accountability to put down what vote leave meant, and the Secretary of State was one of them. That is why we are in the mess that we are in today. It is a mess entirely of the Secretary of State and his colleagues' own making, and one for which not only they but unfortunately the rest of us are paying the price, too.

Matt Western (Warwick and Leamington) (Lab) *rose*—

Anne Marie Morris (Newton Abbot) (Con) *rose*—

Stephen Gethins: I have taken some interventions from the Government side, so I shall take one from the Labour Benches.

Matt Western: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the mess he refers to includes business confidence falling in the last four quarters—3.7% in the last quarter—and consumer confidence at its lowest ever since 2012?

Stephen Gethins: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. We are seeing business confidence falling and investment falling. These things are matters of fact.

I will come to some more figures in a moment, but first I wish to talk about the UK's standing in the world. People talk about democracy and the UK's standing. They talk of unelected bureaucrats, but the greatest number of parliamentarians are the unelected ones in the House of Lords. That is not democracy. The European Parliament is elected, the Commission is accountable to that Parliament, and the Council is made up of the 28 elected Governments as well. That is a damn sight more democratic than this place is.

Alison Thewliss (Glasgow Central) (SNP): My hon. Friend is making a good point about democratic accountability. I have been serving on the Committees

for countless financial services statutory instruments that will take powers and give them to the Financial Conduct Authority, the Prudential Regulation Authority and the Treasury, and the Government will not give them to MPs in this House.

Stephen Gethins: It has been extraordinary. As usual, my hon. Friend makes an excellent point about how the Government have tried to take powers away. They have tried to take votes from us and they have tried to take away our ability to hold them to account in a way that they just could not get away with in the European institutions, whether they like it or not.

On the lack of planning and that vote leave on a blank piece of paper, I think Donald Tusk was being restrained when he said that there is a special place in hell for those who backed Brexit without a clue about how to get there. For all those snowflakes who feigned outrage about his remarks, this is a man who fought the communists—he was living under a Soviet vassal state at that point, unlike others—and who stood up for and was arrested for his beliefs, yet when he points out the blindingly obvious, he gets dragged over the coals for it. What outrage. It was faux outrage.

Richard Graham *rose*—

Stephen Gethins: I will give way if the hon. Gentleman can possibly justify it.

Richard Graham: I honestly do not think that Slovenia has anything to do with today's discussion of the withdrawal agreement. The amendment proposed by the SNP, which is what the hon. Gentleman should be referring to, talks about this House being

“determined not to leave the European Union without a withdrawal agreement”,

so will he confirm that the SNP will support the Government deal, which will be on the table before 12 March?

Stephen Gethins: It is extraordinary: I have not even mentioned Slovenia yet, but the hon. Gentleman knows the reference I am making. I know he is a decent Member and has served his country well in the diplomatic service, and I know he will have been embarrassed by the Foreign Secretary's recent remarks. I want to talk about—[*Interruption.*] I am a Front-Bench speaker. I want to talk about the UK's standing in the world of which we are still a part for the time being.

There are those who are quite content to compare the EU with the USSR and cannot handle these remarks from Donald Tusk. Just at the point when we need friends and influence around the world—as the hon. Member for Gloucester (Richard Graham), who works so hard on these things, knows full well—we are losing them. Let us look at some of the reactions to that. Carl Bildt, the former Swedish Prime Minister, said that Britain used to be a nation

“providing leadership to the world. Now it can't even provide leadership to itself.”

Latvia's ambassador to London said:

“Soviets killed, deported, exiled and imprisoned hundreds of thousands of Latvia's inhabitants after the illegal occupation in 1940, and ruined lives of three generations, while the EU has brought prosperity, equality, growth, and respect.”

I ask Members to please reflect on what our closest friends and allies are telling us. Asked to respond to Hunt's remarks when he compared the EU with the Soviet Union, the European Commission's chief spokesman, said:

"I say respectfully that we would all benefit, in particular foreign affairs ministers, from opening a history book from time to time."

The Foreign Secretary clearly did not listen. He doubled down when he went to Slovenia and referred to it as a "Soviet vassal state" to which the former Speaker of the Slovenian Parliament said:

"The British foreign minister comes to Slovenia asking us for a favour while arrogantly insulting us."

At a time of crisis, the greatest crisis that the UK has faced since the second world war, we are led by political pygmies who do not understand the history of those countries that are closest to us, never mind the history of the nations of these islands. They have turned the UK into the political basket case of Europe. There is utter astonishment and bewilderment in Brussels and elsewhere at the UK's decline. There is also astonishment in Scotland at what is going on down here, even by those who, unlike me, backed the Union.

The right hon. Member for Broxtowe (Anna Soubry) was right to raise a point of order last night and I listened to it carefully. I am glad that, because of her work, we got the no-deal papers released, and I thank her for it. It has to be said that the document was pretty flimsy, a very small document. There is much more to the Scottish Government's document. Their analysis, which they were happy to publish a long time ago without having to be forced, has shown that any form of Brexit will be damaging for Scotland's economy. The deal will be damaging to Scotland's economy, which is why we cannot vote for it, but a no-deal Brexit could result in a recession worse than that in 2008, causing Scotland's GDP to fall by up to 7%, and unemployment to rise by around 100,000.

Anna Soubry rose—

Stephen Gethins: I will give way to the right hon. Lady as I have made reference to her.

Anna Soubry: The point that everybody in this House needs to understand is that, on Privy Council terms, I saw the entirety of the most recent documents that members of this Government's Cabinet and the important sub-Committee had seen. I saw a large number of those documents, the contents of which make it clear, in the words of the Business Secretary, that a no deal would be ruinous. Last night, I attributed those words to the Brexit Secretary who was very keen for me to set the record straight. I would have liked him to have adopted that view, but it was the Business Secretary who described no deal as ruinous. Notwithstanding that clear information, which was available to the most senior members of this Government, they refuse to take no deal off the table. I say gently to the hon. Gentleman that that is the disgrace. The Government know what a no deal would do to this country, and they refuse point blank to take it off the table.

Stephen Gethins: As usual, the right hon. Lady makes a powerful and valid point. As this is the first time I have been able to say this, might I also say that it is nice to hear her speaking so much more closely to me now?

Anna Soubry: You might regret it.

Stephen Gethins: The right hon. Lady is right, I might regret it. As so often, she makes a powerful point. That is why our amendment today—I hope she will support it—is a very simple one that will take no deal off the table. The Cabinet knows how damaging it will be; business knows how damaging it will be. These papers are there. They have been seen, as the right hon. Lady correctly points out. On top of that, the Scottish Government analysis shows that EU structural funds are worth €941 million to Scotland across the EU budget period, and we do not know what happens next. That is almost €1 billion and we do not know what happens.

There are 4,500 EU national staff facing uncertainty in Scottish universities, and I see that daily in my constituency work. A letter from 150 universities says that

"leaving the EU without a deal is one of the biggest threats our universities have ever faced".

The University of St Andrews, which signed that letter, has been around for more than 600 years, so it has a bit of context; it knows a thing or two.

Do you know what stings? Scotland never voted for this. We were the first to suggest an extension, as common sense. The Scottish Government were the first to propose a compromise, to which the UK Government did not really have the decency to respond. And here we are proposing to reach out and work with the Government to take no deal off the table as well. We did not vote for this process but we have to engage with it, and we have engaged with it. I pay tribute to our friends and colleagues from different parties who have worked with us, because this is the right thing to do.

The Scottish food and drink industry thinks that we will lose £2 billion in sales annually. This does not affect the hedge fund managers or those who have pushed money offshore. It affects the poorest and most vulnerable, as well as small businesses, and it has an impact on unemployment in some of the areas of the United Kingdom that can least afford it.

I hear people saying about the EU as a political union, "Why would you want to be a member of the UK in the EU?" Well, you know what? The EU listens. We are in a partnership of equals in the EU; it cannot force us to do things. We have a Court of Justice, a Parliament and a Council of Ministers—the UK has none of them. The EU is a club for independent, growing and thriving member states. There is no place for independence or a partnership of equals within the United Kingdom.

Our amendment is a simple and straightforward cross-party proposal that rules out no deal all together. Yes, we want to take things out of the hands of the Prime Minister, but we also want her to commit to this because I am sorry to say that, with her twists and turns, it has become increasingly difficult to trust anything the Prime Minister says. Four weeks away from leaving, our amendment seems to be a responsible course of action, as there are so many pieces of legislation still to be passed.

I have raised many points, but I now address the hon. Member for Basildon and Billericay (Mr Baron). We have put £4.2 billion into no-deal preparation. Just think what we could have done with that £4.2 billion at

[Stephen Gethins]

a time of continued Westminster austerity, when our public services are crying out for it and when we should be tackling climate change, poverty and many other challenges. Continuing with no deal is irresponsible, irrational and—I appeal to some of the Tories—very, very expensive. I hope that all Members will join us in backing our cross-party amendment.

Mr Speaker: A five-minute limit on Back-Bench speeches now applies, although I warn colleagues that that limit will probably have to fall; it is not compulsory to speak to the full limit.

4.37 pm

Mr John Baron (Basildon and Billericay) (Con): I will try to abide by your instructions, Mr Speaker; thank you for calling me so early.

It is customary to say what a pleasure it is to follow the previous speaker, but I must suggest to my friend, the hon. Member for North East Fife (Stephen Gethins), that the SNP continually talks down the United Kingdom to such an extent that most people in Scotland do not even listen any more. SNP Members would do well to reflect on this. I gently suggest to the hon. Gentleman that he may be very critical of the UK at the moment—of how the Government conduct themselves and our parliamentary democracy—but we can be proud of the fact that this robust democracy is accommodating a very robust debate. In France, the Government can increase the fuel tax and there are people dead in the streets of Paris. In America, there has not been a Government for months. This is an important debate and there are differences across the House, but we can be proud of our parliamentary democracy in actually accommodating that debate.

Angus Brendan MacNeil: As the hon. Gentleman is busy lecturing Scots and Scotland, I hope he will reflect on this point—that in Scotland today the EU is far more popular among the people, by about 18 percentage points, than the United Kingdom. He should bear that in mind the next time he wants to lecture Scotland.

Mr Baron: I actually think that is quite questionable given the SNP's recent election results and how badly it is doing—

Joanna Cherry *rose*—

Mr Baron: Just wait a minute—sit down. I have taken one intervention. We should look at how badly the SNP is doing in terms of representing the interests of the EU, as it were, with regard to election results.

Let me put the SNP to one side for a second and suggest to my fellow fusilier, the Secretary of State, that, as a leaver, I also accept that there is a need for compromise with regard to the withdrawal agreement. One cannot, after 45 years of integration, move from imperfection to perfection in one bound; there has to be compromise on both sides. That is why, while I have trouble with the transition period—there are many aspects that I do not like—at least it is definite. It is no worse than being in the EU itself—not really. As my right hon. Friend will know, what many Conservative Members have a problem with is the fact that the backstop is indefinite as it is presently constituted. I urge him to ensure that we have

a meaningful change to the backstop to address the fact that at the moment we could be locked in an indefinite backstop that only the EU could free us from. No sensible person would enter into a relationship of that sort—it is madness.

When I say “meaningful” change, I mean that it has to have equal standing with the backstop, or the bit that we are changing. The Northern Ireland protocol containing the backstop is an appendix, so there is scope for a further appendix putting this right. It would be face-saving for the EU, if the agreement itself had not been changed. We could put a meaningful appendix into it. I suggest that the Government give that some thought, because it could assuage the concerns of a lot of Conservative Members with regard to the withdrawal agreement. Instead of worrying about where any additional text would go, agreement about the text itself could first be sought. That could be very helpful, because an awful lot of time could be wasted in trying to agree where that text goes before the text itself has been agreed.

That is something for the Secretary of State to think about. I wish him and his team well—genuinely so. I have expressed concern that the Prime Minister's next steps, as outlined yesterday, may, at the margin, make a good deal less likely because the EU could perhaps hope that Parliament does its work for it by taking no deal off the table and by extending article 50. However, I still wish him well, because it is still within our grasp to achieve a withdrawal agreement that could bring us all together—certainly those of us on the Conservative Benches, and a number of hon. Members on the Opposition Benches—to get this agreement through.

Let me quickly turn to the Labour party's policy on a second referendum, because that has not been touched on in this debate so far, but it is absolutely scandalous. Labour said that it would respect the wishes of the referendum, and now it is offering a second referendum. In one way, that is good, because it is clear blue water between the Conservative party and the Labour party. However, I would just offer these thoughts to the Labour party with regard to its recent assurances that it is going to offer a second referendum. First, it is a condescending policy—it is saying that people did not understand what they were voting for.

Peter Grant: Two days ago, the hon. Gentleman told this House that the United Kingdom already trades on WTO terms with everybody outside the European Union, and the Prime Minister had to correct him. If somebody who led the campaign to have an EU referendum still does not know about the trade deals that we have as part of the EU, what chance have the other 60 million people in these islands got?

Mr Baron: I am afraid the hon. Gentleman misheard me. I said that we trade with the majority of the world outside the EU on WTO terms—that is a fact—and we trade very profitably with them. That is the issue. While it is clear that most of us would prefer a good deal to no deal, the exaggeration of how bad WTO terms are has to be set in context.

Peter Grant *rose*—

Mr Baron: I am sorry, but I am going to finish because I do not think that a third intervention will add anything to my time, to be perfectly honest.

The Labour party policy on a second referendum is condescending because it says that people did not know what they voted for the first time round. The predictions of doom and gloom from the establishment in this country—the Bank of England, the International Monetary Fund, the Government and leaflets through the door—and of 500,000 more people unemployed by December 2016 if we voted leave were so badly wrong that most of those public bodies had to apologise.

The policy is condescending, but it is also contradictory, because it suggests that people might not have understood it last time but will understand it this time. Why would they understand it this time if we do not have faith in them to understand it the first time? Why not then have a third or fourth referendum? Finally, it is dangerous, because we made a clear pledge that we would respect that referendum result. I thank the Labour party for its policy, but it is wrong.

4.45 pm

Hilary Benn (Leeds Central) (Lab): We need to begin by acknowledging that we have made a little bit of progress. Yesterday the Prime Minister finally acknowledged that there is no support in the House of Commons for leaving with no deal. It was interesting that the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster was in most difficulty in his contribution when he was trying to avoid answering questions about how the Government will vote if we get to that point. I will make a prediction to ease his pain: if we do get to that point, I think the Government will vote against us leaving with no deal. How could they do anything other than that given the document released yesterday, which predicts £13 billion of cost to British businesses? For what? To fill in customs declarations, with no benefit to their trade whatsoever. It also predicts rising food prices and delays at the ports. At the moment, French customs officials say, “Go on, go on,” but the moment they put their hands up and say, “Arrêtez”—“Stop”—the chaos will begin.

At the industrial coalition meeting to which the right hon. Member for Meriden (Dame Caroline Spelman) referred, the most striking moment for those of us who were there was when representatives of two major parts of manufacturing industry said simply, “If there’s a no-deal Brexit, it will be catastrophic for us.” The thing I always find it hard to understand is why people who do not run things and make things for a living think they know better about the consequences of a no-deal Brexit than people who do.

The other truth that has finally hit home—I hope the Government understand it—is that it does not matter when we are asked to vote against a no-deal Brexit. We will do it in March, we will do it in June and we will do it in October of whatever year, because the House will not allow that to happen.

If the Prime Minister’s deal is defeated when it comes back, there will be an extension to article 50, and the question that has not really been addressed yet is: for what purpose will we use the time? The amendments that probably will not be pressed to a vote today will be very important in the weeks to come, because they will provide us with the means to answer that question.

I think that only three options will face us in those circumstances. The first is to try to reach a consensus on a different kind of Brexit deal. The second is again to extend article 50, to enable us to negotiate the future

partnership. The third, if we remain deadlocked, is to take the question back to the British people. None of them will be easy—there are no benefits to the British economy from Brexit. I will turn to each of those options.

The first—Norway plus or Common Market 2.0—would at least minimise the damage to our economy. It would represent a painful compromise for many people, but it would be a much better way forward than the Prime Minister’s deal. Do I think that she will ever agree to it? Sadly not, because she has shown herself to be completely inflexible.

The second option, which is really the obvious thing to do, is to go to the EU and say, “Why don’t we negotiate the future relationship now and extend article 50 for that purpose?” The House refuses to vote for the Prime Minister’s deal because each of us, for different reasons, says that we do not know what the future will look like, and therefore we are not prepared to take this enormous step of leaving the European Union on the basis of a prospectus that is completely vague and uncertain. How do we answer that question? We negotiate the future partnership.

Mr McFadden: On the point about the purpose of an extension, what does my right hon. Friend think of President Macron saying that there is no way the EU would accept an extension without a “clear objective”? In his view, what should that clear objective be?

Hilary Benn: My right hon. Friend is absolutely right. This is a challenge the House will face the moment it has voted for an extension, because I am sure that is what the European Union will say to us.

I am setting out what I think are the three alternatives that would be available to the House at that point. The first requires agreement. I do not think the Prime Minister is prepared to give that; that is what the evidence shows. The second would require the European Union to change its approach to the negotiations completely. It would be the sensible thing to do, but the EU may not agree. The third—the one we will be left with if we cannot agree—will be to go back to the people and ask them what they think.

I simply want to say that I welcome the decision that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition announced on Monday. It cannot have been an easy decision to make, and I do not at all underestimate the difficulties of holding a second referendum. However, it would in those circumstances answer the question from the European Union about what the extension is for. When it comes to the question in such a referendum, to me it is clear: the only deal that has been negotiated to leave—the Prime Minister’s—even though it would have been rejected by Parliament, and the alternative of remain, because there is not an alternative leave on the table. Let me say to those who might want to jump up and say, “What about no deal?”: first, if we go back to the referendum of 2016, nobody on the leave side argued for leaving with no deal—nobody; secondly, we know how damaging it would be; and, thirdly, why should an option that was never before the British people in 2016 suddenly appear on a ballot paper in 2019, if we have a referendum?

Mr Grieve: I am sorry to bang on about this, but we are a rule-of-law state and it is an unlawful question to put. If a Government choose to put no deal on a

[Mr Grieve]

referendum ballot paper, they are in effect saying that they will not respect and have decided as a matter of a policy not to observe their international obligations.

Hilary Benn: The right hon. and learned Gentleman very forcefully makes one of the arguments for why no deal is not an option in every sense of the word.

In conclusion, we are in a marginally better position than we were when we had the last of these debates, because the Government have been forced to face reality. I pay tribute to Ministers who, we are told, in a series of delegations to the Prime Minister, made her realise that she would not be able to defeat the amendments today if she did not make a concession yesterday.

However, we are still in a very perilous position for the country. I have no doubt at all about our ability to prosper, but our future prosperity depends on the decisions that we choose to make. It is not automatic, as the Brexit disaster is proving. That is why I echo the view of others who have said that those who argued for leave bear a very heavy responsibility for the crisis the country is now in. Parliament's job is to make sure that, when that moment comes, if the deal is defeated again, we are ready to make a choice about what we are for. The tragedy of Brexit is that the Government have been completely incapable of making those choices. It is Parliament's responsibility to step up and take those decisions if the Government continue to fail to do so.

4.53 pm

Sir William Cash (Stone) (Con): To reply immediately to the right hon. Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn), it is not actually the duty of this House to surrender parliamentary government to government by Parliament. In fact, that is well established in our constitutional arrangements. Furthermore, any attempt by shenanigans to rearrange the procedures to give private Members' Bills an advantage over Government business is itself reprehensible for that very good reason.

I want to turn to another question, which is to do with the issue of control over laws. I think it is very important for every Member of this House to ask themselves whether they would be prepared to tell their constituents that, under article 4 of the withdrawal agreement, we would be expected—in fact, we would be required by an Act of Parliament—to surrender control over our laws. If people have not had the time or perhaps the opportunity to read article 4, may I suggest that they do so? To do otherwise would be utterly and completely irresponsible.

Richard Drax (South Dorset) (Con): My hon. Friend is making an excellent speech. If we do not have control of our laws, we do not have control of our country. Is that not right?

Sir William Cash: That is completely right. That is what we are here for. We are not here to voice our own opinions or to fragment into factions and then impose views on others by virtue of deals done across the Floor of the House. We are elected on manifesto commitments, and we have an obligation to our constituents to make laws in their interests, not in ours. I therefore suggest that looking at article 4 is extremely important. I accept

that it is said that the article would apply only during the implementation period, but that in itself would put us at the mercy of our competitors.

Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg (North East Somerset) (Con): It is worse than that, because it would apply not only during the implementation period but during the whole period of the backstop, which is potentially unlimited. The European Court of Justice would therefore remain—against our manifesto commitment—the supreme arbiter of our laws in that area.

Sir William Cash: I am so glad that my hon. Friend has made that point, because I was about to make it myself and now will not have to. I am as much against the backstop as I am against the article 4 arrangements, for reasons that both of us agree on.

We have to grapple with the fact that article 4 will apply across all the EU treaties, laws and legal positions adopted by the ECJ over recent years. It is inconceivable that the House would hollow itself out in such a manner as to preclude itself from being able to control such things. I am Chairman of the European Scrutiny Committee, and we get these regulations and directives week in, week out. We received one last week that intends to turn the veto procedure—or unanimity rule—over the making of national tax policy into qualified majority voting. If people really think that that is a minor matter, let them think again what effect it would have on their constituents.

Under article 4, our country would be reduced, as I said in my intervention on the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, to an undemocratic subjugation to the decisions of 27 other member states. In fact, not only that, but as I said, it would put us at the mercy of our competitors. In addition, the article would have the same effect with regard to the question of state aid during the backstop.

I do not think that the businesses that argued so strongly for this transitional period had any idea that this would be the consequence of the withdrawal agreement. That agreement emerged from the Chequers deal, which itself was an overturning of the withdrawal Act that we passed in June 2018 and had been planned long before that Act was given Royal Assent, without any reference to the Cabinet and in defiance of collective Cabinet responsibility.

If we do not control these laws, who will? It will be the 27 member states. In an important book, "Berlin Rules", by our former ambassador to Germany, Sir Paul Lever, he says that before decisions are taken by European member states, or indeed by the Council of Ministers, they are cleared with Germany. He also says that it is a German Europe. He does not mince his words.

Angus Brendan MacNeil: I wonder if the hon. Gentleman is aware of the utter irony of this situation. He moans and complains and raises grievances about Europe—he has a chip on his shoulder—but the reality for Scotland in the United Kingdom is worse than everything he says. We have a party in charge that we have not voted for in 65 years. The European Union is nowhere near as bad as what he is going on about.

Sir William Cash: I do not concede what the hon. Gentleman says for one very good reason: it is part of the United Kingdom.

That is my first point on control over laws. Article 4 is so offensive because it hollows out this House and hollows out our democracy. On that basis alone, one should not vote for the withdrawal agreement.

As I said in my exchanges with the shadow Secretary of State, I want to know why anyone would want to undermine the repeal of the European Communities Act 1972, which is the law of the land and is contained in section 1 of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act itself. I would also like people to be honest enough—those who wish to rejoin the European Union, including my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr Grieve)—to say why on earth anyone would want to rejoin the European Union when it is in complete and total implosion. People are voting with their feet in so many countries, including in Italy.

In a nutshell, the withdrawal agreement is deeply, deeply flawed and we ought to vote against it. I believe that the decision at the moment—as I understand it, it has not been concluded—is that the amendments are going to be withdrawn, but I look forward to hearing from the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper).

Mr Speaker: We are quite extraordinarily grateful to the Chair of the European Scrutiny Committee.

5.1 pm

Yvette Cooper (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab): As I follow the hon. Member for Stone (Sir William Cash), I would just point out to him that I am not convinced other European countries are looking at us with any kind of envy at the moment, given the confusion and chaos we seem to be in. I will want to move amendment (f), and I will also speak to amendments (a), (b) and (c).

We are back here again at our usual fortnightly gathering in which nothing has changed. The only thing that has changed in our family, Mr Speaker, is that Ed is currently halfway up Kilimanjaro with Little Mix, Danny Dyer and Shirley Ballas for Comic Relief. That has cued a whole series of bad jokes about which is harder: climbing an extremely high mountain or trying to get anybody to agree anything on Brexit. I fear his mountain climbing will be considerably shorter than our repeated debates.

I would like to deal with the amendments first before, if I have time, addressing the wider issue. The Government have changed their position on the next steps if there is no deal in place and agreed by the middle of March. That is clearly a result of our cross-party Bill and cross-party pressure. I want to pay tribute in particular to the work of the right hon. Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin), the hon. Member for Grantham and Stamford (Nick Boles), the right hon. Member for Meriden (Dame Caroline Spelman), my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn) and my hon. Friends the Members for Birmingham, Erdington (Jack Dromey) and for Leicester West (Liz Kendall). It has taken a lot of cross-party work to get this far. Frankly, it should not have taken that, and it should not have taken the threats of resignation by Cabinet Ministers, to get the Government to do something sensible and just put in place parliamentary safeguards to avert the kind of no deal that would be hugely chaotic, that

nobody has done preparation for, that would mean a real hit to our manufacturing industry, disadvantaging British manufacturing right around the world, and that would hit medicine supplies and push food prices up in shops—deeply irresponsible circumstances for our constituents.

I still have some questions and need some assurances, however, because we have had votes promised and then pulled, and we have had motions passed and then ignored. I hope that the Brexit Secretary will repeat the reassurances. He will know that I have raised questions about his previous dismissing of motions in saying that legislation took priority, and previously saying that no deal on 29 March was the default option. I heard the Minister for the Cabinet Office say earlier that the default position had now changed and it would no longer be the policy of the Government to pursue no deal on 29 March if there was not a deal in place in time and that, instead, Government policy would now be to respect the decision of the House on whether to pursue no deal or an extension of article 50. I would just like to have that confirmation.

Owen Smith (Pontypridd) (Lab): My right hon. Friend is making an excellent speech. In addition to that confirmation, which I, too, would like to hear from Ministers today, would she like to hear, as I would, what the Government will do in that vote? Will they vote against no deal or could they—extraordinarily—vote for no deal?

Yvette Cooper: That is hugely important. I will finish these quick points and then come on to that. I would like confirmation, too—like my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds Central—that the motions will be amendable. There is also the key issue about what happens if there is a disagreement. Let us suppose that there is a disagreement between the EU and the UK, perhaps with one side suggesting three months and one suggesting two months. In those circumstances, we need the reassurance that the Government will not shrug their shoulders and say, “Okay, we didn’t get an agreement. We are now just going to pursue no deal after all,” and that instead they will come back to this House and allow for some process of resolution, if there is a disagreement.

I really urge Ministers to say how the Government would vote. We will keep our Bill in reserve. We hope that, with these assurances, we do not need to press amendment (c). I hope to press amendment (f) and that we can have confirmation and clarity of what the Prime Minister said as part of the motion, but it is also important for the Government to provide clarity about how they would vote. Businesses still do not know exactly whether there is going to be a majority or not. We can give them some assurances about how people have voted in the past, but the thing they really want to hear is what Government would do in those circumstances. Will Government, faced with that choice, really want to say, “We actually want to cause huge problems for medicine supplies for the NHS, huge problems for the short-life radioisotopes that are used for cancer treatment, huge problems for our manufacturing industry and to turn motorways into car parks”? Will the Government really, honestly, want to do that, rather than just saying, “D’you know what? We might need a bit more time.”

Sir William Cash: Let me ask the right hon. Lady a question, as she is taking such a prominent part in this debate. It is the same question that I have put to several people today: would she countenance the idea, on behalf of trade unionists and workers who, for example, worked in the ports and were completely against the ports regulation, that those laws should be made in the Council of Ministers—under the control over laws issue that I just raised—behind closed doors and without a transcript? Effectively, it would be imposed on the United Kingdom without our even being there.

Yvette Cooper: We have to get some form of sensible agreement in place so that people can get on with their lives, and so that people are not threatened with the insecurity of having complete chaos from whatever source, if we end up with no deal.

I also support amendment (a) and, in particular, the proposal for a customs union. I think that, if Ministers were honest about being able to reach out and trying to build some consensus around something, they would recognise that if many of the points that are in amendment (a) were put to a free vote across the House, they would—I suspect—get a majority and that that would be a consensus way forward.

I also want to deal with my concerns about the tone of the debate. The right hon. Member for Meriden said earlier that she hoped that the tone of the debate was changing and that there would be some spirit of compromise. I look forward to that, but I am worried that I have still, even today, heard comments from Members of this House about the agreement that the Prime Minister came to yesterday, accusing those of us who have been calling for it of being “mutinous”, “plotters”, “saboteurs” and “blackmailers”. I think that this is really inappropriate, divisive and counter-productive. It really does not fit with the kind of debate that we ought to be having about something so important, particularly when, frankly, I think it is hugely patriotic to be trying to make sure that we can stand up for British manufacturing, that the NHS can get its medicines and that British families across the country do not have to pay higher food prices in shops. I say as a final thought that, in the end, wherever we get to in this Brexit process has to have some form of consensus around it, or it will not be sustainable, and that is what we should all keep in mind.

5.9 pm

Richard Drax (South Dorset) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper), whom I respect enormously. She always speaks in a measured tone. I take her point about the language and how we have to be very careful in this place about how we address one another. We should also speak outside in measured tones to ensure that we try to get the best deal that we possibly can.

Before I start, I just say that I have been accused, often by my own side, of being a zealot, a right-winger, and all these things. I am not. Let me repeat: I and my hon. Friends are MPs who want the best deal we can get for our country. None of us wants to leave the EU without a deal—not one, contrary to popular opinion. We accept that to leave with a deal is the best option we can possibly get. But we have to ask ourselves, how do we get to that point?

We had a vote in June 2016, and that referendum result was clear. The instruction to everyone in this House was to leave the EU—not half in, half out, a bit here, a bit there. The instruction was clear: to leave the EU. We had two years—two long years—to negotiate a deal, and we are now where we are. I would not be, and never would presume to be, Prime Minister, but had I been—and I do not just speak with hindsight—then when article 50 was invoked I would have instructed my Ministers to prepare for no deal immediately, and to publicise to the public exactly what they were doing, while at the same time trying to strike a deal with the EU.

Sir William Cash: Can my hon. Friend, who is a fellow member of the European Scrutiny Committee, recall that very early on, in March last year, we said in our report that we were deeply concerned that the Government were effectively supplicating the EU, and were agreeing to its own guidelines, and not synchronising the withdrawal arrangements with the future relationship?

Richard Drax: I absolutely agree with my hon. Friend, who is immensely knowledgeable on all these matters.

The House needs to clarify where it stands. I have seen many amendments and I suspect there are more to come, because that is the way that the Government are now playing their hand, for fear of Parliament's taking control. Do MPs wish to leave the EU, or do they wish to stay in? That is the question. Some hon. Members are very concerned about no deal, and are tabling amendments in the genuine interests of our country, but for others they are a fig leaf for their wish to remain in the EU. How can we take no deal off the table and let the Prime Minister walk naked to the conference table? How can we do that? It is the last negotiating tool that a Prime Minister has.

We know that the EU always takes it to the last minute. Brinkmanship—that is the name of their game. And let us be honest: do any of us in this House think that we shall strike a fair deal before we leave? I do not think so, because the EU does not want us to go, and is making it clear that it wants to make it as hard as possible for us to leave.

Unfortunately, the behaviour of many in this House is signalling to the EU complete and utter chaos—no sense of purpose, no unity. Imagine if 650 MPs had said, “We are right behind the people of this country, and respect their decision.”

Angus Brendan MacNeil *rose*—

Richard Drax: I shall not give way. I only have a very short time and I would like to continue, if I may.

Imagine if that had been the case—if everyone in this House had been backing leaving the EU. I would suggest that negotiations with the EU over the past two years would have gone very differently. Now we are facing what some would describe as a cliff-edge, although I would disagree with that description. As the right hon. Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn) asked, will moving exit day to April, May or June change the direction of travel—what we are trying to do? No. And in June there will be more amendments, and more efforts by Members in this place to stop us leaving the EU.

So we have to make up our minds. Are we going to leave with a fair deal? The backstop has been mentioned and, as we know, the backstop could go on indefinitely. We will be out of the EU, but with no one at the table. We will be at the mercy of the EU, we will be subjugated, we will be law takers. This is madness. We need a fair deal, and let us fight for it together. Together, we will get the fair deal. We are divided here, and the EU must be sitting back—the Champagne is out, the Chablis is being drunk, the lobsters have been consumed—and why? Because the EU is looking at the chaos in this place. United we stand: united we will get a fair deal, and we will get out of the EU.

5.15 pm

Mr Pat McFadden (Wolverhampton South East) (Lab): I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for South Dorset (Richard Drax), although I shall take a somewhat different tack. I shall make a couple of points about what the Prime Minister said yesterday about how things would be voted on in March, and about the related amendments on that issue that are on the Order Paper today.

Yesterday, for the first time, the Prime Minister was forced to admit that we do not actually have to leave the EU without a deal on 29 March, unless that is an outcome for which Parliament explicitly votes. That admission could, of course, have come much earlier, and was only dragged out of her by the threat of ministerial resignations, but it was an important admission all the same. She added that any extension must be short and limited, and must not go beyond the end of June, because that would create

“a much sharper cliff edge in a few months’ time.”—[*Official Report*, 26 February 2019; Vol. 655, c. 167.]

In other words, she told us that if March was a legal deadline, the end of June was a brick wall. However, there is no point in applying for an extension for a couple of months just to carry on the same parliamentary gridlock in which we lurch from one vote to another every fortnight without the fundamental issue ever being decided.

The Prime Minister is right about one thing. She was right to say that an extension like that on its own will not take no deal off the table. Unless something else changes, it will just give a bit more road for can-kicking. If we are to have an extension, it must be for a purpose, and that purpose should be clarity about the future relationship between the UK and the EU. We are having a huge argument about the withdrawal agreement when the fundamental choices about the future have not been faced up to, let alone decided.

Mr Jonathan Djanogly (Huntingdon) (Con): I am generally sympathetic to what the right hon. Gentleman is saying, but I should point out that at the start of the negotiations, it was the EU, and specifically the French, who insisted that we separate the leaving deal from the future deal. They are therefore now being a bit harsh in trying to pull them back together, are they not?

Mr McFadden: I think that it was a mistake to split them in that way, and I think that they need to be brought back together.

The future has been left blank. We know that we are leaving, and we are told that leave means leave, but leave to where, on what basis? Are we going to have a loose relationship that will mean significant economic disruption, especially for our multinational manufacturing supply chains, and different arrangements for Northern Ireland from those in the rest of the UK, or a closer relationship that will mean the UK's obeying a whole series of rules over which it no longer has a say? That is the essential Brexit choice, and it has been the Brexit choice since day one. It ought to be spelt out clearly to people.

Dr Philippa Whitford (Central Ayrshire) (SNP): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr McFadden: I will not, because others want to speak.

The fact that that is not being done is not because it is in the national interest to keep things vague or to have a blindfold Brexit. It is because facing up to those options would mean exposing the divisions in the Cabinet and the Conservative party on which of them to pursue. It would mean slaying the Brexit unicorns that imply that there are no fundamental choices to be made. We must expose the reality of what the choices really are. Doing that would mean that the Government would have to level with the public before we left—but that is not their plan. Their plan is to get us out before all this becomes clear, on the pretence that if we agree the withdrawal deal, we can somehow move on and talk about other issues. Sometimes we see Brexit portrayed as a project for the people, and criticism of it as a project by the elite, but planning a Brexit where we hide the true reality of what it means until after we have left is the most elitist thing of all, and that is precisely what the Government are planning.

It is an illusion to pretend that vagueness achieves closure. Vagueness does not achieve closure; it just carries on the argument after we have left, and it does so when we have been placed in a much weaker position as a third country. People talk about taking no deal off the table undermining our negotiating position. It does not undermine our negotiating position; it removes a gun held to our own head. What undermines the negotiating position is agreeing to pay a £39 billion divorce settlement without having the foggiest idea of what the future relationship looks like.

If there is to be an extension to the article 50 period, let us use it for a purpose: let us set out properly what leaving means, and let us tell the people clearly once and for all whether we are going for a Canada-type model or a Norway-type model, and let us be candid with the public about the consequences of each option. Clarity would also mean the EU having to be more flexible than it has been until now about the phasing of the discussions; it would have to acknowledge that clarity about the future was in its interests too. This would be a much more honest way of proceeding.

The Prime Minister yesterday, as always, did the absolute minimum to keep the show on the road—to make any extension short and limited so it does not really change anything. But that is not good enough. Having opened the door, there is now an opportunity to do this differently, and we should seize it by making sure that any extension is focused not on a particular timescale but on the key purpose of clarity about the future.

5.21 pm

Mr Dominic Grieve (Beaconsfield) (Con): I agreed entirely with my right hon. Friend the Member for Meriden (Dame Caroline Spelman) when she said the atmosphere of this debate was notably different from that of previous debates, and I am delighted if the system of amendable motions, previously so vociferously attacked, may have made some small contribution to enabling sensible debate to take place, because it is, frankly, doing exactly what I hoped might come out of it: breaking the logjam and enabling this House to look sensibly at problems relating to Brexit and to come to conclusions.

In that spirit I am also delighted that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister indicated yesterday that she would move on this issue of removing no deal and extending article 50 for that purpose and enabling the House to express its opinion. It is manifestly obvious that a no-deal Brexit would be catastrophic. I do not want to repeat all the things that have been said. The Government's own documentation is there, and on top of that I only have to sit in my constituency surgery to have pharmaceutical companies, of which I have many, coming in and explaining the cost to them of having to anticipate no deal—all of which, I might add, will ultimately be manifested in the takings of the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the lack of those funds to pay for public services.

We are impoverishing ourselves; we are making it harder to deliver a good quality of life for our citizens, and we are doing it with a relentless enthusiasm which at last we have found some common sense to check. I have very little doubt that when this matter comes back we will extend article 50, and I hope very much that the Government will finally adopt a policy of indicating that no deal is completely unacceptable.

But I also agree with the point that has been made that there is no point in extending article 50 if we do not know what to do with that. I do not know if this House is going to be capable of coming to a consensus. As a Member of this House, I accept that if there is a majority in this House for some form of Brexit and we vote for it and it is deliverable, that is doubtless what will happen, whatever my personal views may be. However, I will just say this—and I will repeat it, I suspect, ad nauseam until this whole sorry saga is over: I only have to look at the emails I get on Brexit from people who want to leave to see that the principle theme is the demand to leave in the form of catastrophic no-deal Brexit.

The reason that I am getting those emails is that people have, in my opinion, been thoroughly misled over a long period by a form of propaganda that believes that the EU is evil. This was rather highlighted by the extraordinary speech of my hon. Friend the Member for South Dorset (Richard Drax), who put forward the stab-in-the-back theory. I am sorry, but these are mad fantasies. They are absolute fantasies about the EU and its relationship with us. So people are writing in and saying that is what we should be doing, but I have to say that we are not going to be doing it.

The fact is that we are likely to be offering an extraordinary halfway house palliative that a large number of Members of the House absolutely know will be less good than remaining in the EU. Maybe that is a burden

that we are going to have to carry because of the 2016 referendum result, but speaking personally I find it deeply unacceptable that I should park every aspect of my own opinion and evaluation of these options simply in order to go along with an instruction that is now nearly three years old and seems to be running out of steam in virtually every single one of its characteristics.

That is why I urge my right hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench not to ignore the possibility of consulting the public. If the public want the Prime Minister's deal, which is the only deal we are ever likely to get, then so be it; but if not, they should have the option to express the view that they want to stay. Ultimately, my own opinion is that that would be very much better than anything else we have done.

I am delighted that my hon. Friend the Member for South Leicestershire (Alberto Costa) has been successful with his amendment, and I am happy to have supported him. I should also like to say to my hon. Friend the Member for Stone (Sir William Cash), in conclusion, that he talks about dysfunctional relationships, and some people looking at the two of us would say that our relationship has been dysfunctional for a long time, but we have stayed in the same party, and that is a good reason for our staying in the EU as well.

5.26 pm

Hywel Williams (Arfon) (PC): I wish to speak to amendment (1), which has been tabled in my name and those of my hon. Friends. Yesterday, the Prime Minister had the opportunity to completely rule out no deal once and for all and to put forward a credible plan to break the Brexit deadlock. Instead, we had further options, further steps to take and further hoops to leap through. The House of Commons has already voted against no deal, a month ago. The end of March looms and, irrespective of the convenience of the Prime Minister, we do not have time to waste, so I am pleased to have added my name to the amendments tabled by the Scottish National party and other colleagues.

People outside Westminster are looking at the chaos of Brexit, and whatever they thought of this place previously, they now hold the common view that the House of Commons is fundamentally broken. Trust in Westminster is compromised, and faith in our ability to make decisions that will define our economy and society for generations to come has evaporated. Speaking as a Plaid Cymru MP, I find these attitudes towards government from London unremarkable, but it is something else to hear such appraisals from otherwise staunch supporters of the status quo.

Yesterday's events were of no help, with the leaders of both the major Westminster parties being dragged unwillingly towards the logical conclusion of extending the article 50 period and of getting some clarity so that we can call a people's vote. Our amendment (1) offers part of that solution. It requires the Prime Minister to respect the wishes of the National Assembly for Wales and of the Scottish Parliament, as well as the will of many in this House. It would avoid a no deal by obliging the Prime Minister to request an article 50 extension to the end of 2021, replacing the 21-month transition period with sufficient time to allow the UK as a member state—a rule maker rather than a rule taker—and the EU to develop plans for their future

relationship, with the aim of making the contentious Irish backstop redundant, and then putting the whole thing to a public vote.

My understanding is that Brussels is determined to avoid offering us a brief extension. That august organ, the *Evening Standard*, is making that point this very afternoon. Brussels is determined to avoid offering us a brief extension, because that would lead to the danger of having to revisit the issue again in the summer if—or when—the Government again fail to win Parliament round. Donald Tusk has indicated that the extension we propose would be the optimal period of time, and an EU diplomat said yesterday that the

“21-month extension makes sense as it would cover the multi-financial framework”—

the EU's budget period—

“and make things easier. Provided leaders are not completely down with Brexit fatigue, and a three-month technical extension won't cut it, I would expect a 21-month kick”

of the can.

Hilary Benn: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that a longer article-50 extension might encourage the EU to change its current approach and, since it needs a purpose during the 21 months—if that was the period—recognise that it could turn its attention to negotiating the future partnership?

Hywel Williams: The Chairman of the Exiting the European Union Committee makes a fine point. As they say, it takes two to tango, and an extension might induce a bit of dancing from the EU.

Our Government's disastrous handling of the UK's departure from the EU can be seen clearly in the statement that the Secretary of State for International Trade gave on Monday, and I was here in a thinly attended Chamber to listen to it. He outlined his decisions on trade protections following a flawed consultation on EU trade remedies that was begun over 18 months ago, when conditions, perceptions, knowledge and understanding of Brexit were, to say the least, a little different from today. According to the statement, we are abandoning most existing trade protections on the basis of criteria that have produced some pretty serendipitous results. Without repeating the details, which are available in *Hansard*, I am sure that the ironing board industry is mightily pleased with the continuing specific protection for that particular industry, while parts of the steel industry may be less happy. Participants in other sectors, particularly small-scale businesses, may be as unaware of Monday's outcome as they were of the initial consultation, because the responses to it were few.

On Monday, a former Secretary of State for Wales praised the statement as

“An excellent statement with a good balance”—[*Official Report*, 25 February 2019; Vol. 655, c. 54.]

All I can say is that he is much more easily pleased than the people of Wales. Indeed, if the statement impressed the right hon. Member for Wokingham (John Redwood), it was probably not in my nation's best interests, and the same applies to the whole sorry Brexit saga.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr Speaker: Order. A four-minute limit now applies to Back-Bench speeches. I call Alberto Costa.

5.32 pm

Alberto Costa (South Leicestershire) (Con): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for selecting my amendment (b). As all Members will probably know, I have been a loyal Conservative Member. I have never rebelled and have scarcely spoken out of turn. I believe and continue to believe that, as Members of various political parties, we are at our best when we stick together and promote the political policies upon which we were elected. However, when an amendment attracts such broad consensus across the House, including from the leaders of every Opposition party and, importantly for me, the support of right hon. and hon. Friends across the Brexit debate on the Government Benches, a sensible Government must accept that reasonable amendment. I am therefore grateful that the Government have acted reasonably in accepting my amendment in full.

My amendment does not deal in goods or services, backstops or borders, but people—living and breathing, skin and bone. That such an amendment is needed is in itself a sad state of affairs. The rights and freedoms of over 1 million UK citizens in the EU and over 3 million EU citizens in the UK should never have been used as a bargaining chip during the negotiations for our withdrawal from the European Union. That such rights were placed on the table in the first place was wrong.

While I welcome the Government's unilateral undertaking, it does not go far enough, and we need to do more. I have backed the Prime Minister's deal and will continue to, but with the spectre of uncertainty hanging over the heads of over 5 million people, it is right that this House has positively coalesced around a good message to send not just to the country and to EU citizens, but to President Donald Tusk and the European Council, which is carefully listening to our proceedings.

The time for ring-fencing these rights was at the outset of the UK's decision to leave the EU, and it is now imperative that the Government do everything they reasonably can to seek consensus from the European Council and get a legal mandate for the European Commission to carve out those rights. The Prime Minister said yesterday that the EU Commission does not have the legal authority. I spoke to Professor Smismans, professor of EU law at Cardiff University, this morning, and he said it is correct that the European Commission has not been mandated to negotiate a separate agreement on citizens' rights, but that the European Council can revise that mandate at any time. There is no legal hurdle at all.

I would like to hear from the Government exactly what measures the Prime Minister will take to ensure that this amendment, which has been adopted by the Government, is complied with. Will she be writing a letter to President Donald Tusk? If so, when will she write it? What other measures can the Government take to ensure that the Council gives that mandate to the Commission to carve out citizens' rights as quickly as possible?

Charlie Elphicke: Does my hon. Friend agree that this should have been sorted out back in 2016? It is quite wrong that we are discussing it now.

Alberto Costa: Yes. As I said earlier, I entirely agree that this matter should have been dealt with at the outset of the United Kingdom's decision to leave the EU.

Dr Whitford: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Alberto Costa: I do not have time, but I thank the hon. Lady and all her colleagues for supporting my amendment. It is time we sent a clear message.

There has been some discussion about my position in the Government. There is a convention that a Parliamentary Private Secretary is expected to resign if they table an amendment, which is all I would say on the matter.

Finally, I thank all hon. and right hon. Members on both sides of the House who have graciously and very kindly offered to support my amendment. We can all take pride in informing our constituents and fellow British citizens in the EU that we put citizens' rights at the very front. I thank the campaigning groups the3million, which supports the rights of EU nationals here, and British in Europe, which supports the rights of British nationals in the EU. Citizens' rights is not about party politics. It is about people.

5.37 pm

Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): It is such an honour to follow the hon. Member for South Leicestershire (Alberto Costa). He has handled this issue so well, and he has added so much to the reputation of this place by how he has dealt with his amendment. I thank him, and I am proud to have signed the amendment. He may be right that there is a convention that PPSs resign when they table an amendment that is not in line with the Government's thinking but, given that the Government have accepted the amendment, I suggest that the convention is an ass. He should be back in his post, because he is doing a sterling job.

It seems that yesterday the Prime Minister did just enough to prevent resignations from her ministerial ranks and to keep her sordid show on the road for a few more days, but the vote she promised on 13 March does not take no deal off the table. On the contrary, it leaves no deal on the table for another two weeks. I fail to understand how that deliberately created uncertainty is supposed to help employers and small businesses in my Brighton constituency, or indeed across the country, to make the decisions they need to make.

It is simply incredible that, with just 30 days left on the clock, this Prime Minister is still prepared to entertain the economic and social catastrophe of no deal. Worse still, my constituents will have been horrified to hear her say yesterday that she could

"make a success of a no deal."—[*Official Report*, 26 February 2019; Vol. 655, c. 166.]

Make no mistake, a no-deal exit would tear us from every EU law, instrument and agency overnight, and we would have nothing to replace them with. The Government's own assessment of the economic impact of no deal, published yesterday, reinforces just what a catastrophe it would be.

My constituents deserve better than that, as does the country, and it does not have to be this way. There are alternatives to this never-ending game of chicken between the Prime Minister and the various factions of her party. The best, most democratic option is to give the public a final say on their future. In 2016, voters could not and did not express any opinion on the terms on which the UK should leave the EU, because those terms were completely unknown then, not least because they had yet to be negotiated with the EU27. What is certainly

the case is that no one was voting for this dangerous, blindfold Brexit now offered by the Prime Minister, one that was rejected by this House on 15 January. The Prime Minister keeps saying that a public vote would fail to "respect" the 2016 referendum result, but that is the same as saying that electing a new Government fails to respect the previous election result. This Government have spent almost three years negotiating what they believe to be the best possible way of implementing the 2016 result and now the people should get a chance to say whether or not they think this Government have done enough. That does not seem to be radical to me.

Finally, I wish to say a few words about the amendment on environmental protection standing in my name. Yesterday, the Prime Minister talked again of ensuring that Brexit would not lead to any lowering of environmental protection standards. That is all very well but we know that such promises of non-regression are entirely worthless without concrete action to ensure that those standards can be effectively enforced. As I and many others have said repeatedly in this House over the past two years, that requires the embedding of environmental principles in UK law, and the establishment of an independent and adequately resourced environmental body or bodies across the UK, to replace the roles of the European Commission and European Court of Justice in terms of oversight of and, crucially, compliance with environmental law. So my amendment notes that the Environment Secretary's

"proposals for an Office for Environmental Protection in England need to be significantly strengthened to guarantee its independence from Government, include climate change within its remit and provide it with the necessary powers to ensure the monitoring, reporting, oversight and enforcement of environmental law".

5.41 pm

Anne Marie Morris (Newton Abbot) (Con): I am a little frustrated, because all the mood music today has been very negative and I think we have forgotten that 52% of the people voted for Brexit. Why did they do it? It is clear that they wanted sovereignty over their laws and the economic opportunity that Brexit would allow. We seem to have forgotten that we are in deficit with the EU and in surplus with the rest of the world, and that is what this is all about.

We are now struggling to negotiate this withdrawal agreement, which seems to be totally trapped in negativity and in terms of finding any real solution. I take my hat off to those on both the leave and remain side who have endeavoured to find a way through this with the Malthouse compromise, but from everything I have seen that simply is not being listened to—I wish to goodness that it were. I am looking carefully at what is being said about the options, because if we cannot agree a deal, we have to accept that we have to look at no deal. So many people have said today that that is unacceptable, but I say to them that when they read the paperwork and the reports, they should remember that there are always two sides to every argument. I ask them to look to see whether or not they have a balanced view, even when looking at the Government paper which has been referred to today.

Of all the possible options that will deliver certainty—we know what no deal means—this is the only one that would deliver sovereignty and give us back our economic freedom. It also puts us in a much better place to negotiate a good deal after 29 March, and we must not forget that. The Government's paper is not all doom

and gloom about it; it says that 85% of the preparation that needs to be done has been done. It also says that the reason that no more has been done is because of a failure to communicate to businesses—that is absolutely right. I serve on the Public Accounts Committee and we have heard from every Department about how prepared they are. We hear what the challenge is; the one thing they are not able to do and allowed to do is talk to the people who really matter—the people who are going to have to implement this. We should be encouraging the Government to get this right, because it will put us in a better place to do a better deal.

No-deal will enable us to negotiate deals with other countries and to deal with the EU, as I said. We should not dismiss GATT—the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade—which has been referred to before. The assumption is being made that the EU will not allow us to exercise article XXIV of GATT to get zero tariffs, a view with which I simply do not agree. For me, no deal should be seen as an opportunity, not a threat.

Equally, I am not happy with the concept of an extension. I cannot see how we can achieve more in three months than we have already tried to achieve. My fear is that at the end of this process we will find ourselves not with the three choices about which the Prime Minister talks, but with a straight choice between no deal and our right to withdraw our notification under article 50. I noted carefully that for the first time without any need, the Prime Minister mentioned that after she said we would be having the three votes. She said that if it comes to it, she would not support our retracting article 50, but she said before that no deal is better than a bad deal and she has retracted that, and she said that there would be no extension but has retracted that. Let us hope to goodness that she keeps her promise, because otherwise it would undermine democracy and the referendum result.

5.45 pm

Tom Brake (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD): I rise to speak briefly, first in support of amendment (i), the Liberal Democrat amendment, which would have established a Brexit redundancy fund. According to the UK Trade Policy Observatory, something like 750,000 people could lose their jobs in a no-deal scenario. That is linked to what the Government's own report said about a potential 9% drop in GDP. The idea behind a Brexit redundancy fund would be to provide training and advice to people who had lost their jobs as a result of Brexit, or a no-deal Brexit in particular. Of course, some people have already lost their jobs as a result of Brexit uncertainty. It is clear that the Government have some money available for this purpose, because as I understand it the Prime Minister has been seeking to secure £1.6 billion, quite a lot of which is apparently to be spent in constituencies such as Bassetlaw. I am sure that has nothing to do with Brexit, but it is clearly strange that certain constituencies with leave-voting Labour Members are apparently going to receive a substantial portion of the money. The Government should set up a Brexit redundancy fund, and I welcome the support from Members from other parties for the amendment.

Secondly, I wish to draw attention to amendment (h), which would have allowed for the Government to embark on the preparations necessary for a public vote. I suspect that sometime soon we will reach the point at which

that will become necessary, because the Prime Minister will have run out of other options and will feel that a people's vote is the best way to get her deal in front of the public, alongside the option of staying in the European Union. I think she will get there eventually.

I welcome amendment (k) from the SNP, with support from other parties, which does what it says on the tin. In other words, it says very clearly, "We're not going to leave without a deal, whatever the circumstances." There would be broad and clear majority support for that in this House.

I also welcome amendment (e) on environmental standards, which was tabled by the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Caroline Lucas) but has not been selected for a vote. The EU has led on environmental standards and many of us are worried that if we leave, it will no longer play that role, which I am afraid is not one that I expect Ministers to pick up with any great degree of enthusiasm.

I was happy to support amendment (b). We need some clarity not only for EU citizens in the UK but for UK citizens in the EU. In France, for instance, people who are trying to secure the equivalent of settled status may be facing a charge of €100 or €150 per person per year, over a five-year period, to secure their status. That is clearly something on which we should be campaigning.

No deal would clearly be a catastrophe. There are examples in the Government's own report about the hit to GDP. One third of critical projects are off track. SMEs have made virtually no preparations for a no-deal scenario. Indeed, to make matters worse, the Department for International Trade has apparently decided to stop briefing businesses on free trade agreements because apparently there have been leaks. As I understand it, the biggest leaks tend to come from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, so perhaps that needs to be looked into.

It is clear that the Government need to seek an extension to article 50, and the clear purpose for that would be to secure a people's vote.

5.49 pm

Mr Jonathan Djanogly (Huntingdon) (Con): On 29 January, I abstained on the amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale West (Sir Graham Brady) partly because I did not understand it conceptually, but also because I did not see how it was acceptable for a Government to have their own policy and agreement to an international treaty amended by way of a Back-Bench amendment. In the meantime, on the same date, I was pleased to see the amendment tabled by my right hon. Friend the Member for Meriden (Dame Caroline Spelman) pass. Although it was not legally binding, it was important to put on record the unacceptability to the House of a no deal. I suspect that, without a Whip, the majority would have been very much more significant.

By 14 February, when this matter came back for debate, I voted for the Government motion, which essentially supported both the Brady and the Spelman amendments. I was sorry to see it defeated. The point here was not that I had suddenly succumbed to the wonders of the Brady position, but rather that I understood that some level of compromise was needed to give the Prime Minister a stable base on which to negotiate.

[Mr Jonathan Djanogly]

Of course many Members, myself included, are very concerned at further attempts to kick the can down the road yet again. The problem is that we have now run out of road and decisions will have to be taken. I am actually pretty open-minded on the terms of the deal for our withdrawal from the EU, although I shall certainly have more defined views on what our future relationship should be. To that extent, I would like to see time set aside for indicative votes to be held to debate our future relationship with the EU. We must now look forward to our future with the EU as a partner rather than just look back at how we get out of it. The key mistake we made on leaving was to start negotiations without an agreed position, which made us very easy prey for the EU negotiators. I will advocate Norway plus, and others may have different proposals, but the inaction cannot happen again as we head towards the next round of negotiations on a future deal.

However, my immediate concern is that we do not leave the EU without a deal and that we provide the breathing space that business so badly needs. To fall off the cliff would be to invite scarcity, lower living standards, lost employment and lower investment in the UK, and I share the concern of many MPs that the people will punish us for that. When I say “us” I mean all of us—not just the governing party, but the Opposition, who will be seen not to have acted in the national interest.

I certainly welcome the Prime Minister's promise yesterday to allow a vote to extend article 50 in the event that the meaningful vote and then a no-deal resolution are rejected. The Government will need to elaborate on whether they will whip to oppose no deal and also to support any article 50 extension. The Minister seemed just a bit uneasy about answering that key question earlier today. Also, will the House determine the length of the extension, and if the EU makes a counter-proposal on the extension period, will the Government bring that period to the House for debate? The answer is seemingly yes from what the Minister said earlier, but I think that we will need further elaboration.

I am also still very concerned about the ongoing delays in bringing forward the meaningful vote, which I will support, with all its damaging delay implications for business. Let me be clear: I have no interest in delaying Brexit day, but nothing could be worse than leaving without a deal.

I was saddened to see the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition failing to engage immediately after heavily losing the first meaningful vote, which I supported. That was the wrong approach, and I think that the Prime Minister knows that we will sort this matter out only when she engages with all Members of this House who are prepared to take a sensible approach to negotiating with the EU. I was pleased to hear the right hon. and learned Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Keir Starmer) confirm today that Labour is prepared to talk.

Since the votes on 29 January, I have seen nothing coming from the EU to suggest that it is prepared to reopen the terms of the withdrawal agreement—quite the opposite. That is not to say that we should not continue to engage with the EU. Indeed, it may be the case that we can agree some kind of ancillary document—perhaps a binding one—that provides a roadmap towards ending the need for the backstop.

Mr Speaker: We are extremely grateful to the hon. Gentleman.

5.53 pm

Catherine West (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab): This House has witnessed months and months of obfuscation and delay by the Government. At best, that has illustrated the sheer incompetence of their handling of the Brexit negotiations, and at worst, it has demonstrated a wilful attempt to force MPs to choose between two wholly unacceptable outcomes. However, the Prime Minister's statement yesterday was a step in the right direction, allowing MPs a vote on delaying the UK's departure from the EU, or ruling out a no-deal Brexit if we reject her deal next month, demonstrating a positive shift in direction. It was the first time that we had had a concession on the Government's famous red lines. It was an overdue but welcome recognition of the role that Parliament should play in determining the future relationship between the UK and the EU.

Yesterday during the Prime Minister's statement, I asked her whether she could tell me how much Brexit is costing. Of course, she could not, which I was rather surprised by. The cost to the public purse of £500 million a week is an absolute slap in the face to those who voted to leave on the basis of a £350 million lie on the side of a bus. There is also the cost of the £39 billion divorce bill.

The cost that we will all pay in jobs as companies shift, leave or take their operations to European cities will be immense. The right hon. Member for Meriden (Dame Caroline Spelman) and my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Jack Dromey) held an excellent series of meetings, where we heard at first hand about the impact of businesses moving abroad and the effect on the workforce. I fear that the steady stream of jobs moving across the channel will become a torrent if we do not grip this crisis.

There will be a cost to small and medium-sized businesses as supply chains are disrupted. For factory workers, their zero-hours contracts could become zero contracts. Then there is the cost to consumers as they face the prospect of new charges appearing for their goods, and other increased costs, including for insurance and mobile phone roaming charges. For our young people, their ability to travel freely—to live, study and work abroad at the drop of a hat—will now be inflicted with a whole lot more bureaucracy and planning.

There is also the cost to our environment. I was pleased to put my name to amendment (e), which lays out best practice for the environment, because we are at risk of leaving the gold standard for the environment set by the EU. Does everyone remember when beaches were too dirty to swim at? Well, now they are clean, and parks that were too dirty to play in now have a green flag. It all originates with key areas of excellence in the European Union's environmental protections.

I was pleased to hear my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Keir Starmer) saying that the current border arrangements between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland are a physical manifestation of the peace settlement, which was so hard fought for over centuries, culminating in 1998. What a terrific achievement of the then Labour Government, and what an obligation on each of us in this House to uphold that important agreement.

The European Union project is grounded in that common cause for peace, recognising that by pooling our efforts we will not weaken the UK's standing in the world but rather embolden it. As we marked the centenary of the Armistice of the great war last November, we remembered the horrors of the 20th century. Those horrors could come again; this world is so unpredictable. Now is not the time to be stepping back from our European friends and neighbours, and splintering over borders and customs. No—we should be stepping up and joining together to tackle the issues that face us.

5.57 pm

Priti Patel (Witham) (Con): I begin by paying tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for South Leicestershire (Alberto Costa) for his amendment (b). He spoke with great distinction and clarity, demonstrating that this House can be united on such an issue as Brexit. It is challenging, but he has demonstrated great principle and a considered approach in the way in which he has been able to unify us and bring so many of us together.

Those of us in this House who promised to honour the vote in the referendum back in 2016—in fact, that is most of us—and who went on to stand on our respective manifestos seeking to honour that result then voted to trigger article 50 and to leave the EU on 29 March this year. We must now ask ourselves how this situation—not just the debates in this House, but the way in which the negotiations have been taking place and have been handled—looks to the 17.4 million who voted to leave, and to those who voted to remain, when it comes to respecting the result of the referendum.

It is inevitable that I am going to say that the negotiations have not been handled in the most structured way. The Government have missed opportunities to change their approach, and it is fair to say that the warning signs have been there for a considerable amount of time—through the proposals that became the Chequers agreement and then the withdrawal agreement, which in my view were not right for this country. However, the point is that we know that the deal as it stands now is not acceptable to many, and there is more work to do. The right response would be for the Government to carry on listening and to pursue a better deal. At the same time, we are now hearing much more about the whole push for a second referendum that would seek to deny the British people the rights and freedoms that they voted for back in 2016. Voting for delay without even specifying what would be achieved by it is not the right approach at all, and it saddens me that we are now in that position.

The fact is, the Prime Minister undertook to go back to Brussels to reopen the withdrawal agreement, and on 29 January this House voted and showed what sort of deal can command a majority in the House of Commons. No deal is not the outcome that we are all aiming for. We want a deal that can actually speak to the challenges associated with the backstop. All the other choices could mean that we end up going back on the verdict of the British public, backtracking on our promises and undermining democracy. The various arguments have been made about letting down our country. We will end up with irretrievable ramifications, not just for our political parties but for our democracy and our country. None of us wants to see that.

In the coming weeks we have an opportunity, and the Government have an opportunity, to secure a better

deal and bring back a withdrawal agreement that has legally binding changes so that the UK can leave the backstop and, importantly, deliver the Brexit that the British people were promised.

6.1 pm

Owen Smith (Pontypridd) (Lab): Yesterday, in sharp distinction to the “Groundhog Day” debates and statements from the Prime Minister that we have had previously, we had two really important concessions and changes in policy from the Government. One was the admission, at last, that the sovereignty of this House is important and that we cannot simply fall out of the EU through no deal and go on to WTO terms without this House having a say. That was always true, but the Prime Minister was forced to concede it yesterday. The second crucial concession was that it is not holy writ that we leave on 29 March and there may be a longer period. Those are both important concessions.

As colleagues of mine have said today, if we do get to the point, as I expect, of no deal being voted down by this House and there being a vote in favour of an extension of article 50, we need to make sure that that extension is used for a purpose and not for more of the ludicrous merry-go-round that we have had in recent months. In that context, I pay tribute to colleagues across the House—in particular, to Conservative Front Benchers who stood up for their values and refused to allow this place to be railroaded by the Prime Minister and driven to the edge of no deal.

However, the truth is that no deal is only marginally worse than the deal that is on offer. Indeed, one could argue quite rightly, as some in the ERG would, that in respect of the sovereignty arguments, the Prime Minister's deal on offer right now is, in some regards, worse than no deal, however catastrophic that would be for the economy of our country. It is an absolute badge of shame for the Prime Minister that she has been dragged kicking and screaming to this point as we have lost jobs at Nissan, Honda, Ford and so many other companies across our country.

Yet my real concern is that the most likely outcome is still that the armchair generals of the ERG who loll languidly on their Benches are going to get their way—that they are going to get the Prime Minister to the point where Brexit goes through. They will ultimately, I think, be successful—the victors in this Russian roulette game that they have been playing for so long. There are those of us on the Opposition Benches and on the Conservative Benches who still understand and believe that Brexit is ultimately deeply destructive for our country, not just for our economy but for our values—for what we believe in, and not just in a Labour party that is overtly internationalist, outward-looking and tolerant, and understands that we need to be all those things to succeed in the 21st century and for the benefit of the wider culture of our society. It is not only me and other Opposition Members who are deeply worried by the rise in right-wing extremism in our country fuelled and delivered by Brexit. Unfortunately, those things will only be compounded if we exit, whether it is the Prime Minister's or the ERG's version of Brexit.

Sir William Cash: I think the hon. Gentleman is rather exaggerating, if I may say so. Is not the truth, as I

[*Sir William Cash*]

wrote even in 1990, that if we take away the right of the people to decide their own destiny, they will end up moving to the far right?

Owen Smith: We have seen a 100% increase in violent racist attacks since the Brexit vote—that is the truth. Brexit is exacerbating underlying problems in our society. It is a racist, xenophobic, right-wing, reactionary project, and we in the Labour party should be fighting against it with every sinew of our being.

I will use my last minute to plead with people in this House and across the country that if they believe, as I do, that Brexit will damage not only our economy but the values that underpin our society—the good values of Britain—then they need to start saying so. There is a narrow window of opportunity to contest this before some form of Brexit, whether the Prime Minister's or the ERG's, goes through. It may well go through by the end of this month.

There is an opportunity to speak and march against Brexit in London on 23 March. People the length and breadth of Britain should join us for that and make their voice heard. We should still contest Brexit. There is still an opportunity to beat it and allow Britain to pull itself back from the brink. It is not anti-democratic to give the people one further say. It would be the democratic thing to do, and I will urge people to do that until I can urge them no more.

6.6 pm

Jeremy Lefroy (Stafford) (Con): It is an honour to follow the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Owen Smith), although I slightly disagree with him, because I know people who have campaigned and argued over many decades to leave the European Union, such as my hon. Friend the Member for Stone (Sir William Cash), who do so for honourable motives of freedom and control over laws. I happen to disagree with my hon. Friend quite passionately about that, but he is almost as left-wing as I am on many economic matters. We should be careful about the way in which we describe the motives of people on one side or the other.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Meriden (Dame Caroline Spelman) and the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Jack Dromey) on the work they have done to reach across the House. That work to bring us together is so important. Nobody will be satisfied with everything; that is an impossibility. However, we can come much closer together, and for the sake of the nation, that is vital.

I agree with the hon. Member for North East Fife (Stephen Gethins) that the way in which we talk about our relationship with our European friends and neighbours is extremely important. Most of them are very sad about this. They are not rubbing their hands with glee that we are leaving. They still want us to stay; I have heard that from so many people. They viewed us as a sensible, pragmatic country that helps the European cause, and they regret us leaving. It is therefore vital that as we leave—and I believe we must leave; that was the vote—we must maintain those close relationships and perhaps even get closer, because we will have to conduct them bilaterally and not through the means of the European Union.

I am against this business of leaving no deal on the table. The negotiations have gone far beyond that. This is not some game of chicken. This has to be a mature, grown-up relationship between parties that will remain close even if we are a bit more separate than we have been in the past. Let us do this in a mature way.

I would say to my great friend, my hon. Friend the Member for Stone—he should be the right hon. Member for Stone—that I gently take issue with what he said about article 4 of the withdrawal agreement. All these matters take time to disentangle. We will leave the European Union, but it will not be a clean break. Some areas of the withdrawal agreement will go on applying for up to eight years when it comes to citizens' rights. It is vital that, just as when we entered the European Union it took quite a long time for us to come together on the various issues of policy, so as we leave, some issues will be hangovers for a period. We should not confuse that with being subject to the European Union. We should say that those are areas where we will continue to co-operate as we gradually move apart.

My final point is that we need to come together. I believe that today has been the beginning of that—the tone of the debate and the speeches has been very good—and we must continue to do that as we move forward.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr Speaker: Order. A further nine right hon. and hon. Members are seeking to catch my eye, and I am keen to accommodate them. I would simply say that interventions are perfectly orderly, but they are at this stage unhelpful to those waiting to speak. People can do the arithmetic for themselves. There is only half an hour or so to go before the Front-Bench winding-up speeches.

6.10 pm

Anna Soubry (Broxtowe) (Ind): It is an absolute pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Stafford (Jeremy Lefroy). How much I agreed with everything that he said.

The situation is really quite disgraceful. It is a disgrace, and when history records what has happened over the last two and a half years, it will not falter to put the blame where I am afraid it has to be put. It will not fail to observe that one of the most striking features of the last two and a half years, among too many right hon. and hon. Members in this place, has been a breath-taking lack of courage and honesty. When I say that I mean honesty about the situation we found ourselves in after the EU referendum, honesty about the choices we face and honesty with the electorate about the consequences of the choices we face.

As I think everybody in this place knows, I was one of the people who, with members of then other political parties—I am not actually in a political party at the moment; that does not really matter—founded, and I am proud of the fact that we worked cross-party, something called the People's Vote. It came after a great deal of thought and consideration. As far as I am concerned, it is not designed to thwart or frustrate Brexit; I get tired of some of the words that are used in such a disparaging and very silly way. It was a genuine desire to find a solution to the unholy mess that we had got ourselves into, and I still believe that the only way through this mess and through this crisis is by taking it back to the British people.

I take very grave exception to hon. Members on the Conservative Benches, who really should know better, saying that in saying we want a people's vote we are saying that people were stupid, did not know better and did not understand back in 2016. Let us be very clear about why so many of us who believe in a people's vote, and it is a growing number, take that view in the face of the death threats, the threats to our safety, the threat of deselection—not now in my happy case—and so on. The reason we say it is that it is right that people are entitled to change their minds. It is right that young people—denied a vote by virtue of their age in 2016, but now obviously of the age when they can vote—should have a say about their future, given that they more than anyone will bear the burden of Brexit. But there is this: now we know what Brexit looks like, and we did not—any of us—know what we meant when we put to the Great British people the option of leave.

I do take grave exception to something else: the fact that this Government—a Conservative Government—have still refused to take no deal off the table. I take grave exception to that not only because there is no mandate for it and it was not promised at all—in fact, the opposite was promised by leave campaigners, who promised us a deal before we even left the European Union—but because this Government know the facts about the huge danger that it poses to the economy and the future prosperity of all the people of this country, and faced with those facts in black and white, as I saw yesterday, they still refuse to take it off the table. That is my priority—making sure that no deal is not an option—and that is why I will be supporting amendment (a).

6.14 am

Richard Graham (Gloucester) (Con): Following the long-running British soap, “Carry On Brexit”, is testing for everyone. However, tonight things have changed, in ways that I do not think the right hon. and learned Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Keir Starmer) quite realised. He said that nothing will change, and that this will not work. In fact, a lot has changed, and I believe that it can work. Let me explain why.

The outstanding issue between the Government and the EU is restricted to an insurance policy for the Northern Ireland border that both sides have said they would not wish to trigger. It cannot be beyond the wit of the UK's and EU's diplomatic skills to resolve this issue. When the Exiting the European Union Committee was in Brussels a month ago, I summarised a way through that amounts to a legally binding annexe with a backstop review clause, ensuring that we cannot be locked into the customs union indefinitely against our will. That led to revised advice from the Attorney General and triggered support from the Democratic Unionist party of Northern Ireland and from the European Research Group on this side of the House.

There was no objection to that in Brussels but simply a question about whether such changes would pass in the House of Commons. None of us will know that until the votes are counted, but such changes should—I believe would—be the catalyst for success, urged on by a recognition of what would happen should Parliament not approve the withdrawal agreement Bill and then vote, under the Prime Minister's commitment, to proceed without a deal. There can be no doubt about the result of that.

We may not have the support of all my colleagues, judging from the speeches of my hon. Friends the Members for Stone (Sir William Cash) and for South Dorset (Richard Drax), but paradise is not for this world. What matters today, therefore, are the amendments proposed. I believe the Letwin-Cooper and Spelman-Dromey amendments will not be moved, and the Costa amendment has been accepted. As a signatory to amendment (b), tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for South Leicestershire (Alberto Costa), I know that the EU has the same difficulty in agreeing to the same commitment to the rights of UK citizens in the EU as we have to EU nationals here, because it does not have the authority to do so over the 27 member states' sovereignty. However, the European Parliament's Brexit co-ordinator, Guy Verhofstadt, has clearly said that the European Parliament will not accept uneven citizens' rights when it considers the withdrawal agreement Bill and will therefore oblige the European Union to ensure reciprocity. I am therefore pleased that the Government have accepted the spirit and direction of this Conservative-led amendment.

That leaves us with amendment (k), tabled by the right hon. Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Ian Blackford), which has been made redundant by the Government's commitment to a vote on no deal if the withdrawal agreement is not approved, and amendment (a), tabled by the Leader of the Opposition. The right hon. and learned Member for Holborn and St Pancras' explanation of amendment (a) was, in my view, weak. None of his points referred directly to citizens' rights, money and Northern Ireland—the three ingredients of the withdrawal agreement. Everything that he mentioned is sketched out in the political declaration and will be negotiated in detail during the transition period, as he knows. I therefore cannot see any reason why Labour Members, elected on a similar manifesto to Government Members, should not support the Government on the withdrawal agreement Bill.

My message is clear: the Government and the European Union must resolve the backstop issue, to relieve and reduce the already increased uncertainty of citizens and businesses across Europe, as soon as possible. Having done so, Labour should continue to talk with the Government, because the differences between our manifesto, which seeks a customs arrangement, and theirs, which calls for a customs partnership, should surely not be insurmountable. Everyone—especially those who have emailed me to suggest that no deal is no problem—should read the Government's recently released analysis. It would be a problem. We must support the Bill.

6.18 pm

Mr David Lammy (Tottenham) (Lab): I have not met a Member who supports no deal who has experienced real poverty—the scarcity that, in previous eras, was so common: the destitution that families endured in workhouses in Victorian England, the deprivation in the east end that led to the birth of the Salvation Army. There may be a few left now who experienced forced rationing during the second world war.

However, having grown up in the shadow of the Broadwater Farm estate in Tottenham in the 1970s, I know what it feels like to get home and find the cupboards empty; the indignity of living pay cheque to pay cheque;

[Mr David Lammy]

the melancholy of not being able to spend time with family at weekends because they work three jobs, as my mother did.

Maria Caulfield (Lewes) (Con): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr Lammy: I will not, because of the time available.

If we do not stop a no-deal Brexit, a whole generation of families will be impoverished. "Project Fear" will become project reality. The Government's own assessments, forced out last night, estimate that no deal will make our economy up to 9% weaker over 15 years. Food prices will rise and customs checks will cost British businesses £13 billion per year. This will make the 2008 recession seem like a blip. Hundreds of businesses and thousands more jobs will leave the country. The Governor of the Bank of England has warned that house prices will crash by up to a third. Sainsbury's, Asda and Co-op told us that no deal will leave our shelves empty. The Health Secretary could not rule out medicine shortages causing early deaths. Britons living in Europe will lose their rights overnight. We will fall out of the EU's crime-fighting agencies and lose the European arrest warrant. No-deal Brexit is a dereliction of the first duty of a Government, which is to keep the public safe, so I suggest to the Government that they should say tonight that they would vote against that no deal.

Crashing out of the EU without a deal would be the single greatest failure of this Government and of any Government in modern British history: a failure of leave campaigners to deliver the utopia they sold to voters in 2016; a failure of Parliament to stand up for our constituents; and, most of all, a failure of the Prime Minister to put the country before her party and her narrow self-interest. By refusing to rule it out herself, she is deliberately causing confusion, pain and panic. The Prime Minister has made a Faustian pact with the hard-right mob in her party who want to dismantle the EU's social protections at any cost.

Brexit is a con by multi-millionaires to convince the poor that the metropolitan middle class has screwed them, knowing full well that the financial crisis is the fault of their own gambling on the markets and that Brexit is a chance to double down on it again. The Brexiteers have enough capital to profit out of this disaster, so I will call them out. The hon. Member for North East Somerset (Mr Rees-Mogg) has already moved two investment funds to Ireland. The right hon. Member for Wokingham (John Redwood) has campaigned for a hard Brexit while advising investors to pull their money out of the UK. Lord Lawson of Blaby has applied for French residency, Nigel Farage has got German passports for his children, and Sir James Dyson has moved his company headquarters to Singapore. Mr Speaker, leave really did mean leave for these men.

Let me say this directly to those who told us that Brexit was about taking back control. You do not have control when you are living in destitution. You do not have control when you cannot find work. You do not have control when your rights are sold off and dismantled for profit. There is no dignity in poverty, only shame. So shame on the ERG for what they are doing to this

country. Shame on the Prime Minister for failing to say "no. And shame on anyone who would vote to make this country poorer. We should take no deal off the table.

6.22 pm

Lee Rowley (North East Derbyshire) (Con): Eighty-four days ago I last spoke in this Chamber on Brexit and since that time nothing has fundamentally changed: the EU remains as intransigent as ever and people in this place are seeking to frustrate the will of the people, as was so eloquently outlined by the right hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr Lammy). As the son of a milkman and the grandson of miners, I will take no lessons from him.

I and people like me who voted to leave still believe in leave. All the while, the people out there—the 17.4 million people out there—are bewildered by what goes on in this place and by what is happening. I can tell you what has changed in this place in the past 84 days: we have lost our nerve, if we ever had it in the first place. The hyperbole has gone up and the hysteria has gone up, but all the while people out there do not understand what we are doing.

What should have changed in this place in the past 84 days is that we should have got real and recognised that what has happened is only hamstringing our ability to get a deal from the European Union right now. What also should have changed in the past 84 days was that the Government should have actually tried to negotiate in a meaningful way, and taken something like the Malthouse compromise and pushed it through in a way that I am not convinced they are yet doing. We have to realise something in this place, and I hate to break it to you all, but it is not about you—[*Interruption.*] You outsourced this decision in 2016 to the people and you are now trying to in-source, erroneously, the implementation, and it is not working. You do not understand the democratic deficit that is coming out and that I see in my constituency, and I am sure hon. Members—[*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must be heard. I know that he is using the word "you"—he is using it as a rhetorical device. I do not take offence at that, but he must be heard.

Lee Rowley: Hon. Members do not understand the democratic deficit that is coming out and that is completely obvious in places like my constituency and elsewhere. This is not about us. We have a decision to make. I am happy to compromise. I will compromise on money and on timelines—if I have to—and with such things as the Malthouse compromise, but I will not take false choices and false options, which it seems are about to be presented to us.

We have a clear decision to make. If a good deal is put to this place in a few weeks' time, I will vote for it, and vote for it happily. However, this place has already said that the deal that came here last time was a bad one. If that deal comes back and it is not materially changed I will vote against it, because it will not work for our country in the long term. I will vote against taking no deal off the table because that would hamstring our ability to negotiate, and I will vote against an extension of article 50, because there is no reason to extend it when we do not know why we are asking for

that extension. We have a choice to make. The people out there are watching and they are tired of and bewildered by the games that are being played in here. We have to leave on 29 March, and I hope that people will wise up in the next few days and weeks to make sure that happens.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Order. After the next speaker, the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire (Pete Wishart), the time limit on Back-Bench speeches will go down to three minutes in a bid to accommodate everybody, but he luxuriates in the lather of four.

6.26 pm

Pete Wishart (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): I know that it is traditional in this House to say, "It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Gentleman," but may I say that it is not a pleasure at all? I represent probably everything that he does not, and I will tell him something: I loathe Brexit—I truly, utterly loathe it. I hate the economically disastrous, isolating ugliness of the whole project. I particularly loathe the fact that the Government are prepared to take my beautiful, consensual, inclusive nation out of the European Union against its national collective will.

Just when we thought that this overwhelming, chaotic cluelessness could not get any worse, we have this week. I am trying to figure out what has happened this week. I hear all the warm remarks that somehow there is a bit of progress and that we are actually a few steps forward. My sense of what we have actually done is this: we are still going to leave, but just not on the day that we thought. We might have a no-deal Brexit, but it is very unlikely that no deal might extend to the 29th. We have not got a clue on what sort of basis the Government want to leave. They are hoping in vain that somehow the European Union will grant some sort of concession on the backstop. We have already heard from the French that they are not prepared to have an extension unless it is for a purpose. This is all for absolutely nothing. Their Brexit is breaking the country. It is now starting to break the UK political parties, and it is well on its way to consuming this Government, too.

This is perhaps the greatest post-war political disaster in our politics. It will be remembered as the single greatest failure of any British Government, and let us remember that it is exclusively a Tory Brexit, almost laughingly designed to try to resolve the differences about Europe in the Government's own party. Not only has it further divided their rotten party, but it has divided a nation and taken it to the brink. It is they that initiated, designed and administered it. It will define them for decades to come. This chaos will be their legacy.

The Government have driven us along this Brexit road with all the guile of Wile E. Coyote with an Acme rocket strapped to his back. Now the road is running out and that final boulder is about to come crashing down on their head, yet they say that I have to support their Brexit. They say that if I do not support it, I risk a no-deal Brexit and all the chaos that will bring. I will never support their Brexit. I will never accept my country getting taken out against its will. I will not support anything that makes my constituents poorer. I will not support the end of freedom of movement, which will

decimate businesses in my constituency and stop population growth in my country. I will never, ever accept the fact that the rights that I enjoyed to live, to work, to love across a continent will be denied to future generations of young people. I will never, ever accept that. We have tabled an amendment to revoke the whole ugly business. This madness must end. We have had our chance. I know that our amendment (g) cannot be debated because it has been signed by only 12 Members, but I bet that if it were put to the public just now, it would be about the most popular option in this country, just to end this madness, and I hope that we still get an opportunity. To vote on it.

However, Scotland has a way out. We can get off the sinking ship. At some point, the question will have to be put to the Scottish people: do you want to be part of this doomed Brexit deal, or do you want to be an independent nation, making its own way in the world? Imagine if all we could aspire to as a nation was Brexit Britain. Scotland deserves much better than that, and when Scotland gets that opportunity and that chance, Scotland will take advantage of it, and we will be that independent nation—an independent nation within the European Union.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Three-minute limit. I call Joanna Cherry.

6.26 pm

Joanna Cherry (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): I rise to support amendment (k), in the name of my right hon. Friend the Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Ian Blackford).

The distinguished political journalist Robert Peston has pointed out that the amendment rules out a no-deal Brexit completely, not just on 29 March but in perpetuity, and should therefore be supported by all Opposition Members, including the Labour party, and many Conservative Members. I am delighted that the amendment has the support of Plaid Cymru, and of the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Caroline Lucas), of the Liberal Democrats, of the Independent Group, and of the Labour party and, I understand, some Members on the Government Benches. I think it shows that there is a majority in this House to rule out no deal completely.

Given that the Government's own Business Secretary has said that no deal would be ruinous, given what the right hon. Member for Broxtowe (Anna Soubry) has said about the documents that she has viewed in some detail, and given what the hon. Member for Stafford (Jeremy Lefroy) said about this not being a game of chicken, supporting the amendment is a no-brainer. I entreat hon. Members across the House to put aside any reservations about the Scottish National party. They may not agree with all our programme. That is fine; that is their right. But there is a majority across this House to rule out no deal, and I ask hon. Members, particularly on the Government Benches, to live up to what they have said across the media and to have the gumption to support this now cross-party amendment, albeit led by the SNP, to rule out no deal completely.

It is simply not true that no deal cannot be ruled out completely. Why would any country want to shoot itself in the foot in that way? It is ruinous, as the Government have said. We can rule out no deal. The reason we can rule out no deal is that even if the European Union did not give us an extension, we have the means to revoke

[Joanna Cherry]

article 50, thanks to the case that I and others took to the European Court of Justice. I declare my interest in respect of the Good Law Project in that regard.

I entreat hon. Members: today, rather than this being yet another talking shop because certain amendments have been pulled, this is an opportunity to rule out no deal in perpetuity. Those on the Opposition Benches are supporting the amendment. I know that some hon. Members on the Government Benches have said that they will support it. I hope that more will do so, because we can defeat the Government's madness on this tonight.

6.33 pm

Jack Dromey (Birmingham, Erdington) (Lab): With 31 days to go, yesterday saw us take the first step back in this House from the precipice towards which we were heading. Had we plunged over the precipice into a no-deal Britain, our country would have been the poorer for a generation. At the next stages, there can be no backsliding on the commitments that have been given, both yesterday and today. The progress made follows sustained cross-party campaigning, exemplified by the excellent leadership of the right hon. Member for Meriden (Dame Caroline Spelman).

In bringing home the consequences of a no-deal Brexit, we have built a powerful business coalition, and their voice could not be clearer. Only yesterday they met here, against the background of already painful consequences being felt, including in our factories, such as Jaguar Land Rover, where thousands of jobs have gone.

The CBI said that it had seen the fastest drop in services since 2008. Barclays was moving £190 million of investment to Dublin. Billions were being spent on contingency planning. The TUC talked of a devastating impact: already thousands—tens of thousands—of workers were losing their jobs. The chief executive of Virgin said that the company had invested £30 billion, and had brought in American investment in particular, but now the growing uncertainty was leading to investment decisions being taken against Britain. The Food and Drink Federation said that an eighth of its members felt that no deal could threaten their viability.

The National Farmers Union spoke out. From plough to plate, there were grave concerns about the consequences of a no-deal Brexit. Ford said that vehicles were already in transit, but that it did not know what the tariffs would be when they landed. A major health and safety company that was to make a 1,000-strong investment in Northern Ireland has now pulled back from that investment. The ceramics industry is panic-stricken at hard Brexiteers' notion of zero tariffs, fearing the impact that it would have on their businesses. The Investment Association talked of the shift of investment to Asia in particular. A major engineering company said that a £35 million regional headquarters had been shelved.

I could go on, but all I can say in the time available to me is that if we have taken a step back from the brink—and we have—there is no majority in the House, and never will be, for a hard Brexit, a no-deal Brexit. It is therefore crucial for us to come together during the next stages, across parties, as we have done, to frustrate a no-deal Brexit and to agree a new settlement for our country that can command the confidence of the country,

and will be in the best interests of the country. We stand ready to undertake that great enterprise, and I hope that all Members will do likewise.

6.36 pm

Peter Grant (Glenrothes) (SNP): It is easy to ask what has changed since the last debate, and the one before that, and the one before that. I was tempted to talk only about what has changed, because I could quite easily fit “nothing” into four minutes. However, something important has changed. The clock has changed. Cliff-edge day is getting nearer and nearer. The Prime Minister insists that this is not a deliberate, cynical and criminally reckless ploy to run down the clock and blackmail us into voting for a rotten deal as the only alternative to no deal at all. I do not believe that, and I doubt that many other Members in the Chamber do either.

I have been accused tonight of not understanding democratic deficits. I have visited the Dutch Parliament, and I know that Dutch Members of Parliament are able to vote every time a Minister goes to the European Council to tell the Minister how to vote. We are not able to do that. I serve in a Parliament nearly three quarters of whose Members are appointed by patronage and favour, not by democratic mandate. I know about democratic deficits. I have never been alive at a time when my country has voted for a Conservative Government, but Conservative Governments have ruled over me, and misruled over me, for more than half my life. No one in this place is going to tell me, or five and a half million of my fellow Scots, that we do not understand what a democratic deficit means.

I must point out to the hon. Member for Gloucester (Richard Graham)—although I do not know whether he is still in the Chamber—that our amendment is not redundant. The Prime Minister has not promised to give us a chance to take no deal off the table. She has offered to give us a chance to take it off the table on 29 March. I want it off the table on 30 March, 31 March, and every day from then till kingdom come. It is not acceptable that the Prime Minister has refused to confirm that that will happen if the House rejects no deal for a second time. We have already rejected it, and it is still on the table. How is that for a democratic deficit?

We have seen so many principles of good government thrown out of the window by a Government who now seem almost to be playing the game that winning a vote is all that matters. It does not matter what is in the vote. It does not matter if they win a vote to take us over a cliff edge, as long as they win it. My hon. Friend the Member for Central Ayrshire (Dr Whitford)—who I do not think is in the Chamber now—brilliantly described the choice that we are being offered: she said that the Prime Minister's deal takes us over the cliff edge, but with luck we might have time to knit ourselves a parachute on the way down, before we hit the ground.

This is not a good enough choice. Those who want to force Parliament into such a non-choice are not being democratic. They are seeking to frustrate the clearly expressed will of the House. The House does not want to be forced to choose between a rotten deal and no deal. Some of us have another choice before us. Scotland will never accept the xenophobic, isolationist and divisive future that the Government are trying to force us into. Scotland has an alternative future, and that future will be claimed by the people of Scotland before very long.

6.39 pm

Diana Johnson (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): One thing I have noticed in the whole debate about Brexit is that small groups with very loud voices tend to dominate, and this afternoon I had a message from a constituent who said:

"Where did it say 'leave with a deal' on the referendum paper; it never did—did it?"

There are small groups who think no deal is the way forward but the vast majority of my constituents, many of them among those who voted to leave in 2016, want to leave with a deal that delivers on the promises made in 2016.

I certainly believe it is reckless to leave with no deal, and what the hon. Member for Stafford (Jeremy Lefroy) said about the negotiations now having gone too far and that no deal should be taken off the table is absolutely right. I welcome the fact that we will have the opportunity to stop a no deal crash-out of the EU in the next few weeks, although very late in the day.

I want to speak briefly to amendment (a). I am pleased that it has been tabled by my Front-Bench team and selected. It is credible; it is a sensible way forward. Of course it opens up the political declaration, but we know that the EU is open to that. It is such a shame, and I feel really let down by the Prime Minister, that over the last two years she has not felt able to act in the national interest and reach out across this House. She has decided on those red lines, it seems, all by herself, agreed with no one but herself. There has been no real attempt to work cross-party.

It could have been so different, and I do think it could have strengthened her hand in her negotiations with the EU if she had had Parliament backing her when she went into those discussions. I also think it would have stopped her suffering the biggest ever defeat in parliamentary history, which happened last month.

Amendment (a) is the best chance to deliver on the promises made to my constituents and everyone else's constituents in 2016: to protect jobs and trade, and, as an MP representing a university seat, to protect some of our excellent educational schemes such as Erasmus, and also to protect the security of this nation and, finally, the dynamic alignment of rights and protections—which must be, of course, something we all support. So I am pleased that amendment (a) will be voted on this evening and I encourage everybody to get behind it.

6.42 pm

Matthew Pennycook (Greenwich and Woolwich) (Lab): There have been a number of excellent contributions to today's debate from across the House, and while time prevents me from mentioning each of them I do want to single out a number of hon. and right hon. Friends, including my right hon. Friends the Members for Wolverhampton South East (Mr McFadden), for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn) and for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) and my hon. Friends the Members for Birmingham, Erdington (Jack Dromey), for Hornsey and Wood Green (Catherine West) and for Pontypridd (Owen Smith), as well as the right hon. Member for Meriden (Dame Caroline Spelman), the right hon. and learned Member for Beaconsfield (Mr Grieve) and the hon. Member for South Leicestershire (Alberto Costa), who made a particularly passionate contribution.

We find ourselves here again debating much the same issues because we are in an impasse, yet there was little in the Prime Minister's statement yesterday, or the thoughtful opening speech from the Minister for the Cabinet Office, to suggest that that impasse will be broken any time soon. I think it unlikely but it is of course not inconceivable that the Prime Minister will secure changes to the backstop, yet if she does they will almost certainly be minor, if not entirely cosmetic. They will certainly not be changes of the magnitude necessary to satisfy the very clear instruction set out in the amendment in the name of the hon. Member for Altrincham and Sale West (Sir Graham Brady), supported by the Government, that the Northern Ireland backstop be

"replaced with alternative arrangements".

That highlights the fact that that amendment was merely a sticking plaster which hid all manner of sins in an effort to generate a temporary sense of unity among the warring factions in the Conservative party.

Now it may be that some of the less cavalier members of the European Research Group have realised what a hostage to fortune the Brady amendment was: perhaps they are now looking for a way to climb down; perhaps they are no longer insisting that the backstop be replaced in its entirety and are prepared to consider the type of reassurances that for so long they dismissed. But I would be amazed if they would satisfy both the DUP and all of the ideologues in the ERG. As such, the fundamental issues have not changed and the Government's present strategy is likely to continue to fail. What is shameful is that the Prime Minister is fully aware of the risks she is taking yet is ploughing on regardless in an attempt to force this House to blink and accept her flawed deal. Is it any wonder that businesses and individuals across the country, many of whom are already feeling the impact of the Prime Minister's gamble, reacted with alarm at her entirely self-serving and purposefully reckless decision to once again delay a second meaningful vote?

It has long been obvious to many of us on this side of the House that the UK will inevitably have to seek an extension to the article 50 process and postpone exit day beyond 29 March—my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Keir Starmer) has said so repeatedly from the Dispatch Box—yet the Prime Minister has insisted repeatedly that the UK will leave the EU on 29 March, no matter what. Yesterday, she was forced to concede that an extension might be necessary after all, and, as the Minister for the Cabinet Office made clear in his opening remarks, we will now have a vote on a binding motion on 14 March if the House rejects the Prime Minister's revised deal and again rejects a no-deal exit. This is the right thing for the Government to have done, and we will support amendment (f), tabled by my right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford, if she decides to press it to a vote, to bind the Government to those commitments.

We on this side of the House will support any and all efforts to prevent a damaging no-deal departure from the EU, including supporting amendment (k), tabled by the Scottish National party. Providing for a means to reduce the time pressure in the article 50 process does not ensure that a no-deal exit is ruled out categorically as an option, but it is a crucial first step in preventing a no-deal exit from happening, either inadvertently or as a matter of intent. However, as my right hon. Friend the

[Matthew Pennycook]

Member for Wolverhampton South East and my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd stated in their powerful contributions, the EU will agree to an extension only if it is for a purpose, and that purpose cannot be more of the strategy that the Prime Minister has adhered to in the 43 days since 15 January. That is why it is almost inevitable that this House will have to explore credible alternatives to the Prime Minister's deal that might be capable of commanding a majority in this House.

We have set out our alternative in amendment (a), and we know that it is a credible alternative because the EU has said as much, privately and publicly. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Holborn and St Pancras exposed forensically in his opening remarks, it is very different from the political declaration that the Government have currently negotiated. Importantly, amendment (a) would enshrine our new negotiating mandate in primary legislation so that no Government or Prime Minister could renege on it. We will continue to urge Ministers to abandon the pretence and move seriously to engage with our proposal, but we will also put it to the House this evening and ask Parliament to assist us in ensuring that it is the basis for a revised agreement.

I want to end my remarks, as my right hon. and learned Friend ended his, by underlining the commitment made by the Leader of the Opposition on Monday. If amendment (a) is defeated this evening, Labour will then move to propose or support future public vote amendments in Parliament that offer the British people a choice between a credible leave option endorsed by this House and the option of staying in the EU. As my right hon. and learned Friend made clear, we will do that because we have to, in order to prevent a damaging Tory Brexit of the kind that the Prime Minister is proposing and to avert a disastrous no-deal exit.

6.48 pm

The Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Stephen Barclay): The Government's focus is on securing a deal and passing a meaningful vote by 12 March. The Prime Minister has now spoken to the leaders of all 27 EU member states to set out the UK's position. The Attorney General, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and I have been engaged in discussions with the EU to make progress, and both teams are continuing their work. We have agreed to review progress with the EU again over the coming days.

Alberto Costa: I have two questions for my right hon. Friend. Given that the Government have accepted my amendment in full, will he confirm at the Dispatch Box whether the Prime Minister will be writing to President Tusk and the European Council requesting that the European Council give legal authority to the EU Commission to seek to enter into discussions with the UK to carve out the citizens' rights deal? If so, when?

Stephen Barclay: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising that point. Many Members from across the House spoke in support of him during the debate, and I am happy to confirm that we will write to the EU institutions in the coming days. The reality is that we have a shared goal of protecting citizens' rights, and the

Government do not oppose my hon. Friend's amendment for that reason, but the issue is more about what the European side is willing to do, because the EU has previously said that it is a bilateral matter for member states, rather than something within the EU Commission's mandate.

Turning to amendment (c) in the name of my right hon. Friend the Member for Meriden (Dame Caroline Spelman), she kindly referred to my remarks in the media this morning, and those of the Prime Minister, that the will of the House will be respected in respect of a vote on whether to leave with no deal should the meaningful vote on 12 March not be passed. I am grateful to her for indicating, in the light of the assurances that we have provided, that she does not intend to press the amendment to a vote.

Moving on to amendment (f) in the name of the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper), I can confirm that the Government will accept it. It is no longer necessary, because we have made clear commitments to hold a second meaningful vote on 12 March and another vote on leaving without a deal. The Chairman of the Exiting the European Union Committee asked whether those motions would be amendable, and that was addressed by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. As the Chairman of the Committee well knows, it is for you, Mr Speaker, to decide whether a motion is amendable, but the Government are happy to give a commitment subject to that decision. I do not want to pre-empt what the motion will say, but we expect that a substantive motion would be amendable, which I hope reassures him.

Going back to amendment (c), the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford and the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Owen Smith) asked me to confirm the Government's position on the record and to reiterate the position set out by the Prime Minister, who said:

"First, we will hold a second meaningful vote by Tuesday 12 March at the latest. Secondly, if the Government have not won a meaningful vote by Tuesday 12 March, then they will, in addition to their obligations to table a neutral, amendable motion under section 13 of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018, table a motion to be voted on by Wednesday 13 March, at the latest, asking this House if it supports leaving the EU without a withdrawal agreement and a framework for a future relationship on 29 March. So the United Kingdom will only leave without a deal on 29 March if there is explicit consent in this House for that outcome.

Thirdly, if the House, having rejected leaving with the deal negotiated with the EU, then rejects leaving on 29 March without a withdrawal agreement and future framework, the Government will, on 14 March, bring forward a motion on whether Parliament wants to seek a short, limited extension to article 50, and, if the House votes for an extension, seek to agree that extension approved by the House with the EU and bring forward the necessary legislation to change the exit date commensurate with that extension. These commitments all fit the timescale set out in the private Member's Bill in the name of the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford."—[*Official Report*, 26 February 2019; Vol. 655, c. 166-167.]

Those commitments were made by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, and the Government will stick by them. While I do not normally like to read text out verbatim, I hope that that provides the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford with the clarification that she was seeking.

Yvette Cooper: There are some reports online that the Leader of the House may have said something different and that there might be circumstances in which we could leave with no deal even if the House had voted against that. Is the Brexit Secretary aware of that?

Stephen Barclay: As the right hon. Lady knows, I have been sat in the Chamber for the vast majority of the debate, so I do not know about any such comments. The reason why I was so explicit in what I set out and in repeating what the Prime Minister said—and indeed why my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster was so clear in what he said—is that that is the Government position, and I hope that the right hon. Lady will take things in that spirit. Obviously, I do not know what other comments have been made, but I am happy to confirm the Prime Minister's comments at the Dispatch Box.

In introducing amendment (a), in the name of the Leader of the Opposition, the right hon. and learned Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Keir Starmer) said that nothing has changed over the past two weeks, notwithstanding that several Members, including the right hon. Members for Leeds Central and for Birkenhead (Frank Field), contradicted him. The latter said he thinks there has been a change, but I think the right hon. and learned Gentleman was being too modest, because over the past two weeks something material has changed: the position of the Leader of the Opposition. Two weeks ago we thought he was honouring the referendum and honouring his manifesto commitment, whereas we now learn that he is committed to a second referendum.

The Leader of the Opposition started out with six tests, and he now wants five commitments. His five commitments relate to the political declaration, but he uses them to justify not voting for the withdrawal agreement, even though that withdrawal agreement includes protecting citizens' rights, honouring our international obligations and protecting the Northern Ireland border, all of which he calls for. Indeed, he says he wants to be part of the single market but, at the same time, he wants not to be part of state aid rules or freedom of movement, which shows all the consistency we are familiar with from the Leader of the Opposition.

Amendment (k) expresses the SNP's discontent with no deal, regardless of whether we extend article 50. I do not think we need a vote in this House to understand that the SNP is discontented—we can probably take that as read.

My right hon. Friend the Member for North Shropshire (Mr Paterson) raised the issue of alternative arrangements, and I am happy to confirm that the UK and the EU have agreed to consider a joint work stream to develop alternative arrangements to ensure no hard border on the island of Ireland. We will also be setting up domestic structures to take advice from external experts, from businesses that trade with the EU and beyond, and from colleagues across the House. That will be supported by civil service resources and £20 million of Government funding. The work will be done in parallel, without prejudice to the ongoing negotiations.

Mr Baron: The Secretary of State knows we wish him well with these negotiations, but can he confirm that, when it comes to addressing the concerns of Conservative

Members and some Opposition Members about the backstop, what is achieved will not only be meaningful but have a cast-iron guarantee of legal force?

Stephen Barclay: My hon. Friend has exquisite timing, as I was just about to namecheck him. In addition to referring to the fact that we need to address the indefinite nature of the backstop, he spoke of the need for compromise. He reflected one of the themes of today's debate, which is that, among those who voted remain and among those who voted leave, there is consensus in this House on recognising the importance of securing a deal. The best way to mitigate the risk of no deal is to have a deal. Indeed, as the Prime Minister frequently says at this Dispatch Box, the only way to avoid a no deal is either to revoke Brexit entirely, a betrayal of the votes of 17.4 million people, or to secure a deal.

We have listened to Members across the House, and we have listened to their concerns about no deal. We have clearly said to Members across the House that there will be a vote in this place on the issue of no deal. However, in securing a deal, which is our priority, we will protect the rights of EU citizens, along with the wishes of my hon. Friend the Member for South Leicestershire (Alberto Costa), not only in the EU but in the UK, and we will do so in a way that delivers Brexit and delivers on the biggest vote in our country's history. That is why I commend the approach set out in the motion.

Amendment proposed: (a), leave out from "House" to end and add:

"instructs Ministers

(a) to negotiate with the EU for changes to the Political Declaration to secure:

- i. a permanent and comprehensive customs union with the EU;
- ii. close alignment with the single market underpinned by shared institutions and obligations;
- iii. dynamic alignment on rights and protections;
- iv. commitments on participation in EU agencies and funding programmes, including in areas such as the environment, education, and industrial regulation; and
- v. unambiguous agreement on the detail of future security arrangements, including access to the European Arrest Warrant and vital shared databases; and

(b) to introduce primary legislation to give statutory effect to this negotiating mandate."—(*Jeremy Corbyn.*)

The House divided: Ayes 240, Noes 323.

Division No. 345]

[6.59 pm

AYES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane	Brown, Lyn
Abrahams, Debbie	Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
Ali, Rushanara	Bryant, Chris
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena	Buck, Ms Karen
Amesbury, Mike	Burden, Richard
Antoniazzi, Tonia	Burgon, Richard
Ashworth, Jonathan	Butler, Dawn
Bailey, Mr Adrian	Byrne, rh Liam
Beckett, rh Margaret	Cadbury, Ruth
Benn, rh Hilary	Campbell, rh Sir Alan
Betts, Mr Clive	Carden, Dan
Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta	Champion, Sarah
Blomfield, Paul	Chapman, Jenny
Brabin, Tracy	Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben	Clwyd, rh Ann
Brennan, Kevin	Coaker, Vernon

Cooper, Julie
 Cooper, Rosie
 Cooper, rh Yvette
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy
 Coyle, Neil
 Crausby, Sir David
 Creagh, Mary
 Creasy, Stella
 Cruddas, Jon
 Cryer, John
 Cummins, Judith
 Cunningham, Alex
 Cunningham, Mr Jim
 Daby, Janet
 David, Wayne
 Davies, Geraint
 De Cordova, Marsha
 De Piero, Gloria
 Debbonaire, Thangam
 Dent Coad, Emma
 Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
 Dodds, Anneliese
 Doughty, Stephen
 Dowd, Peter
 Drew, Dr David
 Dromey, Jack
 Duffield, Rosie
 Eagle, Ms Angela
 Eagle, Maria
 Efford, Clive
 Elliott, Julie
 Ellman, Dame Louise
 Elmore, Chris
 Esterson, Bill
 Evans, Chris
 Farrelly, Paul
 Fitzpatrick, Jim
 Fletcher, Colleen
 Flint, rh Caroline
 Fovargue, Yvonne
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Frith, James
 Furniss, Gill
 Gaffney, Hugh
 Gardiner, Barry
 George, Ruth
 Gill, Preet Kaur
 Glindon, Mary
 Godsiff, Mr Roger
 Goodman, Helen
 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
 Hill, Mike
 Hillier, Meg
 Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hollern, Kate
 Howarth, rh Mr George

Huq, Dr Rupa
 Hussain, Imran
 Jarvis, Dan
 Johnson, Diana
 Jones, Darren
 Jones, Gerald
 Jones, Graham
 P.
 Jones, Helen
 Jones, rh Mr Kevan
 Jones, Sarah
 Jones, Susan Elan
 Kane, Mike
 Keeley, Barbara
 Kendall, Liz
 Khan, Afzal
 Killen, Ged
 Kinnock, Stephen
 Kyle, Peter
 Laird, Lesley
 Lammy, rh Mr David
 Lavery, Ian
 Lee, Karen
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Lewis, Clive
 Lewis, Mr Ivan
 Lloyd, Tony
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 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
 McCabe, Steve
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonnell, rh John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGinn, Conor
 McGovern, Alison
 McInnes, Liz
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McMahon, Jim
 McMorris, Anna
 Mearns, Ian
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Moon, Mrs Madeleine
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, Grahame
 Murray, Ian
 Nandy, Lisa
 Norris, Alex
 O'Mara, Jared
 Onn, Melanie
 Onwurah, Chi
 Osamor, Kate
 Owen, Albert
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pearce, Teresa
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Perkins, Toby
 Phillips, Jess
 Phillipson, Bridget

Pidcock, Laura
 Platt, Jo
 Pollard, Luke
 Pound, Stephen
 Powell, Lucy
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Rashid, Faisal
 Rayner, Angela
 Reed, Mr Steve
 Rees, Christina
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reeves, Rachel
 Reynolds, Emma
 Reynolds, Jonathan
 Rimmer, Ms Marie
 Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
 Rodda, Matt
 Rowley, Danielle
 Ruane, Chris
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
 Shah, Naz
 Sharma, Mr Virendra
 Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Sherriff, Paula
 Siddiq, Tulip (*Proxy vote cast by Vicky Foxcroft*)
 Skinner, Mr Dennis
 Slaughter, Andy
 Smeeth, Ruth
 Smith, Cat
 Smith, Eleanor
 Smith, Jeff
 Smith, Laura
 Smith, Nick
 Smith, Owen
 Smyth, Karin

Snell, Gareth
 Sobel, Alex
 Spellar, rh John
 Starmer, rh Keir
 Stevens, Jo
 Streeting, Wes
 Sweeney, Mr Paul
 Swinson, Jo
 Tami, rh Mark
 Thomas, Gareth
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick
 Thornberry, rh Emily
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Trickett, Jon
 Turley, Anna
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Derek
 Twigg, Stephen
 Twist, Liz
 Vaz, rh Keith
 Vaz, Valerie
 Walker, Thelma
 Watson, Tom
 West, Catherine
 Western, Matt
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whitfield, Martin
 Williams, Dr Paul
 Wilson, Phil
 Woodcock, John
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:
Nic Dakin and
Bambos Charalambous

NOES

Adams, Nigel
 Afolami, Bim
 Afriyie, Adam
 Aldous, Peter
 Allan, Lucy
 Amess, Sir David
 Andrew, Stuart
 Argar, Edward
 Atkins, Victoria
 Bacon, Mr Richard
 Badenoch, Mrs Kemi
 Baker, Mr Steve
 Baldwin, Harriett
 Barclay, rh Stephen
 Baron, Mr John
 Bebb, Guto
 Bellingham, Sir Henry
 Benyon, rh Richard
 Beresford, Sir Paul
 Berry, Jake
 Blackman, Bob
 Blunt, Crispin
 Boles, Nick
 Bone, Mr Peter
 Bottomley, Sir Peter
 Bowie, Andrew
 Bradley, Ben
 Bradley, rh Karen
 Brady, Sir Graham
 Braverman, Suella
 Brereton, Jack
 Bridgen, Andrew
 Brine, Steve
 Brokenshire, rh James
 Bruce, Fiona
 Buckland, Robert
 Burghart, Alex
 Burns, Conor
 Burt, rh Alistair
 Cairns, rh Alun
 Campbell, Mr Gregory
 Cartlidge, James
 Cash, Sir William
 Caulfield, Maria
 Chalk, Alex
 Chishti, Rehman
 Chope, Sir Christopher
 Churchill, Jo
 Clark, Colin
 Clark, rh Greg
 Clarke, Mr Simon
 Cleverly, James
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
 Coffey, Dr Thérèse
 Collins, Damian
 Costa, Alberto
 Courts, Robert
 Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey
 Crabb, rh Stephen
 Crouch, Tracey
 Davies, Chris
 Davies, David T. C.
 Davies, Glyn
 Davies, Mims
 Davies, Philip
 Davis, rh Mr David

Dinenage, Caroline
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
 Docherty, Leo
 Dodds, rh Nigel
 Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
 Donelan, Michelle
 Dorries, Ms Nadine
 Double, Steve
 Dowden, Oliver
 Doyle-Price, Jackie
 Drax, Richard
 Duddridge, James
 Duguid, David
 Duncan, rh Sir Alan
 Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
 Dunne, rh Mr Philip
 Ellis, Michael
 Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
 Elphicke, Charlie
 Eustice, George
 Evans, Mr Nigel
 Evennett, rh Sir David
 Fabricant, Michael
 Fallon, rh Sir Michael
 Field, rh Frank
 Field, rh Mark
 Ford, Vicky
 Foster, Kevin
 Fox, rh Dr Liam
 Francois, rh Mr Mark
 Frazer, Lucy
 Freeman, George
 Freer, Mike
 Fysh, Mr Marcus
 Gale, rh Sir Roger
 Garnier, Mark
 Gauke, rh Mr David
 Ghani, Ms Nusrat
 Gibb, rh Nick
 Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl
 Girvan, Paul
 Glen, John
 Goldsmith, Zac
 Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
 Gove, rh Michael
 Graham, Luke
 Graham, Richard
 Grant, Bill
 Grant, Mrs Helen
 Gray, James
 Grayling, rh Chris
 Green, Chris
 Green, rh Damian
 Greening, rh Justine
 Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
 Griffiths, Andrew
 Gyimah, Mr Sam
 Hair, Kirstene
 Halfon, rh Robert
 Hall, Luke
 Hammond, rh Mr Philip
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, rh Matt
 Hands, rh Greg
 Harper, rh Mr Mark
 Harrington, Richard
 Harris, Rebecca
 Harrison, Trudy
 Hart, Simon
 Hayes, rh Sir John
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver
 Heappey, James

Heaton-Harris, Chris
 Heaton-Jones, Peter
 Henderson, Gordon
 Hepburn, Mr Stephen
 Herbert, rh Nick
 Hermon, Lady
 Hinds, rh Damian
 Hoare, Simon
 Hollingbery, George
 Hollinrake, Kevin
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holloway, Adam
 Howell, John
 Huddleston, Nigel
 Hughes, Eddie
 Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
 Hurd, rh Mr Nick
 Jack, Mr Alister
 James, Margot
 Javid, rh Sajid
 Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard
 Jenkyns, Andrea
 Jenrick, Robert
 Johnson, rh Boris
 Johnson, Dr Caroline
 Johnson, Gareth
 Johnson, Joseph
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Jones, Mr Marcus
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Keegan, Gillian
 Kennedy, Seema
 Kerr, Stephen
 Knight, rh Sir Greg
 Knight, Julian
 Kwarteng, Kwasi
 Lamont, John
 Lancaster, rh Mark
 Latham, Mrs Pauline
 Leadsom, rh Andrea
 Lee, Dr Phillip
 Lefroy, Jeremy
 Leigh, rh Sir Edward
 Letwin, rh Sir Oliver
 Lewer, Andrew
 Lewis, rh Brandon
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Lidington, rh Mr David
 Little Pengelly, Emma
 Lopez, Julia
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lord, Mr Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Mackinlay, Craig
 Maclean, Rachel
 Main, Mrs Anne
 Mak, Alan
 Malthouse, Kit
 Mann, Scott
 Masterton, Paul
 May, rh Mrs Theresa
 Maynard, Paul
 McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick
 McPartland, Stephen
 McVey, rh Ms Esther
 Menzies, Mark
 Mercer, Johnny
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen

Miller, rh Mrs Maria
 Mills, Nigel
 Milton, rh Anne
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Moore, Damien
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morgan, rh Nicky
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Morton, Wendy
 Mundell, rh David
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll
 Murrison, Dr Andrew
 Neill, Robert
 Newton, Sarah
 Nokes, rh Caroline
 Norman, Jesse
 O'Brien, Neil
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Opperman, Guy
 Paisley, Ian
 Parish, Neil
 Patel, rh Priti
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Pawsey, Mark
 Penning, rh Sir Mike
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Perry, rh Claire
 Philp, Chris
 Pincher, rh Christopher
 Poulter, Dr Dan
 Pow, Rebecca
 Prentis, Victoria
 Prisk, Mr Mark
 Pritchard, Mark
 Pursglove, Tom
 Quin, Jeremy
 Quince, Will
 Raab, rh Dominic
 Redwood, rh John
 Rees-Mogg, Mr Jacob
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Robinson, Gavin
 Robinson, Mary
 Rosindell, Andrew
 Ross, Douglas
 Rowley, Lee
 Rudd, rh Amber
 Rutley, David
 Sandbach, Antoinette
 Scully, Paul
 Seely, Mr Bob
 Selous, Andrew
 Shannon, Jim
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, Alok
 Shelbrooke, Alec

Simpson, David
 Simpson, rh Mr Keith
 Skidmore, Chris
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, rh Julian
 Smith, Royston
 Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
 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
 Tugendhat, Tom
 Vaizey, rh Mr Edward
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Walker, Mr Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben
 Warburton, David
 Warman, Matt
 Watling, Giles
 Whately, Helen
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John
 Wiggin, Bill
 Williamson, rh Gavin
 Wilson, rh Sammy
 Wood, Mike
 Wragg, Mr William
 Wright, rh Jeremy
 Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Noes:
Amanda Milling and
Craig Whittaker

Question accordingly negated.

The Speaker put forthwith the Questions necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded at that time (Order, this day).

Amendment proposed: (k), in line 1, leave out from "House" to end and add—

"is determined not to leave the European Union without a withdrawal agreement and future framework under any circumstances, and regardless of any exit date."—(*Ian Blackford.*)

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The House divided: Ayes 288, Noes 324.

Division No. 346]

[7.15 pm

AYES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
Abrahams, Debbie
Ali, Rushanara
Allen, Heidi
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
Amesbury, Mike
Antoniazzi, Tonia
Ashworth, Jonathan
Bailey, Mr Adrian
Bardell, Hannah
Beckett, rh Margaret
Benn, rh Hilary
Betts, Mr Clive
Black, Mhairi
Blackford, rh Ian
Blackman, Kirsty
Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta
Blomfield, Paul
Brabin, Tracy
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
Brake, rh Tom
Brennan, Kevin
Brock, Deidre
Brown, Alan
Brown, Lyn
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
Bryant, Chris
Buck, Ms Karen
Burden, Richard
Burgon, Richard
Butler, Dawn
Byrne, rh Liam
Cable, rh Sir Vince
Cadbury, Ruth
Cameron, Dr Lisa
Campbell, rh Sir Alan
Carden, Dan
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Champion, Sarah
Chapman, Douglas
Chapman, Jenny
Charalambous, Bambos
Cherry, Joanna
Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth
Clwyd, rh Ann
Coaker, Vernon
Coffey, Ann
Cooper, Julie
Cooper, Rosie
Cooper, rh Yvette
Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Cowan, Ronnie
Coyle, Neil
Crausby, Sir David
Crawley, Angela
Creagh, Mary
Creasy, Stella
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
Farron, Tim
Fletcher, Colleen
Fovargue, Yvonne
Foxcroft, Vicky
Frith, James
Furniss, Gill
Gaffney, Hugh
Gapes, Mike
Gardiner, Barry
George, Ruth
Gethins, Stephen
Gibson, Patricia
Gill, Preet Kaur
Glindon, Mary
Godsiff, Mr Roger
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
Hermon, Lady
Hill, Mike
Hillier, Meg
Hobhouse, Wera
Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Hollern, Kate
Hosie, Stewart
Howarth, rh Mr George
Huq, Dr Rupa

Hussain, Imran
Jardine, Christine
Jarvis, Dan
Johnson, Diana
Jones, Darren
Jones, Gerald
Jones, Graham P.
Jones, Helen
Jones, Sarah
Jones, Susan Elan
Kane, Mike
Keeley, Barbara
Kendall, Liz
Khan, Afzal
Killen, Ged
Kinnock, Stephen
Kyle, Peter
Laird, Lesley
Lake, Ben
Lamb, rh Norman
Lammy, rh Mr David
Lavery, Ian
Law, Chris
Lee, Karen
Leslie, Mr Chris
Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
Lewis, Clive
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
Marsden, Gordon
Martin, Sandy
Maskell, Rachael
Matheson, Christian
Mc Nally, John
McCabe, Steve
McCarthy, Kerry
McDonagh, Siobhain
McDonald, Andy
McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
McDonald, Stuart C.
McDonnell, rh John
McFadden, rh Mr Pat
McGinn, Conor
McGovern, Alison
McInnes, Liz
McKinnell, Catherine
McMahon, Jim
McMorrin, Anna
Mearns, Ian
Miliband, rh Edward
Monaghan, Carol
Moon, Mrs Madeleine
Moran, Layla
Morden, Jessica
Morgan, Stephen
Murray, Ian
Newlands, Gavin
Norris, Alex
O'Hara, Brendan
O'Mara, Jared
Onn, Melanie
Onwurah, Chi
Osamor, Kate

Owen, Albert
Peacock, Stephanie
Pearce, Teresa
Pennycook, Matthew
Perkins, Toby
Phillips, Jess
Phillipson, Bridget
Pidcock, Laura
Platt, Jo
Pollard, Luke
Pound, Stephen
Powell, Lucy
Qureshi, Yasmin
Rashid, Faisal
Rayner, Angela
Reed, Mr Steve
Rees, Christina
Reeves, Ellie
Reeves, Rachel
Reynolds, Emma
Reynolds, Jonathan
Rimmer, Ms Marie
Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
Rodda, Matt
Rowley, Danielle
Ruane, Chris
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
Ryan, rh Joan
Saville Roberts, Liz
Shah, Naz
Sharma, Mr Virendra
Sheerman, Mr Barry
Sheppard, Tommy
Sherriff, Paula
Shuker, Mr Gavin
Siddiq, Tulip (*Proxy vote cast by Vicky Foxcroft*)
Skinner, Mr Dennis
Slaughter, Andy
Smith, Angela
Smith, Cat
Smith, Eleanor
Smith, Jeff
Smith, Laura
Smith, Nick
Smith, Owen
Smyth, Karin
Sobel, Alex
Soubry, rh Anna
Starmar, rh Keir
Stephens, Chris
Stevens, Jo
Stone, Jamie
Streeting, Wes
Sweeney, Mr Paul
Swinson, Jo
Tami, rh Mark
Thewliss, Alison
Thomas, Gareth
Thomas-Symonds, Nick
Thornberry, rh Emily
Trickett, Jon
Turley, Anna
Turner, Karl
Twigg, Stephen
Twist, Liz
Umunna, Chuka
Vaz, rh Keith
Vaz, Valerie
Walker, Thelma
Watson, Tom
West, Catherine

Western, Matt
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Whitfield, Martin
Whitford, Dr Philippa
Williams, Hywel
Williams, Dr Paul
Wilson, Phil
Wishart, Pete

Wollaston, Dr Sarah
Woodcock, John
Yasin, Mohammad
Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:
Marion Fellows and
David Linden

NOES

Adams, Nigel
Afolami, Bim
Afriyie, Adam
Aldous, Peter
Allan, Lucy
Amess, Sir David
Andrew, Stuart
Argar, Edward
Atkins, Victoria
Austin, Ian
Bacon, Mr Richard
Badenoch, Mrs Kemi
Baker, Mr Steve
Baldwin, Harriett
Barclay, rh Stephen
Baron, Mr John
Barron, rh Sir Kevin
Bellingham, Sir Henry
Benyon, rh Richard
Beresford, Sir Paul
Berry, Jake
Blackman, Bob
Blunt, Crispin
Boles, Nick
Bone, Mr Peter
Bottomley, Sir Peter
Bowie, Andrew
Bradley, Ben
Bradley, rh Karen
Brady, Sir Graham
Braverman, Suella
Brereton, Jack
Bridgen, Andrew
Brine, Steve
Brokenshire, rh James
Bruce, Fiona
Buckland, Robert
Burghart, Alex
Burns, Conor
Burt, rh Alistair
Cairns, rh Alun
Campbell, Mr Gregory
Cartledge, James
Cash, Sir William
Caulfield, Maria
Chalk, Alex
Chishti, Rehman
Chope, Sir Christopher
Churchill, Jo
Clark, Colin
Clark, rh Greg
Clarke, Mr Simon
Cleverly, James
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
Coffey, Dr Thérèse
Collins, Damian
Costa, Alberto
Courts, Robert
Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey
Crabb, rh Stephen
Crouch, Tracey

Davies, Chris
Davies, David T. C.
Davies, Glyn
Davies, Mims
Davies, Philip
Davis, rh Mr David
Dinenage, Caroline
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
Docherty, Leo
Dodds, rh Nigel
Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
Donelan, Michelle
Dorries, Ms Nadine
Double, Steve
Dowden, Oliver
Doyle-Price, Jackie
Drax, Richard
Duddridge, James
Duguid, David
Duncan, rh Sir Alan
Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
Dunne, rh Mr Philip
Ellis, Michael
Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
Elphicke, Charlie
Eustice, George
Evans, Mr Nigel
Evennett, rh Sir David
Fabricant, Michael
Fallon, rh Sir Michael
Field, rh Frank
Field, rh Mark
Fitzpatrick, Jim
Flint, rh Caroline
Ford, Vicky
Foster, Kevin
Fox, rh Dr Liam
Francois, rh Mr Mark
Frazer, Lucy
Freeman, George
Freer, Mike
Fysh, Mr Marcus
Gale, rh Sir Roger
Garnier, Mark
Gauke, rh Mr David
Ghani, Ms Nusrat
Gibb, rh Nick
Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl
Girvan, Paul
Glen, John
Goldsmith, Zac
Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
Gove, rh Michael
Graham, Luke
Graham, Richard
Grant, Bill
Grant, Mrs Helen
Gray, James
Grayling, rh Chris
Green, Chris
Green, rh Damian

Griffiths, Andrew
Hair, Kirstene
Halfon, rh Robert
Hall, Luke
Hammond, rh Mr Philip
Hammond, Stephen
Hancock, rh Matt
Hands, rh Greg
Harper, rh Mr Mark
Harrington, Richard
Harris, Rebecca
Harrison, Trudy
Hart, Simon
Hayes, rh Sir John
Heald, rh Sir Oliver
Heapey, James
Heaton-Harris, Chris
Heaton-Jones, Peter
Henderson, Gordon
Hepburn, Mr Stephen
Herbert, rh Nick
Hinds, rh Damian
Hoare, Simon
Hoey, Kate
Hollingbery, George
Hollinrake, Kevin
Hollobone, Mr Philip
Holloway, Adam
Howell, John
Huddleston, Nigel
Hughes, Eddie
Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
Hurd, rh Mr Nick
Jack, Mr Alister
James, Margot
Javid, rh Sajid
Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
Jenkin, Sir Bernard
Jenkyns, Andrea
Jenrick, Robert
Johnson, rh Boris
Johnson, Dr Caroline
Johnson, Gareth
Johnson, Joseph
Jones, Andrew
Jones, rh Mr David
Jones, Mr Marcus
Kawczynski, Daniel
Keegan, Gillian
Kennedy, Seema
Kerr, Stephen
Knight, rh Sir Greg
Knight, Julian
Kwarteng, Kwasi
Lamont, John
Lancaster, rh Mark
Latham, Mrs Pauline
Leadsom, rh Andrea
Lefroy, Jeremy
Leigh, rh Sir Edward
Letwin, rh Sir Oliver
Lewer, Andrew
Lewis, rh Brandon
Lewis, rh Dr Julian
Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
Lidington, rh Mr David
Little Pengelly, Emma
Lopez, Julia
Lopresti, Jack
Lord, Mr Jonathan
Loughton, Tim
Mackinlay, Craig

Maclean, Rachel
Main, Mrs Anne
Mak, Alan
Malthouse, Kit
Mann, John
Mann, Scott
Masterton, Paul
May, rh Mrs Theresa
Maynard, Paul
McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick
McPartland, Stephen
McVey, rh Ms Esther
Menzies, Mark
Mercer, Johnny
Merriman, Huw
Metcalf, Stephen
Miller, rh Mrs Maria
Mills, Nigel
Milton, rh Anne
Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
Moore, Damien
Mordaunt, rh Penny
Morgan, rh Nicky
Morris, Anne Marie
Morris, David
Morris, James
Morton, Wendy
Mundell, rh David
Murray, Mrs Sheryll
Murrison, Dr Andrew
Neill, Robert
Newton, Sarah
Nokes, rh Caroline
Norman, Jesse
O'Brien, Neil
Offord, Dr Matthew
Opperman, Guy
Paisley, Ian
Parish, Neil
Patel, rh Priti
Paterson, rh Mr Owen
Pawsey, Mark
Penning, rh Sir Mike
Penrose, John
Percy, Andrew
Perry, rh Claire
Philp, Chris
Pincher, rh Christopher
Poulter, Dr Dan
Pow, Rebecca
Prentis, Victoria
Prisk, Mr Mark
Pritchard, Mark
Pursglove, Tom
Quin, Jeremy
Quince, Will
Raab, rh Dominic
Redwood, rh John
Rees-Mogg, Mr Jacob
Robertson, Mr Laurence
Robinson, Gavin
Robinson, Mary
Rosindell, Andrew
Ross, Douglas
Rowley, Lee
Rudd, rh Amber
Rutley, David
Sandbach, Antoinette
Scully, Paul
Seely, Mr Bob
Selous, Andrew
Shannon, Jim

Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, Alok
 Shelbrooke, Alec
 Simpson, David
 Simpson, rh Mr Keith
 Skidmore, Chris
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, rh Julian
 Smith, Royston
 Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
 Spelman, rh Dame Caroline
 Spencer, Mark
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, Bob
 Stewart, Iain
 Stewart, Rory
 Streeter, Sir Gary
 Stride, rh Mel
 Stringer, Graham
 Stuart, Graham
 Sturdy, Julian
 Sunak, Rishi
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Swire, rh Sir Hugo
 Syms, Sir Robert
 Thomas, Derek
 Thomson, Ross
 Throup, Maggie
 Tolhurst, Kelly

Tomlinson, Justin
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Tredinnick, David
 Trevelyan, Anne-Marie
 Truss, rh Elizabeth
 Tugendhat, Tom
 Vaizey, rh Mr Edward
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Walker, Mr Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben
 Warburton, David
 Warman, Matt
 Watling, Giles
 Whately, Helen
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John
 Wiggin, Bill
 Williamson, rh Gavin
 Wilson, rh Sammy
 Wood, Mike
 Wragg, Mr William
 Wright, rh Jeremy
 Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Noes:
Amanda Milling and
Craig Whittaker

Atkins, Victoria
 Badenoch, Mrs Kemi
 Bailey, Mr Adrian
 Baldwin, Harriett
 Barclay, rh Stephen
 Bardell, Hannah
 Barron, rh Sir Kevin
 Bebb, Guto
 Beckett, rh Margaret
 Benn, rh Hilary
 Benyon, rh Richard
 Berry, Jake
 Betts, Mr Clive
 Black, Mhairi
 Blackford, rh Ian
 Blackman, Kirsty
 Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta
 Blomfield, Paul
 Boles, Nick
 Bottomley, Sir Peter
 Bowie, Andrew
 Brabin, Tracy
 Bradley, rh Karen
 Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
 Brake, rh Tom
 Brennan, Kevin
 Brereton, Jack
 Brine, Steve
 Brock, Deidre
 Brokenshire, rh James
 Brown, Alan
 Brown, Lyn
 Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
 Bryant, Chris
 Buck, Ms Karen
 Buckland, Robert
 Burden, Richard
 Burghart, Alex
 Burgon, Richard
 Burt, rh Alistair
 Butler, Dawn
 Byrne, rh Liam
 Cable, rh Sir Vince
 Cadbury, Ruth
 Cairns, rh Alun
 Cameron, Dr Lisa
 Campbell, rh Sir Alan
 Carden, Dan
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Cartlidge, James
 Chalk, Alex
 Champion, Sarah
 Chapman, Douglas
 Chapman, Jenny
 Cherry, Joanna
 Churchill, Jo
 Clark, Colin
 Clark, rh Greg
 Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth
 Clwyd, rh Ann
 Coaker, Vernon
 Coffey, Ann
 Coffey, Dr Thérèse
 Collins, Damian
 Cooper, Julie
 Cooper, Rosie
 Cooper, rh Yvette
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy
 Costa, Alberto
 Cowan, Ronnie
 Coyle, Neil
 Crabb, rh Stephen

Crausby, Sir David
 Crawley, Angela
 Creagh, Mary
 Creasy, Stella
 Cruddas, Jon
 Cryer, John
 Cummins, Judith
 Cunningham, Alex
 Cunningham, Mr Jim
 Daby, Janet
 Davey, rh Sir Edward
 David, Wayne
 Davies, Geraint
 Davies, Glyn
 Davies, Mims
 Davis, rh Mr David
 Day, Martyn
 De Cordova, Marsha
 De Piero, Gloria
 Debbonaire, Thangam
 Dent Coad, Emma
 Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
 Dinenage, Caroline
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
 Docherty, Leo
 Docherty-Hughes, Martin
 Dodds, Anneliese
 Donelan, Michelle
 Doughty, Stephen
 Dowd, Peter
 Dowden, Oliver
 Drew, Dr David
 Dromey, Jack
 Duffield, Rosie
 Duguid, David
 Duncan, rh Sir Alan
 Dunne, rh Mr Philip
 Eagle, Ms Angela
 Eagle, Maria
 Edwards, Jonathan
 Efford, Clive
 Elliott, Julie
 Ellis, Michael
 Ellman, Dame Louise
 Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
 Elmore, Chris
 Esterson, Bill
 Eustice, George
 Evans, Chris
 Evans, Mr Nigel
 Evennett, rh Sir David
 Fabricant, Michael
 Fallon, rh Sir Michael
 Farrelly, Paul
 Farron, Tim
 Fellows, Marion
 Field, rh Mark
 Fitzpatrick, Jim
 Fletcher, Colleen
 Flint, rh Caroline
 Ford, Vicky
 Foster, Kevin
 Fovargue, Yvonne
 Fox, rh Dr Liam
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Frazer, Lucy
 Freeman, George
 Freer, Mike
 Frith, James
 Gaffney, Hugh
 Gale, rh Sir Roger
 Gapes, Mike

Question accordingly negated.

Mr Speaker: We come now to amendment (c) in the name of the right hon. Member for Meriden (Dame Caroline Spelman).

Dame Caroline Spelman: Not moved.

Amendment made: (b), at end, add

“; and requires the Prime Minister to seek at the earliest opportunity a joint UK-EU commitment to adopt part two of the Withdrawal Agreement on Citizens’ Rights and ensure its implementation prior to the UK’s exiting the European Union, whatever the outcome of negotiations on other aspects of the Withdrawal Agreement.”—(*Alberto Costa.*)

Amendment proposed: (f), at end, add

“; and further notes in particular the commitment of the Prime Minister made in this House to hold a second meaningful vote by 12 March and if the House, having rejected leaving with the deal negotiated with the EU, then rejects leaving on 29 March without a withdrawal agreement and future framework, the Government will, on 14 March, bring forward a motion on whether Parliament wants to seek a short limited extension to Article 50, and if the House votes for an extension, seek to agree that extension approved by the House with the EU, and bring forward the necessary legislation to change the exit date commensurate with that extension.”—(*Yvette Cooper.*)

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The House divided: Ayes 502, Noes 20.

Division No. 347]

[7.29 pm]

AYES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
 Abrahams, Debbie
 Adams, Nigel
 Afolami, Bim
 Aldous, Peter
 Ali, Rushanara
 Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
 Amesbury, Mike
 Andrew, Stuart
 Antoniazzi, Tonia
 Argar, Edward
 Ashworth, Jonathan

Gardiner, Barry
 Garnier, Mark
 Gauke, rh Mr David
 George, Ruth
 Gethins, Stephen
 Ghani, Ms Nusrat
 Gibb, rh Nick
 Gibson, Patricia
 Gill, Preet Kaur
 Glen, John
 Glindon, Mary
 Godsiff, Mr Roger
 Goodman, Helen
 Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
 Gove, rh Michael
 Grady, Patrick
 Graham, Luke
 Graham, Richard
 Grant, Bill
 Grant, Mrs Helen
 Grant, Peter
 Gray, Neil
 Grayling, rh Chris
 Green, rh Damian
 Green, Kate
 Greening, rh Justine
 Greenwood, Lilian
 Greenwood, Margaret
 Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
 Griffith, Nia
 Grogan, John
 Gwynne, Andrew
 Gyimah, Mr Sam
 Haigh, Louise
 Hair, Kirstene
 Halfon, rh Robert
 Hall, Luke
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hammond, rh Mr Philip
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, rh Matt
 Hanson, rh David
 Hardy, Emma
 Harman, rh Ms Harriet
 Harper, rh Mr Mark
 Harrington, Richard
 Harris, Carolyn
 Harris, Rebecca
 Harrison, Trudy
 Hayes, Helen
 Hayman, Sue
 Healey, rh John
 Heapey, James
 Heaton-Harris, Chris
 Heaton-Jones, Peter
 Hendrick, Sir Mark
 Hendry, Drew
 Herbert, rh Nick
 Hermon, Lady
 Hill, Mike
 Hillier, Meg
 Hinds, rh Damian
 Hoare, Simon
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hollern, Kate
 Hollingbery, George
 Hollinrake, Kevin
 Hosie, Stewart
 Howarth, rh Mr George
 Howell, John

Huddleston, Nigel
 Hughes, Eddie
 Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Hurd, rh Mr Nick
 Hussain, Imran
 Jack, Mr Alister
 James, Margot
 Jardine, Christine
 Jarvis, Dan
 Javid, rh Sajid
 Jenrick, Robert
 Johnson, Dr Caroline
 Johnson, Diana
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, Darren
 Jones, Gerald
 Jones, Graham P.
 Jones, Helen
 Jones, rh Mr Kevan
 Jones, Mr Marcus
 Jones, Sarah
 Jones, Susan Elan
 Kane, Mike
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Keegan, Gillian
 Keeley, Barbara
 Kendall, Liz
 Kennedy, Seema
 Khan, Afzal
 Killen, Ged
 Kinnock, Stephen
 Knight, Julian
 Kyle, Peter
 Laird, Lesley
 Lake, Ben
 Lamb, rh Norman
 Lammy, rh Mr David
 Lamont, John
 Lancaster, rh Mark
 Lavery, Ian
 Law, Chris
 Leadsom, rh Andrea
 Lee, Karen
 Lee, Dr Phillip
 Lefroy, Jeremy
 Leslie, Mr Chris
 Letwin, rh Sir Oliver
 Lewis, rh Brandon
 Lewis, Clive
 Lewis, Mr Ivan
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Liddington, rh Mr David
 Linden, David
 Lloyd, Stephen
 Lloyd, Tony
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lucas, Ian C.
 Lynch, Holly (*Proxy vote cast by Mark Tami*)
 Maclean, Rachel
 MacNeil, Angus Brendan
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Mahmood, Shabana
 Mak, Alan
 Malhotra, Seema
 Malthouse, Kit
 Marsden, Gordon
 Martin, Sandy

Maskell, Rachael
 Masterton, Paul
 Matheson, Christian
 May, rh Mrs Theresa
 Maynard, Paul
 Mc Nally, John
 McCabe, Steve
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
 McDonald, Stuart C.
 McDonnell, rh John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGinn, Conor
 McGovern, Alison
 McInnes, Liz
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick
 McMahon, Jim
 McMorris, Anna
 Mearns, Ian
 Menzies, Mark
 Mercer, Johnny
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria
 Milling, Amanda
 Milton, rh Anne
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Monaghan, Carol
 Moon, Mrs Madeleine
 Moore, Damien
 Moran, Layla
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, rh Nicky
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Morton, Wendy
 Mundell, rh David
 Murray, Ian
 Nandy, Lisa
 Neill, Robert
 Newlands, Gavin
 Newton, Sarah
 Nokes, rh Caroline
 Norman, Jesse
 Norris, Alex
 O'Brien, Neil
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 O'Hara, Brendan
 O'Mara, Jared
 Onn, Melanie
 Onwurah, Chi
 Opperman, Guy
 Osamor, Kate
 Owen, Albert
 Pawsey, Mark
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pearce, Teresa
 Penning, rh Sir Mike
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Penrose, John
 Perkins, Toby
 Perry, rh Claire
 Phillips, Jess
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Philp, Chris
 Pidcock, Laura
 Pincher, rh Christopher
 Platt, Jo

Pollard, Luke
 Poulter, Dr Dan
 Pound, Stephen
 Pow, Rebecca
 Powell, Lucy
 Prentis, Victoria
 Prisk, Mr Mark
 Pritchard, Mark
 Quin, Jeremy
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Rashid, Faisal
 Rayner, Angela
 Reed, Mr Steve
 Rees, Christina
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reeves, Rachel
 Reynolds, Emma
 Reynolds, Jonathan
 Rimmer, Ms Marie
 Robinson, Gavin
 Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
 Robinson, Mary
 Rodda, Matt
 Ross, Douglas
 Rowley, Danielle
 Ruane, Chris
 Rudd, rh Amber
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
 Rutley, David
 Ryan, rh Joan
 Sandbach, Antoinette
 Saville Roberts, Liz
 Scully, Paul
 Seely, Mr Bob
 Selous, Andrew
 Shah, Naz
 Sharma, Alok
 Sharma, Mr Virendra
 Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Shelbrooke, Alec
 Sheppard, Tommy
 Sherriff, Paula
 Shuker, Mr Gavin
 Siddiq, Tulip (*Proxy vote cast by Vicky Foxcroft*)
 Simpson, rh Mr Keith
 Skidmore, Chris
 Skinner, Mr Dennis
 Slaughter, Andy
 Smeeth, Ruth
 Smith, Angela
 Smith, Cat
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Eleanor
 Smith, Jeff
 Smith, rh Julian
 Smith, Laura
 Smith, Nick
 Smith, Owen
 Smyth, Karin
 Snell, Gareth
 Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
 Sobel, Alex
 Soubry, rh Anna
 Spellar, rh John
 Spelman, rh Dame Caroline
 Spencer, Mark
 Starmer, rh Keir
 Stephens, Chris
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevens, Jo
 Stevenson, John

Stewart, Iain
 Stewart, Rory
 Streeter, Sir Gary
 Streeter, Wes
 Stride, rh Mel
 Stuart, Graham
 Sturdy, Julian
 Sunak, Rishi
 Sweeney, Mr Paul
 Swinson, Jo
 Tami, rh Mark
 Thewliss, Alison
 Thomas, Derek
 Thomas, Gareth
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick
 Thornberry, rh Emily
 Throup, Maggie
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Tolhurst, Kelly
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tredinnick, David
 Trickett, Jon
 Truss, rh Elizabeth
 Turley, Anna
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Derek
 Twigg, Stephen
 Twist, Liz
 Umunna, Chuka
 Vaizey, rh Mr Edward
 Vaz, rh Keith
 Vaz, Valerie

Walker, Mr Robin
 Walker, Thelma
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben
 Warburton, David
 Warman, Matt
 Watling, Giles
 Watson, Tom
 West, Catherine
 Western, Matt
 Whately, Helen
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whitfield, Martin
 Whitford, Dr Philippa
 Whittaker, Craig
 Wiggin, Bill
 Williams, Hywel
 Williams, Dr Paul
 Williamson, rh Gavin
 Wilson, Phil
 Wishart, Pete
 Wollaston, Dr Sarah
 Wood, Mike
 Woodcock, John
 Wright, rh Jeremy
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zahawi, Nadhim
 Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:
 Nic Dakin and
 Bambos Charalambous

NOES

Allan, Lucy
 Baron, Mr John
 Blackman, Bob
 Cash, Sir William
 Chishti, Rehman
 Davies, David T. C.
 Davies, Philip
 Drax, Richard
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Johnson, Gareth
 McVey, rh Ms Esther
 Mills, Nigel

Morris, Anne Marie
 Pursglove, Tom
 Smith, Henry
 Stewart, Bob
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Syms, Sir Robert
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Vickers, Martin

Tellers for the Noes:
 Mr Peter Bone and
 Sir Christopher Chope

Question accordingly agreed to.

Main Question, as amended, put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House notes the Prime Minister's statement on Leaving the European Union of 26 February 2019; and further notes that discussions between the UK and the EU are ongoing; and requires the Prime Minister to seek at the earliest opportunity a joint UK-EU commitment to adopt part two of the Withdrawal Agreement on Citizens' Rights and ensure its implementation prior to the UK's exiting the European Union, whatever the outcome of negotiations on other aspects of the Withdrawal Agreement; and further notes in particular the commitment of the Prime Minister made in this House to hold a second meaningful vote by 12 March and if the House, having rejected leaving with the deal negotiated with the EU, then rejects leaving on 29 March without a withdrawal agreement and future framework, the Government will, on 14 March, bring forward a motion on whether Parliament wants to seek a short limited extension to Article 50, and if the House votes for an extension, seek to agree that extension approved by the House with the EU, and bring forward the necessary legislation to change the exit date commensurate with that extension.

Business without Debate

JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE DRAFT DOMESTIC ABUSE BILL

Resolved,

That it is expedient that a Joint Committee of Lords and Commons be appointed to consider and report on the draft Domestic Abuse Bill (CP 15) presented to both Houses on Monday 21 January 2019.

That a Select Committee of six Members be appointed to join with any committee to be appointed by the Lords for this purpose;

That the Committee should report on the draft Bill by Friday 17 May.

That the Committee shall have power:

- (i) to send for persons, papers and records;
- (ii) to sit notwithstanding any adjournment of the House;
- (iii) to report from time to time;
- (iv) to appoint specialist advisers; and
- (v) to adjourn from place to place within the United Kingdom.

That the quorum of the Committee shall be two; and

That Diana Johnson, Gillian Keegan, Mrs Maria Miller, Alex Norris, Helen Whately and Dr Philippa Whitford be members of the Committee.—(*Iain Stewart.*)

Mr Speaker: Any moment now, I shall invite the hon. Member for Oldham West and Royton (Jim McMahon) to speak to his petition, when very large numbers of right hon. and hon. Members have beetled out of the Chamber, preferably quickly and quietly, and those absorbed in absolutely fascinating conversations, including the hon. Member for North West Cambridgeshire (Mr Vara), who is having a most engaging conversation with other hon. and right hon. Members, and indeed other Members too, whose animated exchanges would better take place outwith the Chamber. I am playing for time here, so that the hon. Member for Oldham West and Royton is afforded the courtesy that he deserves as he presents his petition on a matter of considerable concern to his constituents. If the hon. Member for Stone (Sir William Cash) feels that he can beetle out of the Chamber—I am sure he is happy with his prestigious efforts for today—we look forward to seeing him, and indeed we look forward to seeing the Leader of the House as soon as tomorrow morning.

Sir John Hayes (South Holland and The Deepings) (Con): On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: Does the right hon. Gentleman really wish to raise a point of order? Oh, very well.

Sir John Hayes: I only raise a point of order in this respect; I seek your guidance, Mr Speaker. If on some future occasion, for some future purpose, I were to want to present a petition to the House, if I were delayed for some perfectly excusable and understandable reason, would it be in order for other Members to seek to eat up the time of the House to a sufficient degree, as a matter of civility and courtesy, to allow me to make my way here to present my petition? I seek your guidance, Mr Speaker, on that very matter on this occasion.

Mr Speaker: The short answer to the right hon. Gentleman, whose curiosity is legendary, is that there would be nothing to stop Members seeking to do so.

I simply posit to the right hon. Gentleman that the scenario is not entirely to be taken for granted, for it rests upon the premise that very large numbers of Members, united by their commitment to and, dare I say it, even their adoration of the right hon. Gentleman, are so utterly distraught that he is not yet present in his place, but confident that he will shortly be, that they wish to aid and abet him in what they hope will be a fruitful endeavour by him. That is quite an assumption. They could make that attempt, and if the Chair were in a benevolent mood, the Chair could legitimately accommodate their efforts. I hope that the curiosity of the right hon. Gentleman has now been satisfied—at least for tonight.

If there are no further points of order, either from the right hon. Gentleman or from any other hon. or right hon. Member, we come now to the petitions.

PETITIONS

Closure of Oldham Post Office

7.53 pm

Jim McMahon: On behalf of myself, my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham East and Saddleworth (Debbie Abrahams) and my hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Angela Rayner), I present the petition of the residents of Oldham. Over 3,100 people object to the proposed closure of Oldham Crown post office and its relocation to WH Smith. Oldham post office is the borough's last remaining Crown post office, serving a population of 235,000 people and over 6,000 businesses, and its current location is vital for the vibrancy of the market hall and the surviving businesses, as well as being easily accessible for those who use public transport and those with limited mobility.

The petition states:

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and Post Office Ltd to think again about the decision to close Oldham Post Office and to ensure that the consultation is genuine with the real concerns we have fully taken on board.

Following is the full text of the Petition:

[The petition of residents of Oldham,

Declares that we object to the proposal by Post Office Ltd to close our main Crown post office in Oldham town centre and relocate it to WH Smith; further that the proposed closure from its High Street location and relocation to WH Smith in Spindles/Town Square shopping centre is a nonsense as evident to anyone who uses the post office; further that the post office is a busy branch and well used; further that there is no public interest in closing it; further that even if some services will be relocated, services, staff and our high street will be compromised; further that not only will we lose a visible institution on our high street, the experience of post office services in WH Smiths tells us that it will be smaller, queues will be longer and services will be reduced.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and Post Office Ltd to think again about the decision to close Oldham Post Office and to ensure that the consultation is genuine with the real concerns we have fully taken on board.

And the petitioners remain, etc.]

[P002430]

Gibraltar representation in the Houses of Parliament, Westminster

7.55 pm

Andrew Rosindell (Romford) (Con): I am greatly obliged to you, Mr Speaker, for calling me to present my first petition this evening, which was given to me today by the Representation in Westminster group from the British overseas territory of Gibraltar.

As you will know, Mr Speaker, the people of Gibraltar are proudly British, and they would like to be represented in this place as all British citizens expect to be. They have collected this chunky petition, which bears no fewer than 14,000 signatures, 11,200 of which are those of Gibraltarian citizens. That represents 68% of the electorate of Gibraltar. They will be losing their representation by Members of the European Parliament, so they feel that the time has come for them to have their own Member of Parliament here in the sovereign Parliament of our United Kingdom. The petition is supported by the Chief Minister of Gibraltar, Fabian Picardo, and the Deputy Chief Minister, Joseph Garcia. It reads as follows:

The petition of British Citizens of Gibraltar,

Declares that it is a fundamental right of ours to representation in the Houses of Parliament, Westminster.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to grant Gibraltar representation in the Houses of Parliament, Gibraltar.

And the petitioners remain, etc.

[P002427]

Havering, and leaving the European Union

7.57 pm

Andrew Rosindell: A further petition has been handed to me by the residents of the London borough of Havering. It relates to Britain's departure from the European Union. You will know, Mr Speaker, that 70% of Havering residents voted to leave the EU, and that that was one of the largest votes to leave in the country. The petition, which is addressed to the honourable Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland Parliament assembled, reads as follows:

The Humble Petition of Lawrence Webb and the citizens of the London Borough of Havering,

Sheweth,

That in 1975 the British people, in a referendum, agreed to remain members of a Common Market, a group of equal and free European Nations trading together without barriers and tariffs. By default, the British people have, without their consent, become citizens of a European State run by a non-elected bureaucratic Commission in Brussels. This foreign power has suborned our legal system and the authority of our Parliament.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House do all in its power to re-establish our sovereign right to rule ourselves in accordance with the freedoms, liberties and rights granted to us and our heirs forever under Magna Carta 1215 and the Bill of Rights 1689, and that we leave the European Union, the Customs Union, the Single Market and that we end Free Movement of People on 29th March, 2019 as set out in law under the European Withdrawal Act 2018.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, &c.

[P002429]

Dental Health: Older People

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

7.59 pm

Andrew Selous (South West Bedfordshire) (Con): This Adjournment debate provides an opportunity to discuss a very important but often overlooked issue, which can have a major impact on the wellbeing of older people: their oral health. Many of us will have older relatives who have reached the stage where they need some extra support. It might be that they live in a residential care home, have a carer who visits them in their home a couple of times a week, or just require a bit of extra help from us personally to stay independent.

However, one issue that often slips under the radar when we think about an older relative's needs is their oral health; it can often seem like a small issue, but in fact poor oral health can have much wider implications. Having a painful oral health problem can impact on someone's ability to eat comfortably, to speak and to socialise with confidence, and on the ease with which they can take medication, something which may be a particular issue if an older person is living with other long-term health conditions. Maintaining good oral health can also become much more challenging for older people with reduced dexterity, who may for example have more difficulty with brushing their teeth. Furthermore, for the most vulnerable older people, such as those with dementia, who may have difficulty communicating where they are experiencing pain, an oral health problem can be especially distressing.

Ensuring that older people are supported to maintain good oral health, and have access to dental services when they need them, is therefore very important. However, while data on this issue is limited, the information that we do have suggests that these are areas in which we often fall short.

The Faculty of Dental Surgery of the Royal College of Surgeons published a report on "Improving older people's oral health" in 2017, which estimated that 1.8 million people aged 65 and over in England, Wales and Northern Ireland could have an urgent dental condition such as dental pain, oral sepsis or extensive untreated decay. Moreover, the Faculty of Dental Surgery also highlighted that this number could increase to 2.7 million by 2040 as a result of several demographic factors, thereby increasing pressure on dental services in the future. As well as the ageing nature of Britain's population, increasing numbers of people are also retaining their natural teeth into old age; while this is good news, it also means that dental professionals are facing new challenges as they have to provide increasingly complex treatment to teeth that may already have been heavily restored.

Separately, in 2014 Public Health England published the findings of research looking at oral health services for dependent older people in north-west England, which found that access to domiciliary and emergency dental care can often be very challenging for those living in residential care homes or receiving "care in your home" support services. More recently, Public Health England last year published the results of a national oral health survey of dependent older people living in supported housing. This revealed that nearly 70% of respondents had visible plaque and 61% had visible tartar, indicators

of poor oral hygiene, and that in some parts of the country, such as County Durham and Ealing, over a quarter of dependent older people would be unable to visit a dentist and so required domiciliary care in their home.

It is difficult to get a complete up-to-date picture of the oral health needs of older people across the country, partly because there has not been an adult dental health survey for 10 years, an issue I will return to later. However, these figures, as well as anecdotal reports from dental professionals working on the frontline, suggest there is a real issue here which potentially impacts on large numbers of often vulnerable older people.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on bringing this important issue to the House. As he said, 1.8 million elderly people across the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland have problems, which is shocking. The hon. Gentleman outlined some of the solutions such as extra attention on domiciliary care and in residential homes, and for those at home and dependent on carers. Does he agree that older people's confidence can also be diminished by not having their teeth correctly done? My mother went this week to have her teeth done; she is 87 years of age and she depends very much on her dentist. She has attended over the years, but many have not, and we need to have that care at all those different levels.

Andrew Selous: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving us his personal family experience of this issue.

There have been some welcome developments over the last few months, including the recently published NHS long-term plan highlighting oral health as one of the priorities for NHS England as it rolls out a new "Enhanced health in care homes" programme across the country. However, I would like to draw the Minister's attention to five particular areas in which more could usefully be done: training for health and social care professionals; access to dental services; data; regulation; and the social care Green Paper.

First, on training, health and social care professionals regularly do a brilliant job of caring for older people, but as I have mentioned, oral health is one issue that can easily fall between the cracks, particularly if someone is living with a range of other health conditions that also require care and attention. One example of this is oral care plans. Ideally, whenever someone is admitted as a resident to a care home, their oral health needs should be considered as part of their initial health assessment. Those needs should then be reflected in an oral care plan that all their carers are aware of and that will, for example, set out whether the resident needs extra help brushing their teeth.

There is some good guidance from the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence, but this can often be overlooked. In Public Health England's research in north-west England, 57% of residential care home managers said that they did not have an oral care policy, and one in 10 said that an oral health assessment was not undertaken at the start of care provision. Knowing how to provide good oral care is especially important when it comes to supporting those with more complex needs. For example, for those with dementia, electric toothbrushes can sometimes be quite intimidating,

and it makes a big difference if a carer knows that they should use a manual toothbrush when helping with tooth brushing. More broadly, if someone who is living with dementia refuses oral care, this can become an obstacle to maintaining good oral health, so it is important that carers understand how to manage these situations, ideally with input from a dental care professional.

Equally, for those with dentures, it is important that training and procedures are in place to minimise the risk of a denture getting lost, even if this is a simple thing such as ensuring that they are kept in a jar by the bedside when not in use. A lost denture takes weeks to replace, and this can be a devastating experience for an older person who relies on them to eat and speak. This is particularly sensitive if someone is coming to the end of their life, when it may not be possible to manufacture a replacement in time as they spend their remaining days with loved ones. An understanding of good denture care is particularly important in these situations.

Improving awareness of oral health among health and care professionals should therefore be a priority, and was a key recommendation in the Faculty of Dental Surgery's 2017 report. This highlighted schemes such as the Mouth Care Matters programme, in which mouth care leads are recruited to provide oral care training to staff in hospitals and care homes, and I would be interested to know from the Minister whether there were any plans to replicate such initiatives nationwide.

Secondly, ensuring that older people can access dental services when they need them is essential. It is not uncommon for people to think that if someone has no teeth, they cannot be experiencing pain or other oral problems. Sadly, this is not the case and they should still have an oral check-up once a year, not least because the majority of cases of oral cancer occur in people over 50. There are all too many tragic instances of an older person being diagnosed with oral cancer too late—the saddest two words in the English language—simply because they had not seen a dentist in a number of years. Attending a dental appointment can be a particular challenge for those with reduced mobility—for example, if they are unable to climb stairs to reach a dental practice on the first floor—in which case, domiciliary visits are vital. However, evidence suggests that access to domiciliary dental care can be challenging, particularly for those living in care homes or supported housing, and I would appreciate the Minister's thoughts on how we can address this.

In 2015, Healthwatch Bolton reported that it was easier for a local care home resident to get access to a hairdresser than to a dentist. In 2016, Healthwatch Kent reported that care homes had told it about accessibility problems for wheelchair users within dental practices. In 2016, Healthwatch Lancashire reported that care home staff said:

"The residents don't get regular checks; they are only seen when there is a problem."

Healthwatch Derby was concerned about the lack of information for social care providers about how to access dental services for their residents. While the commitment in the NHS long-term plan to

"ensure that individuals are supported to have good oral health" in care homes under the "Enhanced health in care homes" section is welcome, there is no mention of a similar commitment for older people who use domiciliary care agencies. Those people should not be forgotten, so

what do the Government intend to do about that for domiciliary care agency users under the NHS long-term plan?

Thirdly, the intelligence around older people's oral health is quite limited, making it difficult to build a full picture of the level of need or assess the barriers that older people face in accessing dental care. The most immediate action that could be taken to address that would be for the Government to commission a new adult dental health survey. It is one of the few resources to provide detailed, national-level data on standards of oral health among older people, and it is a key reference for many commissioners, policy makers and dental professionals. The survey has been conducted every 10 years since 1968, but the last edition was published in 2009, so a new one is due. However, the Government have yet to give any indication of when or if a new survey will be taking place, which is causing increasing concern within the dental profession, so an update on that would be most welcome.

There are other steps that would help to improve our understanding of such issues. For example, NHS Digital publishes a regular set of NHS dental statistics for England, which reports on the proportion of children aged zero to 17 who attended an NHS dentist in the preceding 12 months, as well as the proportion of adults aged 18 and over who attended an NHS dentist in the past two years. That data provides a useful measure of access, and expanding the figures to include attendance rates for older people would help us to develop a clearer picture of whether there are particular groups or areas where access to an NHS dentist is a problem.

Jim Shannon: Many elderly people are independent and proud, and one of the things that puts them off attending the dentist—I see this in my constituency—is that they think they have to pay for the treatment, but they do not. Perhaps we need to put out a reminder about that.

Andrew Selous: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for putting that on the record.

Fourthly, in addition to health services, care home providers and dental professionals, regulators can play an essential role by monitoring standards of oral care and driving improvements. The Care Quality Commission in England does not explicitly look at oral health during its inspections of hospitals and care homes, although I understand that it is doing a lot of work behind the scenes to try and push that on to the agenda for care providers, which is obviously welcome. Health and care regulators in other parts of the UK can also make a valuable contribution to ensuring that the importance of oral health is recognised by those that they inspect.

Lastly, I continue to look forward to the publication of the Government's long-awaited social care Green Paper. Given the importance of oral health to our wider health and wellbeing, an all-encompassing model of care for older people must include dental services, so it will be important that the Green Paper clearly sets out how social care and dental services can work together in the future and what more can be done to ensure that older people have access to dental services when they need them. As I have mentioned, one of the most valuable things we can do to improve older people's oral health is to ensure that it is not overlooked amid the

[Andrew Selous]

many other issues that we are dealing with, and I hope that the Government will show leadership on that in the Green Paper.

Oral health can sometimes seem like a small issue, but it has a significant impact on quality of life. The Minister will be aware that we have spoken a lot in recent years about the need to improve children's oral health, and quite rightly so, but it is also essential that we do not take our eye off the other groups who need support. For an older person who is in pain because of an oral health problem, finding it difficult to eat or speak, or who may be distressed at the loss of a denture that will take weeks to replace, such issues are very real. We can all contribute to addressing them, including Members who care for older relatives in our everyday lives. Indeed, the Faculty of Dental Surgery published some useful advice over Christmas about using visits to older relatives as an opportunity to check their oral health and for how to spot the signs that they might have an oral health problem. That is something that Members could do over Easter when visiting elderly relatives, and we could encourage our constituents to do the same. However, I hope that the Minister will recognise that Government also have an important role to play and will look carefully at what can be done to help improve oral care for our older people.

8.14 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Steve Brine): I realise that a debate on older people's dental health is merely of passing interest to you, Mr Deputy Speaker, as you are many years from it being of direct interest, but I hope you enjoy my response.

I congratulate my good friend, my hon. Friend the Member for South West Bedfordshire (Andrew Selous), on securing time for this debate and on setting out his case so clearly. I will do my best to answer his points in the time available. As he knows, I will write to him on anything I do not answer.

Oral health has improved significantly over the 40 years that I have been alive. At the start of the NHS—it is worth noting this incredible statistic—40% of the population had no natural teeth. The figure is now—answers on a postcard—6%. These massive improvements are to be celebrated but, of course, with improvements come new challenges.

As we are all aware, older people—we categorise those aged over 65 as older people for the purpose of this conversation—make up an increasingly large proportion of the population. By 2032, we project there will be 13.5 million people aged 65 and over in our country. Older people are retaining far more teeth, often heavily filled, than previous generations. As people age, so do their fillings and all the other bits of their bodies, and ongoing restorative work is needed.

Many older people live independently and are in full charge of their oral health, as are working-age adults, but we recognise that frail older people—those with additional needs, often living in care homes or supported to remain at home, as my hon. Friend set out—can face real barriers to accessing the appropriate care and support they need to maintain good oral and dental health.

My hon. Friend set out some of the reasons why good oral health is an essential part of active ageing. We know that poor oral health can affect an individual's ability to eat, which can lead to an acute episode and an encounter with the tertiary sector, or even to speak and socialise. Obviously, poor oral health hits their confidence and then it spirals. For older adults who are frail, good oral health is particularly important to maintaining hydration and the ability to eat comfortably and easily, which helps them to stay healthy and independent for as long as possible, and even to stay well in a care home setting.

As we set out in our 2017 manifesto, we are committed to improving the nation's oral health, from children right the way through to older people. The NHS long-term plan, published last month, set out our plans specifically to ensure that individuals in care homes are supported to have good oral health. My hon. Friend raised that point.

The long-term plan national implementation framework, due to be published later this spring, and the national implementation plan, due to be published this autumn, will provide further information on how the LTP will be implemented, but I will now turn to the five specific issues raised by my hon. Friend.

Andrew Selous: The Royal College of Surgeons obviously raised concerns about people who use domiciliary care agencies. While there is still time, will it be possible for the NHS long-term plan to address that issue, too, so that we look after all older people whatever type of care they receive, not just those in care homes?

Steve Brine: I will touch on that, but I take my hon. Friend's point. I will make sure it is flagged up in writing as a note from me, the Minister, to the relevant officials as a response to this debate.

In 2016, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence published its "Oral health in care homes" report, which was an important piece of work. As we know, it set out a number of recommendations for care homes to help maintain and improve oral health and ensure timely access to dental treatment for their residents. In dental health, as in every other part of health, prevention is better than cure.

I completely agree that we expect care homes to follow NICE guidance and NICE recommendations in this area, as in every other. Alongside the importance of appropriately trained staff, my hon. Friend makes an important point about the role regulators can play in this area.

The Care Quality Commission is responsible for this area, as it is for many other areas of policy, and it is currently looking in depth at oral health for older people in residential care settings, and much needed that is, too. So last autumn, the CQC's dental inspection teams joined adult social care inspectors on visits to about 100 care homes to gain a better understanding of the oral health care support for residents. I know that the CQC intends to publish the findings later this year. I have asked to be kept updated on the progress of this work and to have early sight of its findings. I will update the House and my hon. Friend in particular on this, given his interest and the fact he is a member of the Health and Social Care Committee. I will make sure the rest of the Committee are aware of this as well.

We should also recognise and highlight the ongoing work of NHS England and Public Health England, which I sponsor within my portfolio, to improve the oral health of vulnerable older people. As is referred to in the long-term plan, NHS England considers oral health for older people, particularly those in care homes who may be vulnerable, an important issue. I have asked also to be kept updated on progress as NHS England takes forward action on this and other areas highlighted in the plan.

Public Health England has published “Commissioning better oral health for vulnerable older people”—a snappy title—which is designed to support commissioners of services to improve the oral health of vulnerable older adults so that they can lead a healthy, long and meaningful life outside the acute sector. My hon. Friend highlighted the Mouth Care Matters programme, which, as he says, is a local training initiative from Health Education England offering support and training in oral healthcare for the elderly and for hospital staff looking after patients who may need help with mouth care. I know the programme has been very successful locally in Kent, Surrey and Sussex. Decisions on whether to extend the training more widely are for HEE, but I would hope the success of the programme to date means that HEE is able to take it forward to new areas in the longer term, including to his county. I cannot give the nationwide answer that he asked for in his speech, but I suggest that the early signs are positive.

On access to dental services currently, NHS England is legally responsible for commissioning services to meet local identified need, and that includes the commissioning of domiciliary care services, where appropriate. However, it is important to say that where residents can, the care home and the local NHS work together, often very successfully, to ensure that dental services are provided in the most appropriate setting for those residents, whether that is within the care home itself or in a dental practice, or provided by the community dental service. Often people in care home settings will enjoy the trip out to the dentist; it is part of their socialisation and their routine, and we should not overlook that.

I note my hon. Friend’s concerns about the availability of oral health data, particularly for the older age groups. I agree that the adult dental health survey is an important tool for understanding oral health changes over time. I can reassure him that although there is not yet a date set for the next survey, no decision has been taken to discontinue this important source of information. I take this debate as a bit of a nudge to ask more questions about this. If my hon. Friend looks at my track record, for example, on the cancer patient experience survey, which I was clear was an important tool to give me information about cancer patients’ experience, he will see that I place value on such patient health surveys. In the shorter term, I agree that the regularly published NHS dental statistics on numbers of people seeing an

NHS dentist could provide more helpful information by analysing the data by age. I am going to ask my officials to work with NHS England and NHS Digital to pursue this further, and I will ensure that my hon. Friend is kept informed on that point.

My hon. Friend made a point about the social care Green Paper, which remains very much a priority but is not yet in reach. The Green Paper will cover a range of issues that are common to all adults with care and support needs, and will bring forward proposals to ensure that we have a social care system in which people know that the care they receive will help them to maintain their independence and wellbeing, and that we have a social care system that we can be proud of. We will publish the document shortly, and it will set out proposals to reform the adult care system. I take the points made by my hon. Friend about the importance of including dental and oral health in the Green Paper. I will make sure that a copy of this remarks is sent to the Minister for Care, my hon. Friend the Member for Gosport (Caroline Dinenage).

In the remaining few minutes, I wish to touch on the prevention Green Paper. We set out our prevention strategy last year, and it is one of the Secretary of State’s three priorities. We are now in the process of developing the prevention Green Paper, which is an exciting piece of work with which to be involved. It will be called “Prevention is better than cure” and will do exactly what it says on the tin. I will engage with key dental stakeholders—including the British Dental Association, Mr Deputy Speaker, so there is no need to tweet me—in the coming weeks. I look forward to those engagements.

In conclusion, although I am disappointed not to have heard from the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) during my speech, I know he has already intervened, and I am pleased that we have had the opportunity to discuss these issues. I think this is the first time I have responded to an Adjournment debate on this subject, and I have responded to quite a few. I hope I have been able to demonstrate the Government’s commitment to improving oral health. Of course there is more to do, and that commitment absolutely includes work on the oral health of older people in care homes, as set out in the long-term plan, and in domiciliary care settings. Our plans to engage in the coming weeks with key dental stakeholders on the development of the prevention Green Paper are honest and sincerely meant. I will continue to watch the work of the CQC and the outputs of its report with interest, and I will follow up on the dental survey so that we have the key data we need to improve services for the people we are here for—our constituents.

Question put and agreed to.

8.26 pm

House adjourned.

Deferred Divisions

EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION (FINANCIAL SERVICES AND MARKETS)

That the draft Official Listing of Securities Prospectus and Transparency (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, which were laid before this House on 21 January, be approved.

The House divided: Ayes 317, Noes 280.

Division No. 339]

AYES

Adams, Nigel
Afolami, Bim
Afriyie, Adam
Aldous, Peter
Allan, Lucy
Andrew, Stuart
Argar, Edward
Atkins, Victoria
Bacon, Mr Richard
Badenoch, Mrs Kemi
Baker, Mr Steve
Baldwin, Harriett
Barclay, rh Stephen
Baron, Mr John
Bebb, Guto
Bellingham, Sir Henry
Benyon, rh Richard
Berry, Jake
Blackman, Bob
Blunt, Crispin
Boles, Nick
Bone, Mr Peter
Bowie, Andrew
Bradley, Ben
Bradley, rh Karen
Brady, Sir Graham
Braverman, Suella
Brereton, Jack
Bridgen, Andrew
Brine, Steve
Brokenshire, rh James
Bruce, Fiona
Buckland, Robert
Burghart, Alex
Burns, Conor
Burt, rh Alistair
Cairns, rh Alun
Campbell, Mr Gregory
Cartlidge, James
Cash, Sir William
Caulfield, Maria
Chalk, Alex
Chishti, Rehman
Churchill, Jo
Clark, Colin
Clark, rh Greg
Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth
Clarke, Mr Simon
Cleverly, James
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
Coffey, Dr Thérèse
Collins, Damian
Costa, Alberto
Courts, Robert
Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey
Crabb, rh Stephen
Crouch, Tracey
Davies, Chris
Davies, David T. C.

Davies, Glyn
Davies, Mims
Davies, Philip
Davis, rh Mr David
Dinenage, Caroline
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
Docherty, Leo
Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey
M.
Donelan, Michelle
Dorries, Ms Nadine
Double, Steve
Dowden, Oliver
Doyle-Price, Jackie
Drax, Richard
Duddridge, James
Duguid, David
Duncan, rh Sir Alan
Duncan Smith, rh Mr
Iain
Dunne, rh Mr Philip
Ellis, Michael
Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
Elphicke, Charlie
Eustice, George
Evans, Mr Nigel
Evennett, rh Sir David
Fabricant, Michael
Fallon, rh Sir Michael
Field, rh Frank
Field, rh Mark
Ford, Vicky
Foster, Kevin
Fox, rh Dr Liam
Francois, rh Mr Mark
Frazer, Lucy
Freeman, George
Freer, Mike
Fysh, Mr Marcus
Gale, rh Sir Roger
Garnier, Mark
Gauke, rh Mr David
Ghani, Ms Nusrat
Gibb, rh Nick
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
Greening, rh Justine
Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
Griffiths, Andrew

Gyimah, Mr Sam
Hair, Kirstene
Halfon, rh Robert
Hall, Luke
Hammond, rh Mr Philip
Hammond, Stephen
Hancock, rh Matt
Hands, rh Greg
Harper, rh Mr Mark
Harrington, Richard
Harris, Rebecca
Harrison, Trudy
Hart, Simon
Hayes, rh Sir John
Heald, rh Sir Oliver
Heappey, James
Heaton-Harris, Chris
Heaton-Jones, Peter
Henderson, Gordon
Herbert, rh Nick
Hermon, Lady
Hinds, rh Damian
Hoare, Simon
Hollingbery, George
Hollinrake, Kevin
Hollobone, Mr Philip
Holloway, Adam
Howell, John
Huddleston, Nigel
Hughes, Eddie
Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
Hurd, rh Mr Nick
Jack, Mr Alister
James, Margot
Javid, rh Sajid
Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
Jenkin, Sir Bernard
Jenkyns, Andrea
Jenrick, Robert
Johnson, rh Boris
Johnson, Dr Caroline
Johnson, Gareth
Johnson, Joseph
Jones, Andrew
Jones, rh Mr David
Jones, Mr Marcus
Kawczynski, Daniel
Keegan, Gillian
Kennedy, Seema
Kerr, Stephen
Knight, rh Sir Greg
Knight, Julian
Kwarteng, Kwasi
Lamont, John
Lancaster, rh Mark
Latham, Mrs Pauline
Leadsom, rh Andrea
Lee, Dr Phillip
Lefroy, Jeremy
Leigh, rh Sir Edward
Letwin, rh Sir Oliver
Lewer, Andrew
Lewis, rh Brandon
Lewis, rh Dr Julian
Liddell-Grainger, Mr
Ian
Lidington, rh Mr David
Little Pengelly, Emma
Lopez, Julia
Lopresti, Jack
Lord, Mr Jonathan
Loughton, Tim
Mackinlay, Craig
Maclean, Rachel
Main, Mrs Anne
Mak, Alan
Malthouse, Kit
Mann, Scott
Masterton, Paul
May, rh Mrs Theresa
Maynard, Paul
McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick
McPartland, Stephen
McVey, rh Ms Esther
Menzies, Mark
Mercer, Johnny
Merriman, Huw
Metcalf, Stephen
Miller, rh Mrs Maria
Milling, Amanda
Mills, Nigel
Milton, rh Anne
Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
Moore, Damien
Mordaunt, rh Penny
Morgan, rh Nicky
Morris, Anne Marie
Morris, David
Morris, James
Morton, Wendy
Mundell, rh David
Murray, Mrs Sheryll
Murrison, Dr Andrew
Neill, Robert
Newton, Sarah
Nokes, rh Caroline
Norman, Jesse
O'Brien, Neil
Offord, Dr Matthew
Opperman, Guy
Paisley, Ian
Parish, Neil
Patel, rh Priti
Paterson, rh Mr Owen
Pawsey, Mark
Penning, rh Sir Mike
Penrose, John
Percy, Andrew
Perry, rh Claire
Philp, Chris
Pincher, rh Christopher
Poulter, Dr Dan
Pow, Rebecca
Prentis, Victoria
Prisk, rh Mark
Pritchard, Mark
Pursglove, Tom
Quin, Jeremy
Quince, Will
Raab, rh Dominic
Redwood, rh John
Rees-Mogg, Mr Jacob
Robertson, Mr Laurence
Robinson, Gavin
Robinson, Mary
Ross, Douglas
Rowley, Lee
Rudd, rh Amber
Rutley, David
Sandbach, Antoinette
Scully, Paul
Seely, Mr Bob
Selous, Andrew
Shannon, Jim

Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, Alok
 Shelbrooke, Alec
 Simpson, David
 Simpson, rh Mr Keith
 Skidmore, Chris
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, rh Julian
 Smith, Royston
 Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
 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
 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

Elliott, Julie
 Ellman, Dame Louise
 Elmore, Chris
 Esterson, Bill
 Evans, Chris
 Farrelly, Paul
 Farron, Tim
 Fellows, Marion
 Fitzpatrick, Jim
 Fletcher, Colleen
 Flint, rh Caroline
 Fovargue, Yvonne
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Frith, James
 Furniss, Gill
 Gaffney, Hugh
 Gardiner, Barry
 George, Ruth
 Gethins, Stephen
 Gibson, Patricia
 Gill, Preet Kaur
 Glindon, Mary
 Godsiff, Mr Roger
 Goodman, Helen
 Grady, Patrick
 Grant, Peter
 Gray, Neil
 Green, Kate
 Greenwood, Lilian
 Greenwood, Margaret
 Griffith, Nia
 Grogan, John
 Gwynne, Andrew
 Haigh, Louise
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hanson, rh David
 Hardy, Emma
 Harman, rh Ms Harriet
 Harris, Carolyn
 Hayes, Helen
 Hayman, Sue
 Healey, rh John
 Hendrick, Sir Mark
 Hendry, Drew
 Hepburn, Mr Stephen
 Hill, Mike
 Hillier, Meg
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hollern, Kate
 Hopkins, Kelvin
 Howarth, rh Mr George
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Hussain, Imran
 Jarvis, Dan
 Johnson, Diana
 Jones, Darren
 Jones, Gerald
 Jones, Graham P.
 Jones, Helen
 Jones, rh Mr Kevan
 Jones, Sarah
 Jones, Susan Elan
 Kane, Mike
 Keeley, Barbara
 Kendall, Liz
 Khan, Afzal
 Killen, Ged
 Kinnock, Stephen
 Kyle, Peter
 Laird, Lesley
 Lake, Ben

Lammy, rh Mr David
 Lavery, Ian
 Law, Chris
 Lee, Karen
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Lewis, Clive
 Lewis, Mr Ivan
 Linden, David
 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, Andy
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
 McDonald, Stuart C.
 McDonnell, rh John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGinn, Conor
 McGovern, Alison
 McInnes, Liz
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McMahon, Jim
 McMorris, Anna
 Mearns, Ian
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Monaghan, Carol
 Moon, Mrs Madeleine
 Moran, Layla
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, Grahame
 Murray, Ian
 Nandy, Lisa
 Newlands, Gavin
 Norris, Alex
 O'Hara, Brendan
 Onn, Melanie
 Onwurah, Chi
 Osamor, Kate
 Owen, Albert
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pearce, Teresa
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Perkins, Toby
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Pidcock, Laura
 Platt, Jo
 Pollard, Luke
 Powell, Lucy
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Rashid, Faisal
 Rayner, Angela
 Reed, Mr Steve
 Rees, Christina
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reeves, Rachel

NOES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
 Abrahams, Debbie
 Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
 Amesbury, Mike
 Antoniazzi, Tonia
 Ashworth, Jonathan
 Bailey, Mr Adrian
 Bardell, Hannah
 Barron, rh Sir Kevin
 Beckett, rh Margaret
 Benn, rh Hilary
 Betts, Mr Clive
 Blackford, rh Ian
 Blackman, Kirsty
 Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta
 Blomfield, Paul
 Brabin, Tracy
 Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
 Brake, rh Tom
 Brennan, Kevin
 Brock, Deidre
 Brown, Alan
 Brown, Lyn
 Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
 Bryant, Chris
 Buck, Ms Karen
 Burden, Richard
 Burgon, Richard
 Butler, Dawn
 Byrne, rh Liam
 Cable, rh Sir Vince
 Cadbury, Ruth
 Cameron, Dr Lisa
 Campbell, rh Sir Alan
 Carden, Dan
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Champion, Sarah
 Chapman, Douglas
 Chapman, Jenny

Charalambous, Bambos
 Cherry, Joanna
 Clwyd, rh Ann
 Coaker, Vernon
 Cooper, Julie
 Cooper, Rosie
 Cooper, rh Yvette
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy
 Cowan, Ronnie
 Coyle, Neil
 Crausby, Sir David
 Crawley, Angela
 Creagh, Mary
 Creasy, Stella
 Cruddas, Jon
 Cryer, John
 Cummins, Judith
 Cunningham, Alex
 Cunningham, Mr Jim
 Daby, Janet
 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
 Dromey, Jack
 Duffield, Rosie
 Eagle, Ms Angela
 Eagle, Maria
 Edwards, Jonathan
 Efford, Clive

Reynolds, Emma
 Rimmer, Ms Marie
 Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
 Rodda, Matt
 Rowley, Danielle
 Ruane, Chris
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
 Saville Roberts, Liz
 Shah, Naz
 Sharma, Mr Virendra
 Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Sheppard, Tommy
 Sherriff, Paula
 Siddiq, Tulip (*Proxy vote cast by Vicky Foxcroft*)
 Skinner, Mr Dennis
 Slaughter, Andy
 Smeeth, Ruth
 Smith, Cat
 Smith, Eleanor
 Smith, Jeff
 Smith, Laura
 Smith, Nick
 Smyth, Karin
 Snell, Gareth
 Sobel, Alex
 Soubry, rh Anna
 Spellar, rh John
 Starmer, rh Keir
 Stephens, Chris

Stevens, Jo
 Stone, Jamie
 Streeting, Wes
 Stringer, Graham
 Sweeney, Mr Paul
 Swinson, Jo
 Tami, rh Mark
 Thomas, Gareth
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick
 Thornberry, rh Emily
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Trickett, Jon
 Turley, Anna
 Twigg, Derek
 Twigg, Stephen
 Twist, Liz
 Umunna, Chuka
 Vaz, rh Keith
 Vaz, Valerie
 Walker, Thelma
 West, Catherine
 Western, Matt
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whitfield, Martin
 Whitford, Dr Philippa
 Williams, Hywel
 Williams, Dr Paul
 Wilson, Phil
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zeichner, Daniel

Crabb, rh Stephen
 Crouch, Tracey
 Davies, Chris
 Davies, David T. C.
 Davies, Glyn
 Davies, Mims
 Davies, Philip
 Davis, rh Mr David
 Dinéage, Caroline
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
 Docherty, Leo
 Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
 Donelan, Michelle
 Dorries, Ms Nadine
 Double, Steve
 Dowden, Oliver
 Doyle-Price, Jackie
 Drax, Richard
 Duddridge, James
 Duguid, David
 Duncan, rh Sir Alan
 Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
 Dunne, rh Mr Philip
 Ellis, Michael
 Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
 Elphicke, Charlie
 Eustice, George
 Evans, Mr Nigel
 Evennett, rh Sir David
 Fabricant, Michael
 Fallon, rh Sir Michael
 Field, rh Frank
 Field, rh Mark
 Ford, Vicky
 Foster, Kevin
 Fox, rh Dr Liam
 Francois, rh Mr Mark
 Frazer, Lucy
 Freeman, George
 Freer, Mike
 Fysh, Mr Marcus
 Gale, rh Sir Roger
 Garnier, Mark
 Gauke, rh Mr David
 Ghani, Ms Nusrat
 Gibb, rh Nick
 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
 Greening, rh Justine
 Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
 Griffiths, Andrew
 Gyimah, Mr Sam
 Hair, Kirstene
 Halfon, rh Robert
 Hall, Luke
 Hammond, rh Mr Philip
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, rh Matt
 Hands, rh Greg
 Harper, rh Mr Mark

Harrington, Richard
 Harris, Rebecca
 Harrison, Trudy
 Hart, Simon
 Hayes, rh Sir John
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver
 Heapey, James
 Heaton-Harris, Chris
 Heaton-Jones, Peter
 Henderson, Gordon
 Herbert, rh Nick
 Hermon, Lady
 Hinds, rh Damian
 Hoare, Simon
 Hollingbery, George
 Hollinrake, Kevin
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holloway, Adam
 Howell, John
 Huddleston, Nigel
 Hughes, Eddie
 Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
 Hurd, rh Mr Nick
 Jack, Mr Alister
 James, Margot
 Javid, rh Sajid
 Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard
 Jenkyns, Andrea
 Jenrick, Robert
 Johnson, rh Boris
 Johnson, Dr Caroline
 Johnson, Gareth
 Johnson, Joseph
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Jones, Mr Marcus
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Keegan, Gillian
 Kennedy, Seema
 Kerr, Stephen
 Knight, rh Sir Greg
 Knight, Julian
 Kwarteng, Kwasi
 Lamont, John
 Lancaster, rh Mark
 Latham, Mrs Pauline
 Leadsom, rh Andrea
 Lee, Dr Phillip
 Lefroy, Jeremy
 Leigh, rh Sir Edward
 Letwin, rh Sir Oliver
 Lewer, Andrew
 Lewis, rh Brandon
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Iain
 Lidington, rh Mr David
 Little Pengeilly, Emma
 Lopez, Julia
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lord, Mr Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Mackinlay, Craig
 Maclean, Rachel
 Main, Mrs Anne
 Mak, Alan
 Malthouse, Kit
 Mann, Scott
 Masterton, Paul
 May, rh Mrs Theresa
 Maynard, Paul

Question accordingly agreed to.

EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION (TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT)

That the draft Employment Rights (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, which were laid before this House on 14 January, be approved.

The House divided: Ayes 317, Noes 260.

Division No. 340]

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
 Baldwin, Harriett
 Barclay, rh Stephen
 Baron, Mr John
 Bebb, Guto
 Bellingham, Sir Henry
 Benyon, rh Richard
 Berry, Jake
 Blackman, Bob
 Blunt, Crispin
 Boles, Nick
 Bone, Mr Peter
 Bowie, Andrew
 Bradley, Ben
 Bradley, rh Karen
 Brady, Sir Graham
 Braverman, Suella

Brereton, Jack
 Bridgen, Andrew
 Brine, Steve
 Brokenshire, rh James
 Bruce, Fiona
 Buckland, Robert
 Burghart, Alex
 Burns, Conor
 Burnt, rh Alistair
 Cairns, rh Alun
 Campbell, Mr Gregory
 Cartlidge, James
 Cash, Sir William
 Caulfield, Maria
 Chalk, Alex
 Chishty, Rehman
 Churchill, Jo
 Clark, Colin
 Clark, rh Greg
 Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth
 Clarke, Mr Simon
 Cleverly, James
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
 Coffey, Dr Thérèse
 Collins, Damian
 Costa, Alberto
 Courts, Robert
 Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey

McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick
 McPartland, Stephen
 McVey, rh Ms Esther
 Menzies, Mark
 Mercer, Johnny
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria
 Milling, Amanda
 Mills, Nigel
 Milton, rh Anne
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Moore, Damien
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morgan, rh Nicky
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Morton, Wendy
 Mundell, rh David
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll
 Murrison, Dr Andrew
 Neill, Robert
 Newton, Sarah
 Nokes, rh Caroline
 Norman, Jesse
 O'Brien, Neil
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Opperman, Guy
 Paisley, Ian
 Parish, Neil
 Patel, rh Priti
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Pawsey, Mark
 Penning, rh Sir Mike
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Perry, rh Claire
 Philp, Chris
 Pincher, rh Christopher
 Poulter, Dr Dan
 Pow, Rebecca
 Prentis, Victoria
 Prisk, Mr Mark
 Pritchard, Mark
 Pursglove, Tom
 Quin, Jeremy
 Quince, Will
 Raab, rh Dominic
 Redwood, rh John
 Rees-Mogg, Mr Jacob
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Robinson, Gavin
 Robinson, Mary
 Ross, Douglas
 Rowley, Lee
 Rudd, rh Amber
 Rutley, David
 Sandbach, Antoinette
 Scully, Paul

Seely, Mr Bob
 Selous, Andrew
 Shannon, Jim
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, Alok
 Shelbrooke, Alec
 Simpson, David
 Simpson, rh Mr Keith
 Skidmore, Chris
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, rh Julian
 Smith, Royston
 Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
 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
 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
 Wright, rh Jeremy
 Zahawi, Nadhim

NOES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
 Abrahams, Debbie
 Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
 Amesbury, Mike
 Antoniazzi, Tonia
 Ashworth, Jonathan
 Austin, Ian
 Bailey, Mr Adrian

Barron, rh Sir Kevin
 Beckett, rh Margaret
 Benn, rh Hilary
 Berger, Luciana (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Leslie*)
 Betts, Mr Clive
 Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta
 Blomfield, Paul

Brabin, Tracy
 Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
 Brake, rh Tom
 Brennan, Kevin
 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
 Campbell, rh Sir Alan
 Carden, Dan
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Champion, Sarah
 Chapman, Jenny
 Charalambous, Bambos
 Clwyd, rh Ann
 Coaker, Vernon
 Cooper, Julie
 Cooper, Rosie
 Cooper, rh Yvette
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy
 Coyle, Neil
 Crausby, Sir David
 Creagh, Mary
 Creasy, Stella
 Cruddas, Jon
 Cryer, John
 Cummins, Judith
 Cunningham, Alex
 Cunningham, Mr Jim
 Daby, Janet
 Dakin, Nic
 David, Wayne
 Davies, Geraint
 De Cordova, Marsha
 De Piero, Gloria
 Debbonaire, Thangam
 Dent Coad, Emma
 Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
 Dodds, Anneliese
 Doughty, Stephen
 Dowd, Peter
 Dromey, Jack
 Duffield, Rosie
 Eagle, Ms Angela
 Eagle, Maria
 Edwards, Jonathan
 Efford, Clive
 Elliott, Julie
 Ellman, Dame Louise
 Elmore, Chris
 Esterson, Bill
 Evans, Chris
 Farrelly, Paul
 Farron, Tim
 Fitzpatrick, Jim
 Fletcher, Colleen
 Flint, rh Caroline
 Fovargue, Yvonne
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Frith, James
 Furniss, Gill
 Gaffney, Hugh
 Gardiner, Barry
 George, Ruth
 Gill, Preet Kaur

Glindon, Mary
 Godsiff, Mr Roger
 Goodman, Helen
 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
 Hepburn, Mr Stephen
 Hill, Mike
 Hillier, Meg
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hollern, Kate
 Hopkins, Kelvin
 Howarth, rh Mr George
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Hussain, Imran
 Jarvis, Dan
 Johnson, Diana
 Jones, Darren
 Jones, Gerald
 Jones, Graham P.
 Jones, Helen
 Jones, rh Mr Kevan
 Jones, Sarah
 Jones, Susan Elan
 Kane, Mike
 Keeley, Barbara
 Kendall, Liz
 Khan, Afzal
 Killen, Ged
 Kinnock, Stephen
 Kyle, Peter
 Laird, Lesley
 Lake, Ben
 Lammy, rh Mr David
 Lavery, Ian
 Lee, Karen
 Leslie, Mr Chris
 Lewis-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Lewis, Clive
 Lewis, Mr Ivan
 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
 Mann, John
 Marsden, Gordon
 Martin, Sandy
 Maskell, Rachael
 Matheson, Christian
 McCabe, Steve
 McCarthy, Kerry

McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonnell, rh John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGinn, Conor
 McGovern, Alison
 McInnes, Liz
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McMahon, Jim
 McMorris, Anna
 Mearns, Ian
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Moon, Mrs Madeleine
 Moran, Layla
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, Grahame
 Murray, Ian
 Nandy, Lisa
 Norris, Alex
 O'Hara, Brendan
 Onn, Melanie
 Onwurah, Chi
 Osamor, Kate
 Owen, Albert
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pearce, Teresa
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Perkins, Toby
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Pidcock, Laura
 Platt, Jo
 Pollard, Luke
 Powell, Lucy
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Rashid, Faisal
 Rayner, Angela
 Reed, Mr Steve
 Rees, Christina
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reeves, Rachel
 Reynolds, Emma
 Rimmer, Ms Marie
 Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
 Rodda, Matt
 Rowley, Danielle
 Ruane, Chris
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
 Ryan, rh Joan
 Saville Roberts, Liz
 Shah, Naz
 Sharma, Mr Virendra
 Sheerman, Mr Barry

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
 Smyth, Karin
 Snell, Gareth
 Sobel, Alex
 Soubry, rh Anna
 Spellar, rh John
 Starmer, rh Keir
 Stephens, Chris
 Stevens, Jo
 Stone, Jamie
 Streeter, Wes
 Stringer, Graham
 Sweeney, Mr Paul
 Swinson, Jo
 Tami, rh Mark
 Thomas, Gareth
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick
 Thornberry, rh Emily
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Trickett, Jon
 Turley, Anna
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Derek
 Twigg, Stephen
 Twist, Liz
 Umunna, Chuka
 Vaz, rh Keith
 Vaz, Valerie
 Walker, Thelma
 West, Catherine
 Western, Matt
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whitfield, Martin
 Williams, Hywel
 Williams, Dr Paul
 Wilson, Phil
 Wollaston, Dr Sarah
 Woodcock, John
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zeichner, Daniel

Badenoch, Mrs Kemi
 Baker, Mr Steve
 Baldwin, Harriett
 Barclay, rh Stephen
 Baron, Mr John
 Bebb, Guto
 Bellingham, Sir Henry
 Benyon, rh Richard
 Berry, Jake
 Blackman, Bob
 Blunt, Crispin
 Boles, Nick
 Bone, Mr Peter
 Bowie, Andrew
 Bradley, Ben
 Bradley, rh Karen
 Brady, Sir Graham
 Braverman, Suella
 Brereton, Jack
 Bridgen, Andrew
 Brine, Steve
 Brokenshire, rh James
 Bruce, Fiona
 Buckland, Robert
 Burghart, Alex
 Burns, Conor
 Burt, rh Alistair
 Cairns, rh Alun
 Campbell, Mr Gregory
 Cartlidge, James
 Cash, Sir William
 Caulfield, Maria
 Chalk, Alex
 Chishti, Rehman
 Churchill, Jo
 Clark, Colin
 Clark, rh Greg
 Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth
 Clarke, Mr Simon
 Cleverly, James
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
 Coffey, Dr Thérèse
 Collins, Damian
 Costa, Alberto
 Courts, Robert
 Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey
 Crabb, rh Stephen
 Crouch, Tracey
 Davies, Chris
 Davies, David
 T. C.
 Davies, Glyn
 Davies, Mims
 Davies, Philip
 Davis, rh Mr David
 Dinage, Caroline
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
 Docherty, Leo
 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
 Evnnett, rh Sir David
 Fabricant, Michael
 Fallon, rh Sir Michael
 Field, rh Frank
 Field, rh Mark
 Ford, Vicky
 Foster, Kevin
 Fox, rh Dr Liam
 Francois, rh Mr Mark
 Frazer, Lucy
 Freeman, George
 Freer, Mike
 Fysh, Mr Marcus
 Gale, rh Sir Roger
 Garnier, Mark
 Gauke, rh Mr David
 Ghani, Ms Nusrat
 Gibb, rh Nick
 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
 Greening, rh Justine
 Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
 Griffiths, Andrew
 Gyimah, Mr Sam
 Hair, Kirstene
 Halfon, rh Robert
 Hall, Luke
 Hammond, rh Mr Philip
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, rh Matt
 Hands, rh Greg
 Harper, rh Mr Mark
 Harrington, Richard
 Harris, Rebecca
 Harrison, Trudy
 Hart, Simon
 Hayes, rh Sir John
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver
 Heapey, James
 Heaton-Harris, Chris
 Heaton-Jones, Peter
 Henderson, Gordon
 Herbert, rh Nick
 Hermon, Lady
 Hinds, rh Damian
 Hoare, Simon
 Hollingbery, George
 Hollinrake, Kevin
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holloway, Adam
 Howell, John
 Huddleston, Nigel
 Hughes, Eddie
 Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
 Hurd, rh Mr Nick
 Jack, Mr Alister
 James, Margot

Question accordingly agreed to.

EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION (TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT)

That the draft Employment Rights (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, which were laid before this House on 14 January, be approved.

The House divided: Ayes 318, Noes 288.

Division No. 341]

AYES

Adams, Nigel
 Afolami, Bim
 Afriyie, Adam
 Aldous, Peter
 Allan, Lucy
 Amess, Sir David
 Andrew, Stuart
 Argar, Edward
 Atkins, Victoria
 Bacon, Mr Richard

Javid, rh Sajid
 Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard
 Jenkyns, Andrea
 Jenrick, Robert
 Johnson, rh Boris
 Johnson, Dr Caroline
 Johnson, Gareth
 Johnson, Joseph
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Jones, Mr Marcus
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Keegan, Gillian
 Kennedy, Seema
 Kerr, Stephen
 Knight, rh Sir Greg
 Knight, Julian
 Kwarteng, Kwasi
 Lamont, John
 Lancaster, rh Mark
 Latham, Mrs Pauline
 Leadsom, rh Andrea
 Lee, Dr Phillip
 Lefroy, Jeremy
 Leigh, rh Sir Edward
 Letwin, rh Sir Oliver
 Lewer, Andrew
 Lewis, rh Brandon
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Liddington, rh Mr David
 Little Pengelly, Emma
 Lopez, Julia
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lord, Mr Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Mackinlay, Craig
 Maclean, Rachel
 Main, Mrs Anne
 Mak, Alan
 Malthouse, Kit
 Mann, Scott
 Masterton, Paul
 May, rh Mrs Theresa
 Maynard, Paul
 McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick
 McPartland, Stephen
 McVey, rh Ms Esther
 Menzies, Mark
 Mercer, Johnny
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria
 Milling, Amanda
 Mills, Nigel
 Milton, rh Anne
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Moore, Damien
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morgan, rh Nicky
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Morton, Wendy
 Mundell, rh David
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll
 Murrison, Dr Andrew
 Neill, Robert
 Newton, Sarah
 Nokes, rh Caroline
 Norman, Jesse

O'Brien, Neil
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Opperman, Guy
 Paisley, Ian
 Parish, Neil
 Patel, rh Priti
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Pawsey, Mark
 Penning, rh Sir Mike
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Perry, rh Claire
 Philp, Chris
 Pincher, rh Christopher
 Poulter, Dr Dan
 Pow, Rebecca
 Prentis, Victoria
 Prisk, Mr Mark
 Pritchard, Mark
 Pursglove, Tom
 Quin, Jeremy
 Quince, Will
 Raab, rh Dominic
 Redwood, rh John
 Rees-Mogg, Mr Jacob
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Robinson, Gavin
 Robinson, Mary
 Ross, Douglas
 Rowley, Lee
 Rudd, rh Amber
 Rutley, David
 Sandbach, Antoinette
 Scully, Paul
 Seely, Mr Bob
 Selous, Andrew
 Shannon, Jim
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, Alok
 Shelbrooke, Alec
 Simpson, David
 Simpson, rh Mr Keith
 Skidmore, Chris
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, rh Julian
 Smith, Royston
 Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
 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
 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
 Abrahams, Debbie
 Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
 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 (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Leslie*)
 Betts, Mr Clive
 Blackford, rh Ian
 Blackman, Kirsty
 Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta
 Blomfield, Paul
 Brabin, Tracy
 Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
 Brake, rh Tom
 Brennan, Kevin
 Brock, Deidre
 Brown, Alan
 Brown, Lyn
 Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
 Bryant, Chris
 Buck, Ms Karen
 Burden, Richard
 Burgon, Richard
 Butler, Dawn
 Byrne, rh Liam
 Cable, rh Sir Vince
 Cadbury, Ruth
 Cameron, Dr Lisa
 Campbell, rh Sir Alan
 Carden, Dan
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Champion, Sarah
 Chapman, Douglas
 Chapman, Jenny
 Charalambous, Bambos
 Cherry, Joanna
 Clwyd, rh Ann
 Coaker, Vernon
 Cooper, Julie
 Cooper, Rosie
 Cooper, rh Yvette
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy
 Cowan, Ronnie
 Coyle, Neil
 Crausby, Sir David
 Crawley, Angela
 Creagh, Mary
 Creasy, Stella
 Cruddas, Jon

Cryer, John
 Cummins, Judith
 Cunningham, Alex
 Cunningham, Mr Jim
 Daby, Janet
 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
 Dromey, Jack
 Duffield, Rosie
 Eagle, Ms Angela
 Eagle, Maria
 Edwards, Jonathan
 Efford, Clive
 Elliott, Julie
 Ellman, Dame Louise
 Elmore, Chris
 Esterson, Bill
 Evans, Chris
 Farrelly, Paul
 Farron, Tim
 Fellows, Marion
 Fitzpatrick, Jim
 Fletcher, Colleen
 Flint, rh Caroline
 Fovargue, Yvonne
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Frith, James
 Furniss, Gill
 Gaffney, Hugh
 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
 Hill, Mike
 Hillier, Meg
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hollern, Kate
 Hopkins, Kelvin
 Howarth, rh Mr George
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Hussain, Imran
 Jarvis, Dan
 Johnson, Diana
 Jones, Darren
 Jones, Gerald
 Jones, Graham
 P.
 Jones, Helen
 Jones, rh Mr Kevan
 Jones, Sarah
 Jones, Susan Elan
 Kane, Mike
 Keeley, Barbara
 Kendall, Liz
 Khan, Afzal
 Killen, Ged
 Kinnock, Stephen
 Kyle, Peter
 Laird, Lesley
 Lake, Ben
 Lammy, rh Mr David
 Lavery, Ian
 Law, Chris
 Lee, Karen
 Leslie, Mr Chris
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Lewis, Clive
 Lewis, Mr Ivan
 Linden, David
 Lloyd, 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, Andy
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm

McDonald, Stuart C.
 McDonnell, rh John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGinn, Conor
 McGovern, Alison
 McInnes, Liz
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McMahon, Jim
 McMorris, Anna
 Mearns, Ian
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Monaghan, Carol
 Moon, Mrs Madeleine
 Moran, Layla
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, Grahame
 Murray, Ian
 Nandy, Lisa
 Newlands, Gavin
 Norris, Alex
 O'Hara, Brendan
 Onn, Melanie
 Onwurah, Chi
 Osamor, Kate
 Owen, Albert
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pearce, Teresa
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Perkins, Toby
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Pidcock, Laura
 Platt, Jo
 Pollard, Luke
 Powell, Lucy
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Rashid, Faisal
 Rayner, Angela
 Reed, Mr Steve
 Rees, Christina
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reeves, Rachel
 Reynolds, Emma
 Rimmer, Ms Marie
 Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
 Rodda, Matt
 Rowley, Danielle
 Ruane, Chris
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
 Ryan, rh Joan
 Saville Roberts, Liz
 Shah, Naz
 Sharma, Mr Virendra
 Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Sheppard, Tommy
 Sherrieff, 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
 Smyth, Karin
 Snell, Gareth
 Sobel, Alex

Soubry, rh Anna
 Spellar, rh John
 Starmer, rh Keir
 Stephens, Chris
 Stevens, Jo
 Stone, Jamie
 Streeter, Wes
 Stringer, Graham
 Sweeney, Mr Paul
 Swinson, Jo
 Tami, rh Mark
 Thomas, Gareth
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick
 Thornberry, rh Emily
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Trickett, Jon
 Turley, Anna
 Twigg, Derek

Twigg, Stephen
 Twist, Liz
 Umunna, Chuka
 Vaz, rh Keith
 Vaz, Valerie
 Walker, Thelma
 West, Catherine
 Western, Matt
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whitfield, Martin
 Whitford, Dr Philippa
 Williams, Hywel
 Williams, Dr Paul
 Wilson, Phil
 Wollaston, Dr Sarah
 Woodcock, John
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zeichner, Daniel

Question accordingly agreed to.

EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION (TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT)

That the draft Employment Rights (Amendment) (EU Exit) (No. 2) Regulations 2018, which were laid before this House on 31 October 2018, be approved.

The House divided: Ayes 317, Noes 288.

Division No. 342]

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
 Baldwin, Harriett
 Barclay, rh Stephen
 Baron, Mr John
 Bebb, Guto
 Bellingham, Sir Henry
 Benyon, rh Richard
 Berry, Jake
 Blackman, Bob
 Blunt, Crispin
 Boles, Nick
 Bone, Mr Peter
 Bowie, Andrew
 Bradley, Ben
 Bradley, rh Karen
 Brady, Sir Graham
 Braverman, Suella
 Brereton, Jack
 Bridgen, Andrew
 Brine, Steve
 Brokenshire, rh James
 Bruce, Fiona
 Buckland, Robert
 Burghart, Alex
 Burns, Conor
 Burt, rh Alistair
 Cairns, rh Alun
 Campbell, Mr Gregory
 Cartledge, James

Cash, Sir William
 Caulfield, Maria
 Chalk, Alex
 Chishti, Rehman
 Churchill, Jo
 Clark, Colin
 Clark, rh Greg
 Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth
 Clarke, Mr Simon
 Cleverly, James
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
 Coffey, Dr Thérèse
 Collins, Damian
 Costa, Alberto
 Courts, Robert
 Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey
 Crabb, rh Stephen
 Crouch, Tracey
 Davies, Chris
 Davies, David
 T. C.
 Davies, Glyn
 Davies, Mims
 Davies, Philip
 Davis, rh Mr David
 Dinanage, Caroline
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
 Docherty, Leo
 Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey
 M.
 Donelan, Michelle
 Dorries, Ms Nadine
 Double, Steve
 Dowden, Oliver
 Doyle-Price, Jackie
 Drax, Richard
 Duddridge, James
 Duguid, David
 Duncan, rh Sir Alan

Duncan Smith, rh Mr
Iain
Dunne, rh Mr Philip
Ellis, Michael
Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
Elphicke, Charlie
Eustice, George
Evans, Mr Nigel
Evennett, rh Sir David
Fabricant, Michael
Fallon, rh Sir Michael
Field, rh Frank
Field, rh Mark
Ford, Vicky
Foster, Kevin
Fox, rh Dr Liam
Francois, rh Mr Mark
Frazer, Lucy
Freeman, George
Freer, Mike
Fysh, Mr Marcus
Gale, rh Sir Roger
Garnier, Mark
Gauke, rh Mr David
Ghani, Ms Nusrat
Gibb, rh Nick
Girvan, Paul
Glen, John
Goldsmit, Zac
Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
Gove, rh Michael
Graham, Luke
Graham, Richard
Grant, Bill
Grant, Mrs Helen
Gray, James
Grayling, rh Chris
Green, Chris
Greening, rh Justine
Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
Griffiths, Andrew
Gyimah, Mr Sam
Hair, Kirstene
Halfon, rh Robert
Hall, Luke
Hammond, rh Mr Philip
Hammond, Stephen
Hancock, rh Matt
Hands, rh Greg
Harper, rh Mr Mark
Harrington, Richard
Harris, Rebecca
Harrison, Trudy
Hart, Simon
Hayes, rh Sir John
Heald, rh Sir Oliver
Heappey, James
Heaton-Harris, Chris
Heaton-Jones, Peter
Henderson, Gordon
Herbert, rh Nick
Hermon, Lady
Hinds, rh Damian
Hoare, Simon
Hollingbery, George
Hollinrake, Kevin
Hollobone, Mr Philip
Holloway, Adam
Howell, John
Huddleston, Nigel
Hughes, Eddie
Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy

Hurd, rh Mr Nick
Jack, Mr Alister
James, Margot
Javid, rh Sajid
Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
Jenkin, Sir Bernard
Jenkyne, Andrea
Jenrick, Robert
Johnson, rh Boris
Johnson, Dr Caroline
Johnson, Gareth
Johnson, Joseph
Jones, Andrew
Jones, rh Mr David
Jones, Mr Marcus
Kawczynski, Daniel
Keegan, Gillian
Kennedy, Seema
Kerr, Stephen
Knight, rh Sir Greg
Knight, Julian
Kwarteng, Kwasi
Lamont, John
Lancaster, rh Mark
Latham, Mrs Pauline
Leadsom, rh Andrea
Lee, Dr Phillip
Lefroy, Jeremy
Leigh, rh Sir Edward
Letwin, rh Sir Oliver
Lewer, Andrew
Lewis, rh Brandon
Lewis, rh Dr Julian
Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
Lidington, rh Mr David
Little Pengelly, Emma
Lopez, Julia
Lopresti, Jack
Lord, Mr Jonathan
Loughton, Tim
Mackinlay, Craig
Maclean, Rachel
Main, Mrs Anne
Mak, Alan
Malthouse, Kit
Mann, Scott
Masterton, Paul
May, rh Mrs Theresa
Maynard, Paul
McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick
McPartland, Stephen
McVey, rh Ms Esther
Menzies, Mark
Mercer, Johnny
Merriman, Huw
Metcalfe, Stephen
Miller, rh Mrs Maria
Milling, Amanda
Mills, Nigel
Milton, rh Anne
Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
Moore, Damien
Mordaunt, rh Penny
Morgan, rh Nicky
Morris, Anne Marie
Morris, David
Morris, James
Morton, Wendy
Mundell, rh David
Murray, Mrs Sheryl
Murrison, Dr Andrew
Neill, Robert

Newton, Sarah
Nokes, rh Caroline
Norman, Jesse
O'Brien, Neil
Offord, Dr Matthew
Opperman, Guy
Paisley, Ian
Parish, Neil
Patel, rh Priti
Paterson, rh Mr Owen
Pawsey, Mark
Penning, rh Sir Mike
Penrose, John
Percy, Andrew
Perry, rh Claire
Philp, Chris
Pincher, rh Christopher
Poulter, Dr Dan
Pow, Rebecca
Prentis, Victoria
Prisk, Mr Mark
Pritchard, Mark
Pursglove, Tom
Quin, Jeremy
Quince, Will
Raab, rh Dominic
Redwood, rh John
Rees-Mogg, Mr Jacob
Robertson, Mr Laurence
Robinson, Gavin
Robinson, Mary
Ross, Douglas
Rowley, Lee
Rudd, rh Amber
Rutley, David
Sandbach, Antoinette
Scully, Paul
Seely, Mr Bob
Selous, Andrew
Shannon, Jim
Shapps, rh Grant
Sharma, Alok
Shelbrooke, Alec
Simpson, David
Simpson, rh Mr Keith
Skidmore, Chris
Smith, Chloe
Smith, Henry
Smith, rh Julian

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
Abrahams, Debbie
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
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 (*Proxy vote
cast by Chris Leslie*)
Betts, Mr Clive
Blackford, rh Ian
Blackman, Kirsty
Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta
Blomfield, Paul
Brabin, Tracy

Smith, Royston
Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
Spelman, rh Dame Caroline
Spencer, Mark
Stephenson, Andrew
Stevenson, John
Stewart, Bob
Stewart, Iain
Stewart, Rory
Streeter, Sir Gary
Strode, rh Mel
Stuart, Graham
Sturdy, Julian
Sunak, Rishi
Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
Swire, rh Sir Hugo
Syms, Sir Robert
Thomas, Derek
Thomson, Ross
Throup, Maggie
Tolhurst, Kelly
Tomlinson, Justin
Tomlinson, Michael
Tracey, Craig
Tredinnick, David
Trevelyan, Anne-Marie
Truss, rh Elizabeth
Tugendhat, Tom
Vaizey, rh Mr Edward
Vara, Mr Shailesh
Vickers, Martin
Villiers, rh Theresa
Walker, Mr Charles
Walker, Mr Robin
Wallace, rh Mr Ben
Warburton, David
Warman, Matt
Watling, Giles
Whately, Helen
Wheeler, Mrs Heather
Whittaker, Craig
Whittingdale, rh Mr John
Wiggin, Bill
Williamson, rh Gavin
Wilson, rh Sammy
Wood, Mike
Wright, rh Jeremy
Zahawi, Nadhim

NOES

Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
Brake, rh Tom
Brennan, Kevin
Brock, Deidre
Brown, Alan
Brown, Lyn
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
Bryant, Chris
Buck, Ms Karen
Burden, Richard
Burgon, Richard
Butler, Dawn
Byrne, rh Liam
Cable, rh Sir Vince
Cadbury, Ruth
Cameron, Dr Lisa
Campbell, rh Sir Alan
Carden, Dan
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Champion, Sarah

Chapman, Douglas
 Chapman, Jenny
 Charalambous, Bambos
 Cherry, Joanna
 Clwyd, rh Ann
 Coaker, Vernon
 Cooper, Julie
 Cooper, Rosie
 Cooper, rh Yvette
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy
 Cowan, Ronnie
 Coyle, Neil
 Crausby, Sir David
 Crawley, Angela
 Creagh, Mary
 Creasy, Stella
 Cruddas, Jon
 Cryer, John
 Cummins, Judith
 Cunningham, Alex
 Cunningham, Mr Jim
 Daby, Janet
 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
 Dromey, Jack
 Duffield, Rosie
 Eagle, Ms Angela
 Eagle, Maria
 Edwards, Jonathan
 Efford, Clive
 Elliott, Julie
 Ellman, Dame Louise
 Elmore, Chris
 Esterson, Bill
 Evans, Chris
 Farrelly, Paul
 Farron, Tim
 Fellows, Marion
 Fitzpatrick, Jim
 Fletcher, Colleen
 Flint, rh Caroline
 Flovargue, Yvonne
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Frith, James
 Furniss, Gill
 Gaffney, Hugh
 Gardiner, Barry
 George, Ruth
 Gethins, Stephen
 Gibson, Patricia
 Gill, Preet Kaur
 Glindon, Mary
 Godsiff, Mr Roger
 Goodman, Helen
 Grady, Patrick
 Grant, Peter
 Gray, Neil
 Green, Kate
 Greenwood, Lilian
 Greenwood, Margaret
 Griffith, Nia

Grogan, John
 Gwynne, Andrew
 Haigh, Louise
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hanson, rh David
 Hardy, Emma
 Harman, rh Ms Harriet
 Harris, Carolyn
 Hayes, Helen
 Hayman, Sue
 Healey, rh John
 Hendrick, Sir Mark
 Hendry, Drew
 Hepburn, Mr Stephen
 Hill, Mike
 Hillier, Meg
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hollern, Kate
 Hopkins, Kelvin
 Howarth, rh Mr George
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Hussain, Imran
 Jarvis, Dan
 Johnson, Diana
 Jones, Darren
 Jones, Gerald
 Jones, Graham P.
 Jones, Helen
 Jones, rh Mr Kevan
 Jones, Sarah
 Jones, Susan Elan
 Kane, Mike
 Keeley, Barbara
 Kendall, Liz
 Khan, Afzal
 Killen, Ged
 Kinnock, Stephen
 Kyle, Peter
 Laird, Lesley
 Lake, Ben
 Lammy, rh Mr David
 Lavery, Ian
 Law, Chris
 Lee, Karen
 Leslie, Mr Chris
 Lowell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Lewis, Clive
 Lewis, Mr Ivan
 Linden, David
 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, Andy
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm

McDonald, Stuart C.
 McDonnell, rh John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGinn, Conor
 McGovern, Alison
 McInnes, Liz
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McMahon, Jim
 McMorris, Anna
 Mearns, Ian
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Monaghan, Carol
 Moon, Mrs Madeleine
 Moran, Layla
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, Grahame
 Murray, Ian
 Nandy, Lisa
 Newlands, Gavin
 Norris, Alex
 O'Hara, Brendan
 Onn, Melanie
 Onwurah, Chi
 Osamor, Kate
 Owen, Albert
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pearce, Teresa
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Perkins, Toby
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Pidcock, Laura
 Platt, Jo
 Pollard, Luke
 Powell, Lucy
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Rashid, Faisal
 Rayner, Angela
 Reed, Mr Steve
 Rees, Christina
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reeves, Rachel
 Reynolds, Emma
 Rimmer, Ms Marie
 Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
 Rodda, Matt
 Rowley, Danielle
 Ruane, Chris
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
 Ryan, rh Joan
 Saville Roberts, Liz
 Shah, Naz
 Sharma, Mr Virendra
 Sheerman, Mr Barry

Sheppard, Tommy
 Sherriff, Paula
 Shuker, Mr Gavin
 Siddiq, Tulip (*Proxy vote cast by Vicky Foxcroft*)
 Skinner, Mr Dennis
 Slaughter, Andy
 Smeeth, Ruth
 Smith, Angela
 Smith, Cat
 Smith, Eleanor
 Smith, Jeff
 Smith, Laura
 Smith, Nick
 Smyth, Karin
 Snell, Gareth
 Sobel, Alex
 Soubry, rh Anna
 Spellar, rh John
 Starmar, rh Keir
 Stephens, Chris
 Stevens, Jo
 Stone, Jamie
 Streeter, Wes
 Stringer, Graham
 Sweeney, Mr Paul
 Swinson, Jo
 Tami, rh Mark
 Thomas, Gareth
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick
 Thornberry, rh Emily
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Trickett, Jon
 Turley, Anna
 Twigg, Derek
 Twigg, Stephen
 Twist, Liz
 Umunna, Chuka
 Vaz, rh Keith
 Vaz, Valerie
 Walker, Thelma
 West, Catherine
 Western, Matt
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whitfield, Martin
 Whitford, Dr Philippa
 Williams, Hywel
 Williams, Dr Paul
 Wilson, Phil
 Wollaston, Dr Sarah
 Woodcock, John
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zeichner, Daniel

Question accordingly agreed to.

EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION (TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT)

That the draft Employment Rights (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) (EU Exit) (No. 2) Regulations 2018, which were laid before this House on 31 October 2018, be approved.

The House divided: Ayes 317, Noes 260.

Division No. 343]

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
 Baldwin, Harriett
 Barclay, rh Stephen
 Baron, Mr John
 Bebb, Guto
 Bellingham, Sir Henry
 Benyon, rh Richard
 Berry, Jake
 Blackman, Bob
 Blunt, Crispin
 Boles, Nick
 Bone, Mr Peter
 Bowie, Andrew
 Bradley, Ben
 Bradley, rh Karen
 Brady, Sir Graham
 Braverman, Suella
 Brereton, Jack
 Bridgen, Andrew
 Brine, Steve
 Brokenshire, rh James
 Bruce, Fiona
 Buckland, Robert
 Burghart, Alex
 Burns, Conor
 Burt, rh Alistair
 Cairns, rh Alun
 Campbell, Mr Gregory
 Cartledge, James
 Cash, Sir William
 Caulfield, Maria
 Chalk, Alex
 Chishti, Rehman
 Churchill, Jo
 Clark, Colin
 Clark, rh Greg
 Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth
 Clarke, Mr Simon
 Cleverly, James
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
 Coffey, Dr Thérèse
 Collins, Damian
 Costa, Alberto
 Courts, Robert
 Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey
 Crabb, rh Stephen
 Crouch, Tracey
 Davies, Chris
 Davies, David
 T. C.
 Davies, Glyn
 Davies, Mims
 Davies, Philip
 Davis, rh Mr David
 Dinenage, Caroline
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
 Docherty, Leo
 Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey
 M.
 Donelan, Michelle
 Dorries, Ms Nadine
 Double, Steve
 Dowden, Oliver
 Doyle-Price, Jackie
 Drax, Richard
 Duddridge, James
 Duguid, David
 Duncan, rh Sir Alan

Duncan Smith, rh Mr
 Iain
 Dunne, rh Mr Philip
 Ellis, Michael
 Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
 Elphicke, Charlie
 Eustice, George
 Evans, Mr Nigel
 Evennett, rh Sir David
 Fabricant, Michael
 Fallon, rh Sir Michael
 Field, rh Frank
 Field, rh Mark
 Ford, Vicky
 Foster, Kevin
 Fox, rh Dr Liam
 Francois, rh Mr
 Mark
 Frazer, Lucy
 Freeman, George
 Freer, Mike
 Fysh, Mr Marcus
 Gale, rh Sir Roger
 Garnier, Mark
 Gauke, rh Mr David
 Ghani, Ms Nusrat
 Gibb, rh Nick
 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
 Greening, rh Justine
 Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
 Griffiths, Andrew
 Gyimah, Mr Sam
 Hair, Kirstene
 Halfon, rh Robert
 Hall, Luke
 Hammond, rh Mr Philip
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, rh Matt
 Hands, rh Greg
 Harper, rh Mr Mark
 Harrington, Richard
 Harris, Rebecca
 Harrison, Trudy
 Hart, Simon
 Hayes, rh Sir John
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver
 Heappey, James
 Heaton-Harris, Chris
 Heaton-Jones, Peter
 Henderson, Gordon
 Herbert, rh Nick
 Hermon, Lady
 Hinds, rh Damian
 Hoare, Simon
 Hollingbery, George
 Hollinrake, Kevin
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holloway, Adam
 Howell, John
 Huddleston, Nigel
 Hughes, Eddie

Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
 Hurd, rh Mr Nick
 Jack, Mr Alister
 James, Margot
 Javid, rh Sajid
 Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard
 Jenkyns, Andrea
 Jenrick, Robert
 Johnson, rh Boris
 Johnson, Dr Caroline
 Johnson, Gareth
 Johnson, Joseph
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Jones, Mr Marcus
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Keegan, Gillian
 Kennedy, Seema
 Kerr, Stephen
 Knight, rh Sir Greg
 Knight, Julian
 Kwarteng, Kwasi
 Lamont, John
 Lancaster, rh Mark
 Latham, Mrs Pauline
 Leadsom, rh Andrea
 Lee, Dr Phillip
 Lefroy, Jeremy
 Leigh, rh Sir Edward
 Letwin, rh Sir Oliver
 Lewer, Andrew
 Lewis, rh Brandon
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Lidington, rh Mr David
 Little Pengelly, Emma
 Lopez, Julia
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lord, Mr Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Mackinlay, Craig
 Maclean, Rachel
 Main, Mrs Anne
 Mak, Alan
 Malthouse, Kit
 Mann, Scott
 Masterton, Paul
 May, rh Mrs Theresa
 Maynard, Paul
 McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick
 McPartland, Stephen
 McVey, rh Ms Esther
 Menzies, Mark
 Mercer, Johnny
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria
 Milling, Amanda
 Mills, Nigel
 Milton, rh Anne
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Moore, Damien
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morgan, rh Nicky
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Morton, Wendy
 Mundell, rh David
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll
 Murrison, Dr Andrew

Neill, Robert
 Newton, Sarah
 Nokes, rh Caroline
 Norman, Jesse
 O'Brien, Neil
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Opperman, Guy
 Paisley, Ian
 Parish, Neil
 Patel, rh Priti
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Pawsey, Mark
 Penning, rh Sir Mike
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Perry, rh Claire
 Philp, Chris
 Pincher, rh Christopher
 Poulter, Dr Dan
 Pow, Rebecca
 Prentis, Victoria
 Prisk, Mr Mark
 Pritchard, Mark
 Pursglove, Tom
 Quin, Jeremy
 Quince, Will
 Raab, rh Dominic
 Redwood, rh John
 Rees-Mogg, Mr Jacob
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Robinson, Gavin
 Robinson, Mary
 Ross, Douglas
 Rowley, Lee
 Rudd, rh Amber
 Rutley, David
 Sandbach, Antoinette
 Scully, Paul
 Seely, Mr Bob
 Selous, Andrew
 Shannon, Jim
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, Alok
 Shelbrooke, Alec
 Simpson, David
 Simpson, rh Mr Keith
 Skidmore, Chris
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, rh Julian
 Smith, Royston
 Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
 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
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
Wright, rh Jeremy
Zahawi, Nadhim

Hopkins, Kelvin
Howarth, rh Mr George
Huq, Dr Rupa
Hussain, Imran
Jarvis, Dan
Johnson, Diana
Jones, Darren
Jones, Gerald
Jones, Graham

P.
Jones, Helen
Jones, rh Mr Kevan
Jones, Sarah
Jones, Susan Elan

Kane, Mike
Keeley, Barbara
Kendall, Liz
Khan, Afzal
Killen, Ged
Kinnock, Stephen
Kyle, Peter
Laird, Lesley
Lake, Ben
Lammy, rh Mr David
Lavery, Ian
Lee, Karen
Leslie, Mr Chris
Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
Lewis, Clive
Lewis, Mr Ivan
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
Mann, John
Marsden, Gordon
Martin, Sandy
Maskell, Rachael
Matheson, Christian
McCabe, Steve
McCarthy, Kerry
McDonagh, Siobhain
McDonald, Andy
McDonnell, rh John
McFadden, rh Mr Pat
McGinn, Conor
McGovern, Alison
McInnes, Liz
McKinnell, Catherine
McMahon, Jim
McMorrin, Anna
Mearns, Ian
Miliband, rh Edward
Moon, Mrs Madeleine
Moran, Layla
Morden, Jessica
Morgan, Stephen
Morris, Grahame
Murray, Ian
Nandy, Lisa
Norris, Alex
O'Hara, Brendan
Onn, Melanie
Onwurah, Chi
Osamor, Kate
Owen, Albert

Peacock, Stephanie
Pearce, Teresa
Pennycook, Matthew
Perkins, Toby
Phillipson, Bridget
Pidcock, Laura
Platt, Jo
Pollard, Luke
Powell, Lucy
Qureshi, Yasmin
Rashid, Faisal
Rayner, Angela
Reed, Mr Steve
Rees, Christina
Reeves, Ellie
Reeves, Rachel
Reynolds, Emma
Rimmer, Ms Marie
Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
Rodda, Matt
Rowley, Danielle
Ruane, Chris
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
Ryan, rh Joan
Saville Roberts, Liz
Shah, Naz
Sharma, Mr Virendra
Sheerman, Mr Barry
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
Smyth, Karin
Snell, Gareth
Sobel, Alex
Soubry, rh Anna
Spellar, rh John
Starmer, rh Keir
Stephens, Chris
Stevens, Jo
Stone, Jamie
Streeter, Wes
Stringer, Graham
Sweeney, Mr Paul
Swinson, Jo
Tami, rh Mark
Thomas, Gareth
Thomas-Symonds, Nick
Thornberry, rh Emily
Timms, rh Stephen
Trickett, Jon
Turley, Anna
Turner, Karl
Twigg, Derek
Twigg, Stephen
Twist, Liz
Umunna, Chuka
Vaz, rh Keith
Vaz, Valerie
Walker, Thelma
West, Catherine
Western, Matt
Whitehead, Dr Alan

NOES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
Abrahams, Debbie
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
Amesbury, Mike
Antoniazzi, Tonia
Ashworth, Jonathan
Austin, Ian
Bailey, Mr Adrian
Barron, rh Sir Kevin
Beckett, rh Margaret
Benn, rh Hilary
Berger, Luciana (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Leslie*)
Betts, Mr Clive
Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta
Blomfield, Paul
Brabin, Tracy
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
Brake, rh Tom
Brennan, Kevin
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
Campbell, rh Sir Alan
Carden, Dan
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Champion, Sarah
Chapman, Jenny
Charalambous, Bambos
Clwyd, rh Ann
Coaker, Vernon
Cooper, Julie
Cooper, Rosie
Cooper, rh Yvette
Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Coyle, Neil
Crausby, Sir David
Creagh, Mary
Creasy, Stella
Cruddas, Jon
Cryer, John
Cummins, Judith
Cunningham, Alex
Cunningham, Mr Jim
Daby, Janet
Dakin, Nic
David, Wayne
Davies, Geraint
De Cordova, Marsha

De Piero, Gloria
Debbonaire, Thangam
Dent Coad, Emma
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Dodds, Anneliese
Doughty, Stephen
Dowd, Peter
Dromey, Jack
Duffield, Rosie
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eagle, Maria
Edwards, Jonathan
Efford, Clive
Elliott, Julie
Ellman, Dame Louise
Elmore, Chris
Esterson, Bill
Evans, Chris
Farrelly, Paul
Farron, Tim
Fitzpatrick, Jim
Fletcher, Colleen
Flint, rh Caroline
Fovargue, Yvonne
Foxcroft, Vicky
Frith, James
Furniss, Gill
Gaffney, Hugh
Gardiner, Barry
George, Ruth
Gill, Preet Kaur
Glendon, Mary
Godsiff, Mr Roger
Goodman, Helen
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
Hepburn, Mr Stephen
Hill, Mike
Hillier, Meg
Hobhouse, Wera
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Hollern, Kate

Whitfield, Martin
Williams, Hywel
Williams, Dr Paul
Wilson, Phil

Wollaston, Dr Sarah
Woodcock, John
Yasin, Mohammad
Zeichner, Daniel

Question accordingly agreed to.

EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION (FINANCIAL SERVICES AND MARKETS)

That the draft Financial Services Contracts (Transitional and Saving Provision) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, which were laid before this House on 15 January, be approved.

The House divided: Ayes 318, Noes 281.

Division No. 344]

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
Baldwin, Harriett
Barclay, rh Stephen
Baron, Mr John
Bebb, Guto
Bellingham, Sir Henry
Benyon, rh Richard
Berry, Jake
Blackman, Bob
Blunt, Crispin
Boles, Nick
Bone, Mr Peter
Bowie, Andrew
Bradley, Ben
Bradley, rh Karen
Brady, Sir Graham
Braverman, Suella
Brereton, Jack
Bridgen, Andrew
Brine, Steve
Brokenshire, rh James
Bruce, Fiona
Buckland, Robert
Burghart, Alex
Burns, Conor
Burt, rh Alistair
Cairns, rh Alun
Campbell, Mr Gregory
Cartlidge, James
Cash, Sir William
Caulfield, Maria
Chalk, Alex
Chishti, Rehman
Churchill, Jo
Clark, Colin
Clark, rh Greg
Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth
Clarke, Mr Simon
Cleverly, James
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
Coffey, Dr Thérèse
Collins, Damian
Costa, Alberto

Courts, Robert
Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey
Crabb, rh Stephen
Crouch, Tracey
Davies, Chris
Davies, David T. C.
Davies, Glyn
Davies, Mims
Davies, Philip
Davis, rh Mr David
Dinenage, Caroline
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
Docherty, Leo
Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
Donelan, Michelle
Dorries, Ms Nadine
Double, Steve
Dowden, Oliver
Doyle-Price, Jackie
Drax, Richard
Duddridge, James
Duguid, David
Duncan, rh Sir Alan
Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
Dunne, rh Mr Philip
Ellis, Michael
Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
Elphicke, Charlie
Eustice, George
Evans, Mr Nigel
Evennett, rh Sir David
Fabricant, Michael
Fallon, rh Sir Michael
Field, rh Frank
Field, rh Mark
Ford, Vicky
Foster, Kevin
Fox, rh Dr Liam
Francois, rh Mr Mark
Frazer, Lucy
Freeman, George
Freer, Mike
Fysh, Mr Marcus
Gale, rh Sir Roger
Garnier, Mark
Gauke, rh Mr David
Ghani, Ms Nusrat
Gibb, rh Nick
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
Greening, rh Justine
Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
Griffiths, Andrew
Gyimah, Mr Sam
Hair, Kirstene
Halfon, rh Robert
Hall, Luke
Hammond, rh Mr Philip
Hammond, Stephen
Hancock, rh Matt
Hands, rh Greg
Harper, rh Mr Mark
Harrington, Richard
Harris, Rebecca
Harrison, Trudy
Hart, Simon
Hayes, rh Sir John
Heald, rh Sir Oliver
Heappey, James
Heaton-Harris, Chris
Heaton-Jones, Peter
Henderson, Gordon
Herbert, rh Nick
Hermon, Lady
Hinds, rh Damian
Hoare, Simon
Hollingbery, George
Hollinrake, Kevin
Hollobone, Mr Philip
Holloway, Adam
Howell, John
Huddleston, Nigel
Hughes, Eddie
Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
Hurd, rh Mr Nick
Jack, Mr Alister
James, Margot
Javid, rh Sajid
Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
Jenkin, Sir Bernard
Jenkyns, Andrea
Jenrick, Robert
Johnson, rh Boris
Johnson, Dr Caroline
Johnson, Gareth
Johnson, Joseph
Jones, Andrew
Jones, rh Mr David
Jones, Mr Marcus
Kawczynski, Daniel
Keegan, Gillian
Kennedy, Seema
Kerr, Stephen
Knight, rh Sir Greg
Knight, Julian
Kwarteng, Kwasi
Lamont, John
Lancaster, rh Mark
Latham, Mrs Pauline
Leadsom, rh Andrea
Lee, Dr Phillip
Lefroy, Jeremy
Leigh, rh Sir Edward
Letwin, rh Sir Oliver
Lewer, Andrew
Lewis, rh Brandon

Lewis, rh Dr Julian
Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
Lidington, rh Mr David
Little Pengelly, Emma
Lopez, Julia
Lopresti, Jack
Lord, Mr Jonathan
Loughton, Tim
Mackinlay, Craig
Maclean, Rachel
Main, Mrs Anne
Mak, Alan
Malthouse, Kit
Mann, Scott
Masterton, Paul
May, rh Mrs Theresa
Maynard, Paul
McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick
McPartland, Stephen
McVey, rh Ms Esther
Menzies, Mark
Mercer, Johnny
Merriman, Huw
Metcalf, Stephen
Miller, rh Mrs Maria
Milling, Amanda
Mills, Nigel
Milton, rh Anne
Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
Moore, Damien
Mordaunt, rh Penny
Morgan, rh Nicky
Morris, Anne Marie
Morris, David
Morris, James
Morton, Wendy
Mundell, rh David
Murray, Mrs Sheryll
Murrison, Dr Andrew
Neill, Robert
Newton, Sarah
Nokes, rh Caroline
Norman, Jesse
O'Brien, Neil
Offord, Dr Matthew
Opperman, Guy
Paisley, Ian
Parish, Neil
Patel, rh Priti
Paterson, rh Mr Owen
Pawsey, Mark
Penning, rh Mr Mike
Penrose, John
Percy, Andrew
Perry, rh Claire
Philp, Chris
Pincher, rh Christopher
Poulter, Dr Dan
Pow, Rebecca
Prentis, Victoria
Prisk, Mr Mark
Pritchard, Mark
Pursglove, Tom
Quin, Jeremy
Quince, Will
Raab, rh Dominic
Redwood, rh John
Rees-Mogg, Mr Jacob
Robertson, Mr Laurence
Robinson, Gavin
Robinson, Mary
Ross, Douglas

Rowley, Lee
 Rudd, rh Amber
 Rutley, David
 Sandbach, Antoinette
 Scully, Paul
 Seely, Mr Bob
 Selous, Andrew
 Shannon, Jim
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, Alok
 Shelbrooke, Alec
 Simpson, David
 Simpson, rh Mr Keith
 Skidmore, Chris
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, rh Julian
 Smith, Royston
 Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
 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
 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
 Abrahams, Debbie
 Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
 Amesbury, Mike
 Antoniazzi, Tonia
 Ashworth, Jonathan
 Bailey, Mr Adrian
 Bardell, Hannah
 Barron, rh Sir Kevin
 Beckett, rh Margaret
 Benn, rh Hilary
 Berger, Luciana (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Leslie*)
 Betts, Mr Clive
 Blackford, rh Ian
 Blackman, Kirsty
 Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta
 Blomfield, Paul
 Brabin, Tracy
 Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
 Brennan, Kevin
 Brock, Deidre
 Brown, Alan
 Brown, Lyn
 Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
 Bryant, Chris
 Buck, Ms Karen
 Burden, Richard
 Burgon, Richard
 Butler, Dawn
 Byrne, rh Liam
 Cadbury, Ruth
 Cameron, Dr Lisa
 Campbell, rh Sir Alan
 Carden, Dan
 Champion, Sarah

Chapman, Douglas
 Chapman, Jenny
 Charalambous, Bambos
 Cherry, Joanna
 Clwyd, rh Ann
 Coaker, Vernon
 Cooper, Julie
 Cooper, Rosie
 Cooper, rh Yvette
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy
 Cowan, Ronnie
 Coyle, Neil
 Crausby, Sir David
 Crawley, Angela
 Creagh, Mary
 Creasy, Stella
 Cruddas, Jon
 Cryer, John
 Cummins, Judith
 Cunningham, Alex
 Cunningham, Mr Jim
 Daby, Janet
 Dakin, Nic
 David, Wayne
 Davies, Geraint
 Day, Martyn
 De Cordova, Marsha
 De Piero, Gloria
 Debonnaire, Thangam
 Dent Coad, Emma
 Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
 Docherty-Hughes, Martin
 Dodds, Anneliese
 Doughty, Stephen
 Dowd, Peter
 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
 Gardiner, Barry
 George, Ruth
 Gethins, Stephen
 Gibson, Patricia
 Gill, Preet Kaur
 Glindon, Mary
 Godsiff, Mr Roger
 Goodman, Helen
 Grady, Patrick
 Grant, Peter
 Gray, Neil
 Green, Kate
 Greenwood, Lilian
 Greenwood, Margaret
 Griffith, Nia
 Grogan, John
 Gwynne, Andrew
 Haigh, Louise
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hanson, rh David
 Hardy, Emma
 Harman, rh Ms Harriet
 Harris, Carolyn
 Hayes, Helen
 Hayman, Sue
 Healey, rh John
 Hendrick, Sir Mark
 Hendry, Drew
 Hepburn, Mr Stephen
 Hill, Mike
 Hillier, Meg
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hollern, Kate
 Hopkins, Kelvin
 Howarth, rh Mr George
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Hussain, Imran
 Jarvis, Dan
 Johnson, Diana
 Jones, Darren
 Jones, Gerald
 Jones, Graham P.
 Jones, Helen
 Jones, rh Mr Kevan
 Jones, Sarah
 Jones, Susan Elan
 Kane, Mike
 Keeley, Barbara
 Kendall, Liz
 Khan, Afzal
 Killen, Ged
 Kinnock, Stephen

Kyle, Peter
 Laird, Lesley
 Lake, Ben
 Lammy, rh Mr David
 Lavery, Ian
 Law, Chris
 Lee, Karen
 Leslie, Mr Chris
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Lewis, Clive
 Lewis, Mr Ivan
 Linden, David
 Lloyd, 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, Andy
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
 McDonald, Stuart C.
 McDonnell, rh John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGinn, Conor
 McGovern, Alison
 McInnes, Liz
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McMahon, Jim
 McMorris, Anna
 Mearns, Ian
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Monaghan, Carol
 Moon, Mrs Madeleine
 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
 Pearce, Teresa
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Perkins, Toby
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Pidcock, Laura
 Platt, Jo
 Pollard, Luke
 Powell, Lucy
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Rashid, Faisal
 Rayner, Angela
 Reed, Mr Steve

Rees, Christina
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reeves, Rachel
 Reynolds, Emma
 Rimmer, Ms Marie
 Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
 Rodda, Matt
 Rowley, Danielle
 Ruane, Chris
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
 Ryan, rh Joan
 Saville Roberts, Liz
 Shah, Naz
 Sharma, Mr Virendra
 Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Sheppard, Tommy
 Sherriff, Paula
 Shuker, Mr Gavin

Siddiq, Tulip (*Proxy vote cast
 by Vicky Foxcroft*)
 Skinner, Mr Dennis
 Slaughter, Andy
 Smeeth, Ruth
 Smith, Angela
 Smith, Cat
 Smith, Eleanor
 Smith, Jeff
 Smith, Laura
 Smith, Nick
 Smyth, Karin
 Snell, Gareth
 Sobel, Alex
 Soubry, rh Anna
 Spellar, rh John
 Starmer, rh Keir
 Stephens, Chris

Stevens, Jo
 Stone, Jamie
 Streeting, Wes
 Stringer, Graham
 Sweeney, Mr Paul
 Tami, rh Mark
 Thomas, Gareth
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick
 Thornberry, rh Emily
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Trickett, Jon
 Turley, Anna
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Derek
 Twigg, Stephen
 Twist, Liz

Umunna, Chuka
 Vaz, rh Keith
 Vaz, Valerie
 Walker, Thelma
 West, Catherine
 Western, Matt
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whitfield, Martin
 Whitford, Dr Philippa
 Williams, Hywel
 Williams, Dr Paul
 Wilson, Phil
 Wollaston, Dr Sarah
 Woodcock, John
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zeichner, Daniel

Question accordingly agreed to.

Westminster Hall

Wednesday 27 February 2019

[MR ADRIAN BAILEY *in the Chair*]

Eating Disorders Awareness Week

9.30 am

Kirstene Hair (Angus) (Con): I beg to move,

That this House has considered Eating Disorders Awareness week.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Bailey, for this very important debate. As we are in the middle of Eating Disorders Awareness Week, this is a timely day on which to remind ourselves of the good work that has been achieved in the past year, but also to look forward to where we want to be by this time next year.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Beat—the Eating Disorders Association—and the many other charities that have been in touch with me ahead of the debate for their sheer hard work and determination to keep this issue at the forefront of the Government agenda. I see many of you in the Public Gallery and want to say thank you for all that you do.

There is always great cross-party support in debates on eating disorders. I have been in this place for only 18 months, but it is the debates in which we are all travelling in the same direction that are so powerful, because we show our constituents that we can agree, and when we do, this place is much stronger and improves lives much more quickly.

As we know, eating disorders affect more than 1.25 million people throughout the United Kingdom, but that is a conservative figure, because many sufferers have not yet been diagnosed or identified. It is for that reason that this debate is opportune. We are all here today for those in the Gallery, for those who are fighting for this cause, for those who are currently fighting this debilitating disease, for those who have fought and come through it and for those who are currently living their daily lives as normal but may suffer at some point in the future. My colleagues and I will always fight your corner, and I am delighted to see many hon. Members here today to support the debate.

I wish to begin with the topic of stigma, which is the focus of the Eating Disorders Awareness Week campaign this year. As we know, eating disorders affect all age groups, genders and backgrounds. An eating disorder is not a diet gone wrong, a fad or a phase. It is not caused simply by a young female being exposed frequently to magazine images of skinny models or going on online platforms with similar material and deciding that they wish to look the same. It is an illness so deep rooted in the individual that it leads to devastating consequences for those who are suffering and for those around them.

John Howell (Henley) (Con): My hon. Friend has talked about the effect on constituents. I have to say that, in this case, it was the effect on me, because a close member of my family suffered from an eating disorder. The help that was available was pretty close to negligible.

Does my hon. Friend think that there is much more that we can do to increase the help available for people whose family members are in that sort of situation?

Kirstene Hair: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The sufferer of course needs specialist support, but I will go on to speak about how I believe that we also desperately need to support families and, indeed, all those around them. This disease is so complex that it is often difficult to treat and, trapped in the disease, sufferers feel that there is simply no way out. Many believe that if the disease does not take them, they will take their own life, just to rid themselves of it. No matter how strong an individual is, an eating disorder is so all-consuming that once it has taken hold, some people believe that they will never live a normal life again, and many do not: the condition becomes chronic for about 20% of sufferers.

Normally, a series of events has encouraged the person's mind to think differently about their body image. Perhaps they have decided that they are not good enough: one too many times, people or life events have created a narrative in their mind that they are inferior to those around them, or perhaps life is out of control in many aspects—nothing is going right. They compare themselves with others around them and see only the negatives in their own life and the positives in other lives, but they can take back control of one aspect of their life—control of what they eat. That may well start off as a diet, but not a diet that would be followed by a normal individual, which often fails. It soon becomes a focus and then a more extreme calorie-counting exercise that involves hiding food, burning off every calorie possible and social isolationism. Before they know it, the candle is burning at both ends. Before a sufferer has identified that they need help, the registered impact on their body is always perceived as being caused by some other reason. There is a voice inside a sufferer screaming that too much food is being consumed or not enough exercise is being done—praise when they miss a meal or hear the sound of a rumbling stomach. That voice inside a sufferer will not and cannot go away.

The loved ones around a sufferer see their daughter, son or friend fade into a shadow of their former self; they are helpless in every way. Parents struggle and are in emotional turmoil. They know that if their daughter falls and skins her knee, they can bathe it, put a plaster on it and make it better. If their son is upset because he is struggling at school, they can get him the support that he needs. We have solutions, and it is human nature to want to fix and help those we love. However, when it comes to eating disorders, everyone is helpless and feels hopeless. No one, unless they are trained, can provide support, other than the individual themselves. Many, if not all, sufferers who have managed to recover will say that it was the hardest journey that they have ever taken, but having spoken to some of Beat's bravest ambassadors, we have seen at first hand the amazing, inspiring individuals they can become—but that is only if we help them.

As a result of the stigma attached to eating disorders, black, Asian and ethnic minority people, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and people from less affluent backgrounds are less likely to seek and get medical support. Research developed ahead of today's debate showed that four in 10 people believe that eating

[Kirstene Hair]

disorders were more prevalent in white people than in other ethnicities, yet research shows that they are just as common or more common in the BAME community. Thirty per cent. thought eating disorders were more likely to affect the more affluent; in fact, they evolve at the same rate irrespective of education or income. Sixty per cent. of respondents believed that they affected only young people. That is having a significant impact on adults coming forward for support, and we see men and boys not being referred as soon as girls and females.

The statistics might not be surprising, but we have to challenge them continually. They are preventing certain groups in society from appealing for help, and creating an inequality in support. As a result, people are more ill by the time they are referred, making the recovery process much more difficult and sometimes impossible. We have seen fantastic work by members of the royal family as well as other notable figures, who have raised awareness of mental health disorders and who seek to break down the barriers to people speaking out, but also recognise that it is okay to talk and okay for someone to say that they need help.

When sufferers reach out for help, they have often been suffering for years. They need urgent specialist help immediately. The average cycle of relapse and recovery lasts six years, and there must be constant efforts to reduce that. To undo months and years of torture, specialists need time and resources to allow a patient to open up, to analyse, to find out the root causes, to get under the skin of the issues and to develop the mind to fundamentally change—a long-term approach, but a life-changing one.

Families, too, need guidance and support on how to deal with this troubling time. Many do not know where to go for support. This was one comment from the social media campaign that I ran before the debate:

“When anorexia arrives in a family it is like throwing a grenade into a home and watching it explode...caring for my daughter has impacted on the mental health of all those in my family.”

That is why I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Henley (John Howell) that family-based therapy would provide a much-needed support base throughout the recovery process.

Without the investment of time, those patients will be back in our GP surgeries and hospitals time and again. We must look beyond weight. This is an issue of the mind, so whether it is a case of referral or recovery, it cannot be determined by the number on the scales. As a result of the digital campaign that I ran, I heard from many people up and down the country, and I thank them for coming forward with their stories. One person, who wished to remain anonymous, said that

“my granddaughter never got so thin but she died nearly 7 years ago at the age of 19 and I feel that if there had been some positive help she would have been alive today.”

She had been disregarded simply because her weight was not low enough. Recent research shows that GPs do not have adequate training for supporting individuals who have an eating disorder, with three in 10 sufferers not being referred when required.

Rachael Maskell (York Central) (Lab/Co-op) *rose*—

Mr Adrian Bailey (in the Chair): I call Louise Haigh.

Rachael Maskell: The hon. Lady is making an excellent speech. I am troubled by the fact that, a year on, services in York are still completely inadequate. On Friday, I spoke to GPs who are trying to manage individuals with eating disorders. They have been instructed to take patients' blood, to monitor the electrolytes, and to weigh them frequently, without the psychological support and clinical competencies that are necessary. Is it not absolutely essential that GPs receive the training that they need, so that we can put in place the holistic services that patients need?

Kirstene Hair: The hon. Lady is absolutely correct. I will come on to speak about that in detail. I hope the Minister will give further detail on how she is approaching that with other Departments.

In any five-year medical degree at UK medical schools the average amount of training in eating disorders was 1.8 hours, and one in five gave no training at all. The concern is not confined to one part of the United Kingdom; it is a widespread issue across all nations. That seems absolutely extraordinary, given that this is one of the most fatal mental health disorders, affecting 1.25 million people. GPs must be able to tell the difference between a healthy exercise routine and a compulsive one, low body-mass index and lack of nutrition, and going through a diet phase and the beginning of an eating disorder. They must recognise the clear indicators and how eating disorders manifest in order to deliver the right treatment plan, but to do that they need training.

I would like to see further encouragement of self-referrals and more work with schools, where many members of staff may be able to identify unusual behaviour. I warmly welcome the approach taken by my secondary school, Brechin High School, which has appointed a member of staff to lead on mental health who has a support base within the school and is linked up with the local primary schools, so that at the end of primary school, when an eating disorder—or any mental health disorder—may begin to develop, that support is monitored and continued as pupils enter secondary school and progress their education. I am keen to hear from the Minister how the training aspect can be addressed. I would like to hear from the Scottish National party spokesperson how the Scottish Government could do more to include training within university tuition, and how they will address the role that schools can play in early intervention.

When help is needed, how long do we have to wait? Waiting time targets have been a focal part of the campaigns run by many charities for years. In England and Wales, by 2021, 95% of eating disorder referrals for those under-19 are due to reach a specialist within four weeks, and within one week for urgent cases. Will the Minister confirm that the Government are on track to deliver that target, which is already making a huge impact? Along with the charities, I warmly welcome the ambition shown by this Government.

This is not a political debate and I do not wish to make it one. However, once again, when I wrote to the Scottish Government asking why they refused to equalise that target for young people, no substantive reason was given. I have also asked the Scottish Minister for Mental Health about that, and I look forward to her response. The UK Government have stepped up to treat under-19s. I encourage work so that those targets continue to be

ambitious. We know that the sooner patients are seen, the higher the chance of recovery and the lower the long-term cost to the NHS. The current 18-week target in Scotland simply has to be addressed. When sufferers determine they need help, their illness is more likely to be treatable, but by the time they may be seen, the likely outcome is much more negative and potentially fatal. I want my constituents to have the same opportunity for early intervention as people south of the border. I want the Scottish Government urgently to address this needless inequality.

As we know, those with an eating disorder often take up to three years to identify that they have such a disorder. Sufferers must do two things: realise something is wrong and wish to make themselves better. When a sufferer comes forward, given their scepticism about all those trying to help them, we have a moral responsibility to grasp their ask for help and support them as a matter of urgency. That requires step-by-step help, to nurture these fragile but wonderful people and not let any of them fall out of the system.

I want to conclude with a point about social media, which is a force for good in many ways, but a stain on the life of many families, which recognise it as the tool that tore them apart. All age groups regularly browse online to determine what everyone else is up to or to catch up on the news, but they normally see only positive news. I have not seen one Instagram image of anyone in this room getting up in the morning, doing mundane things, such as washing the dishes, or having a bad day at work, because we submit only positive images. However, if we also put out negative images, things might feel slightly more normal.

Social media is a platform for showcasing the positive aspect of our lives, with no balance of the negative aspect that we encounter every day. For someone with an eating disorder, or any mental health disorder, that only accentuates their problems. Recent cases have made us all stop and think. There is so much pro-ana and pro-mia material promoting a harmful mindset, which forms or heightens an eating disorder. We must not forget that this material is often put up by sufferers themselves, so we must push supportive materials towards those who promote such images and material.

I do not believe that that is above any of the social media companies. The Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport made a hugely positive step forward in that respect earlier this month. Will the Minister explain the conversations that her Department has had with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport? Social media platforms cannot take all the positives of social media, but refuse to take responsibility for some of the damage it causes.

In summary, I would like to thank all hon. Members for supporting this debate. I know that it is close to the hearts of many in this place. I hope that the Minister will show those who have suffered, those who are suffering and those who do not yet know that they will suffer that this Government are on their side. I hope the Minister will show that we will never rest on our laurels, but will continue to address the flaws and increase our ambition, reduce waiting times, develop support and facilities for all who need it, wherever they live in the country, intervene early and offer the right support throughout the whole process, expel the postcode lottery of support, encourage our world-class universities to improve teaching

programmes, so that they are in line with the impact this disease has on so many, and ensure that social media companies play their part in bucking this trend. We have to help those who are, through no fault of their own, helpless about their own aid. For many it will be the first time in their lives, because that is what Government is here to do: help you when you cannot help yourself.

Mr Adrian Bailey (in the Chair): Before I move on to the other speakers, I point out for the record that the intervention was made by Rachael Maskell, not Louise Haigh, her close friend. However, I noticed that she did not notice; confusion reigns. I call Paul Farrelly.

9.47 am

Paul Farrelly (Newcastle-under-Lyme) (Lab): Thank you, Mr Bailey. I congratulate the hon. Member for Angus (Kirstene Hair) on her success in securing this debate during Eating Disorders Awareness Week. I thank Beat, the eating disorders campaign group, for its unstinting efforts on behalf of the more than 1 million sufferers across the UK. After this debate, from 11 o'clock to 3 pm, during the lobby of Parliament, I am hosting a drop-in event with my good friend, the hon. Member for Stafford (Jeremy Lefroy), in room R of Portcullis House; colleagues here and those listening can go there to find out more about Beat's work.

This debate follows that secured last October by the hon. Member for Bath (Wera Hobhouse), which shows that support for this cause is truly cross-party. We also had a debate on the subject in September with the children's Minister, the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Nadhim Zahawi), highlighting the issues for vulnerable children going into adulthood. In that debate, I focused on concerns that regularly pop up in my area of north Staffordshire for young adults suffering from anorexia, bulimia and other eating disorders, which have such devastating effects on them and their families.

The impact on young adults is one example of a core concern of the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman's groundbreaking 2017 report, which I will focus on again today. This suffering and vulnerability does not stop when children reach the age of 18. However, in my immediate locality—Newcastle-under-Lyme, Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Moorlands, which have a population of well over 600,000 people—the commissioning of specialist support and treatment does stop at the age of 18.

Staffordshire is served by six clinical commissioning groups, with one common accountable officer. The budget for specialist, post-18 eating disorder services in the four CCGs serving the centre, east and south of the county is £428,000 a year, but for the North Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent CCGs, it is exactly zero. Sufferers who, up to the age of 18, had been used to specialist support in the community or at in-patient facilities have to rely thereafter on the hard-pressed, overstretched and generalist child and adult mental health teams. It is a postcode lottery—an “unwarranted variation”, in the NHS jargon—that has persisted for far too long, is patently unfair and lets local families down badly.

Of course, the last thing those families and their children want is the publicity that would bring pressure to bear on the CCGs to change course and give them the specialist support that is available just a few miles

[Paul Farrelly]

down the road. Last September, however, after our debate here, one of my constituents, Sarah Pustkowski, was brave enough to speak out publicly about the effects on her.

Sarah is 25 and developed anorexia nervosa when she was 16. She is slowly recovering—touch wood—but her father says that she is not out of the woods yet. Her case shows how long the anomaly in our area has persisted, because her dad first approached me in 2014 when she was 20 to relate what a cliff edge they had fallen off, in terms of specialist support.

Until then, Sarah had access to the excellent Kinver Centre, a hospital in Stafford just down the A34. When discharged, however, all the expert support that the family was used to stopped, because our CCGs failed to commission it. The Kinver Centre can admit people from all over the country, not just the county, but not from north Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent or Staffordshire Moorlands, because our CCGs provide no funding. Sarah and her family are not alone.

Since the autumn, we have been working with sufferers, concerned local health professionals and providers, and Beat to resolve the situation. A business case has been drawn up for the two CCGs as part of their annual prioritisation process, which aims at consistent commissioning across the county. The professionals involved are more hopeful than before but, with intense financial pressures on our NHS, I pray that the dawn does not again prove false in the coming weeks.

Something that should help to make the case and, one would hope, to inform and form Government policy, is information as to what happens across the country as a whole. Last October, after our debate here, we asked the new Secretary of State which of the 190-plus CCGs in England also did not provide specialist 18-plus eating disorder services. His written reply stated:

“This information is not held centrally...NHS England does not hold information about all of the specific services commissioned by individual CCGs.”

But specialist in-patient units are commissioned by NHS England, so the response could have been more helpful.

The Secretary of State’s reply went on to say that the Government were investing £150 million in community-based care for eating disorders, which will mean that

“70...new or extended...services are now either open or in development”,

which will benefit

“at least 3,350 children and young people a year”.

We are still, however, at a loss to know precisely where. Perhaps the Minister could write to us with some more details after the debate.

In December, we served freedom of information requests on all 190-plus of England’s CCGs about the full extent of their services and funding. As hon. Members who have done that before know, it is a mammoth exercise that takes quite some following up. Thankfully, only a handful of CCGs did not respond and are being chased, and about 25 swerved the questions and gave little meaningful information, but the overall picture for adults and young adults is certainly better than the situation in North Staffordshire, and no doubt in the

areas of many hon. Members present. The majority do provide specialist 18-plus services—in the community, at least.

There is still a glaring hole in the picture of specialist adult in-patient provision, however. Most CCGs defaulted on that question and referred it to our old friends at NHS England. Coming full circle, we formally FOI-ed it, too, in the new year. Under the statutory limits, a reply was due by last Thursday, but despite chasing, none has yet come. It would have been good to have had it by the end of last week to inform our local business case, and it would have been respectful to the families and sufferers for NHS England to have responded before this awareness week.

I am sorry to speak at length about our travails, but the saga demonstrates only too clearly how difficult it is for conscientious campaigners such as Beat, the families and the MPs who support them to lay their hands on the information they need. If it is difficult for us, it is fair to ask how Ministers can draw up effective and informed policy, and make sure that recommendations for improvement, such as those in the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman’s report, are put into practice.

One of the five core recommendations in that report was that

“The Department of Health and NHS England should review the existing quality and availability of adult eating disorder services to achieve parity with child and adolescent services.”

It is that lack of parity, and the progress in reducing it, that we have been so frustratingly trying to get to the bottom of in the last six months. If the Minister has more information, I hope that she will share it with us and, importantly, ensure that NHS England does, too.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr Adrian Bailey (in the Chair): Before I call John Lamont, I inform hon. Members that I intend to start calling the Front-Bench spokespeople by 10.30 am at the latest. After some simple arithmetic, that works out as about five minutes per speaker, if we are to get everybody in, as I intend to. I will not impose a hard time limit now, but each speaker should bear that in mind.

9.55 am

John Lamont (Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Bailey. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Angus (Kirstene Hair) on securing this important debate during Eating Disorders Awareness Week. She made a passionate, well-informed and thoughtful speech, which I learned much from.

In my area of the Scottish Borders, some great charities and organisations work with young people to overcome issues such as eating disorders. There are now counsellors in every high school in the Scottish Borders, so teenagers have someone to speak to at school who is not a parent or teacher. We also have a specialist eating disorder nurse based in the Scottish Borders and some great work is done in the child and adolescent mental health service to support younger people.

I am sure that there are many good examples around the country. My hon. Friend the Member for Cheltenham (Alex Chalk) has spoken to me about the Brownhill

eating disorder clinic in his constituency. He holds the clinicians and the work they do for his constituents in high regard.

Treatment across Scotland is patchy to say the least. In the Scottish Borders, there are no community tier 1 services aimed at preventing the onset of eating disorders locally and waiting times for help are far too high, as we have heard. I will focus on the impact that technology can have on the issue. The all-party parliamentary group on technology addiction looks at how smartphones, tablets and social media can have a detrimental impact on our health.

We have all seen the shocking stories about how diet pills, some of which contain lethal substances, are readily available to buy on social media, or how eating disorder-related hashtags and accounts are available and easily accessible to vulnerable people. Some of the content is more subtle. Platforms where we show only the best of ourselves mean that young people in particular can find it harder to feel content with their lives. Online images of thin and happy people clearly act as a trigger for some.

Social media platforms are working to tackle the issue and remove negative content, and so they should be. The idea of allowing the promotion of a category of mental health illness that kills so many people is completely unacceptable. I agree with those who argue that the likes of Facebook, Instagram and Twitter are on their final warning and that if they do not step up to properly tackle the issue, it is time to regulate. Given the clear link between mental health and social media use or abuse, there is certainly a case for requiring tech companies to mitigate the negative effects of their product, as the tobacco and alcohol industries are required to.

Although TV, films and social media are undoubtedly part of the problem, it is important to recognise the good work that some do. There are more documentaries and storylines in our soaps raising awareness about eating disorders. Social media platforms are also taking some action to tackle the issue. For example, Instagram has rolled out a warning that displays when users search for pro-eating disorder content and offers them help and support.

Matt Warman (Boston and Skegness) (Con): I thank my hon. Friend for giving way and for making an excellent speech. Does he agree that this process should be about more than warnings and that there should be a proactive attempt to stop this sort of material being visible in the first place, which needs to be algorithmic and technology-based, so that people can recover in the community?

John Lamont: I absolutely agree with that important point and the social media platforms that are responsible for their content need to understand it much more clearly. They cannot just allow a free market, as it were, on their space, and if people are putting content on it that is clearly leading people to harm themselves, action needs to be taken, either by the companies themselves or, if they fail to do so, by the Government.

Perhaps above all, a vast array of online communities has been set up by people who have been through this experience and want to offer support. The internet can provide something that is immensely powerful—the sense that someone is not alone if they suffer from an

eating disorder. That is what makes this issue so complicated. When it comes to eating disorders, the internet is both an enabler and potentially a powerful tool for good.

We will never get to a situation where eating disorder triggers can be removed entirely from social media. So, instead let us use technology as part of the solution, as best we can.

10 am

Tim Farron (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Bailey. I, too, pay tribute to the hon. Member for Angus (Kirstene Hair), who secured this debate and made an excellent speech, and to the other colleagues who have contributed to it so far.

Without doubt, eating disorders have acquired a greater profile in recent years, and there are two things that are apparent and that we can learn from. One is that, as a society, we are better at talking about these things, and organisations such as Beat, which has already been mentioned, do outstanding work in making people feel that the stigma around these issues is something that we, as a society, need to get over, and therefore people will feel more comfortable about coming forward, which is good.

The second lesson that we might learn is that we are a society that, for some of the reasons that have already been mentioned, increasingly breeds poor mental health. So, I will focus my remarks on the support—or lack of it—for young people living with mental health conditions and particularly for those with eating disorders in my constituency of Westmorland and Lonsdale.

Very often, it is the parents who come to me first. Parents come to me with two clear emotions: one is terror; and the other is guilt. It is absolutely essential that we are clear to people with eating disorders, and indeed to those who love and support them, that there is absolutely no need for guilt; there is no blame attached whatever. Likewise, we need to tackle the fear and the terror, which often stem from a lack of understanding or an absence of hope as to where to go next, by showing that there are things that we can do to help.

In my constituency, we estimate that three quarters of young people with eating disorders were not seen within the target time of one month, and that 100% of those with an urgent need were not seen within the target time of two weeks. That is not acceptable, but what is even more terrifying is that the numbers involved are ludicrous. In the year up to August 2018, a grand total of 13 young people in South Lakeland were registered as living with eating disorders, which is baloney: we all know that that is not true. I would comfortably say that the real number is 10 times higher. In my office, we deal with at least one new case of an eating disorder every single week. So what is happening, such that our young people with eating disorders are falling through the gaps? We need to look at a whole range of things, but I especially ask the Minister to investigate personally why this is happening, particularly in South Lakeland but—I suspect—around the country as well.

One GP got in touch with me about this issue. I will not name her, but she was very keen for me to share her experience with everyone here in Westminster Hall and everyone who is listening. She did not have any training at all in mental health while she was gaining her qualifications, but she has sought to bring herself up to speed on it in her job. She is a general practitioner. She

[Tim Farron]

does her best to help young people and indeed people of all ages presenting with mental health conditions, but she feeds people into the system, or refers people into it, and there is no triage.

There is no general triage once a young person has been referred for help: “Does this person have anxiety?”; “Does this person have an eating disorder?”; or, “Does this person have some other condition?” That person could be referred to the wrong silo and then sit there for months, undiagnosed or misdiagnosed. I am sure that is one window into why such pitifully low numbers of people are being diagnosed, against the backdrop of what I think are many hundreds of people living with a condition who are left in desperation and not even getting the beginnings of the support that they desperately need. We are failing to catch our children and our young people when they are at their most vulnerable, so how can we then go and help them?

Anorexia nervosa has the highest mortality rate of any psychiatric disorder in adolescence. The consequences for someone of not getting the right treatment are absolutely huge and extremely serious. However, even those who are diagnosed—this goes for younger people and for adults—may not get the help that they need. Colleagues have already referred to the fact that people will have experience—I have, with constituents of mine—of being told, “Frankly, you’re not thin enough yet. Come back when you are. You are not manifesting physical conditions to back up your mental health condition, therefore come back later on.”

Would somebody who had been fortunate enough to have been diagnosed with cancer at stage 1 be told, “Clear off till you’ve got stage 4. Come back when you’re at death’s door”? Come off it, but that is how we treat people with mental health conditions and in particular people living with eating disorders. There are people with eating disorders—I can think of some who I know myself—who may have experienced no appreciable or noticeable weight loss. They still have an eating disorder, which needs to be tackled, and tackled quickly.

In Cumbria, three years ago—to the week—we were promised a specialist one-to-one eating disorder service for young people. Three years on, it still does not exist. That is why so many people will be cynical about promises made at this time of year at events such as this. We want to see real delivery for all of our young people in every part of the country.

Finally, the Government—rightly—emphasised preventive care in the NHS long-term plan just a few weeks ago. However, just a few days before Christmas they had sneaked out the funding cuts for public health, which is genuinely preventive care. Those cuts included a £500,000 cut in preventive health care in Cumbria. At the moment in Cumbria, we spend 75p per child on preventive health care. If we want to support those people who may struggle with eating disorders in the future, it is vital that we invest early and invest now. That will be not only more efficient and more effective, but far, far kinder.

10.6 am

Bill Grant (Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship this morning, Mr Bailey, and I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Angus (Kirstene Hair) for securing this important debate in Eating Disorders Awareness Week.

According to YoungMinds, one in 12 teenagers in the United Kingdom suffer from eating disorders, and about 25% of those with eating disorders are noted as being male. Statistics for 2017-18 recorded that 536 Scots were treated for eating disorders. Eating disorders are complex illnesses that take many forms, such as anorexia nervosa, which was mentioned earlier, whereby people erroneously believe that they are overweight.

The root causes of these disorders are unclear, but they may include things such as career choices. The biographies of many jockeys speak of crash dieting and sometimes dehydrating themselves with the aid of saunas, to reach a low weight prior to a race. The image of the ballerina is of a slight and fragile figure floating through the air. What must it take to maintain such a body image? In show-business, there are child stars of stage and screen for whom the limelight proves too much, or perhaps they fear losing popularity during the transition to adulthood. How will growing up affect their future career?

It is important not to stereotype and to be alert to the fact that eating disorders befall people regardless of their age, gender, race, or socioeconomic circumstances. What is clear are the dangers associated with the resulting malnutrition and the serious complications, such as osteoporosis, low blood pressure, heart failure, oedema and anaemia. Anorexia can be life-threatening; it is one of the leading causes of deaths related to mental health problems. Every single such loss is a tragedy for the individual themselves and their family—indeed, the unnecessary loss of a life is also a tragedy for the nation.

Binge eating is characterised by an uncontrolled addiction to food, involving over-eating and exceedingly fast eating in secret, whether the person is hungry or not. And bulimia is a combination of the worst elements of both anorexia and binge eating.

Encouragement to seek treatment at the earliest opportunity will no doubt enhance the chances of recovery, which very often is a long-term process, requiring an immense amount of support from professionals and family members. However, as with any addiction, the person must acknowledge their problem—in this case, unhealthy eating—and they themselves must want to seek assistance. Anxiety and depression are common threads, whether as a cause or a result of an eating disorder.

I acknowledge the good work of the child and adolescent mental health staff of NHS Ayrshire & Arran, but from the complaints I have heard at surgeries from my constituents about waiting times for appointments, it is clear that the numbers of those much-welcomed professional staff do not match society’s demand for their time and support. When individuals with eating disorders reach out for help, we as a society must grasp that hand and be there for them. I welcome the new guidelines for Scotland announced at the beginning of this week, which it is stated will assist in providing a range of approaches to mental health issues, ensuring that help is available when and where it is needed.

In closing, I ask both Governments to continue providing vital funding for much-needed support services for persons afflicted with eating disorders and their heartbroken families—heartbroken does not sum it up; it does not describe the agony and the pain that those families go through. I also ask them to consider whether there needs to be enhanced control of slimming and dietary

products, especially the marketing of those products to young and vulnerable individuals. I understand from the news that only this week, concerns were expressed by Food Standards Scotland that DNP—dinitrophenol, an industrial chemical—is being illegally marketed as a slimming pill, which FSS considers to be potentially lethal. It is still available to purchase on the internet, and we as a Government need to rein in social media platforms that permit, condone, or have a policy of turning a blind eye for the pursuit of profit, regardless of the health and wellbeing of our young people. As a Government, as has been said earlier, we must seriously bring those people to book for the damage and harm that they are causing to families throughout the United Kingdom.

10.11 am

Patricia Gibson (North Ayrshire and Arran) (SNP): I thank the hon. Member for Angus (Kirstene Hair) for having secured this important debate, and I am delighted to participate in it, although I wish it was not necessary. A debate about Eating Disorders Awareness Week is, of course, very important.

Despite what we have heard, in so many ways, we have come so far with regards to this illness. I think back to someone of the stature of Karen Carpenter, who died in 1983 at the age of 32, when I was 15 years old. Those of us among the general population who mourned her passing did not appreciate what an eating disorder was. It has to be said that we are still learning, but we are having this debate during Eating Disorders Awareness Week, at a time when the general public are more aware—and becoming much more aware—of an illness that so many people can fall prey to. This week is an international event that aims to raise further awareness of the issue of eating disorders, and the stigma that too often goes with them. Charities work hard to encourage people from all walks of life to come forward, because as we have heard, this illness respects no gender, no class and no race.

This week, the UK eating disorder charity Beat has continued to work very hard to break down the barriers that so many people face when they try to access support. It is important that those living with this condition and their families know that they are not alone, so sharing stories of how an eating disorder has affected others from all walks of life can be a powerful tool. Those who are in the darkest days of this disorder can be greatly comforted by hearing the stories and experiences of those who have lived with it, but have come through it and are in recovery. However, we also need to remember, as we heard earlier, that eating disorders can still be present during the process of recovery, and indeed can overshadow a person's entire life, even when recovery might seem a long time ago.

One of the key barriers to tackling eating disorders is that too often, they are stereotyped and not taken seriously. Only by continuing to raise awareness of the struggles that sufferers go through, by talking about eating disorders in places like this and by supporting charities in their outreach work, can we make the change happen that we all want. We have heard—it is worth repeating—that social media has brought added complications to dealing with an already complex condition. Our young people are immersed in social media, a forum that projects so-called “perfect” images of lifestyles

and bodies, and given how much young people are exposed to those images, it is not difficult to see how a young, vulnerable person could lose sight of what looks healthy or real. We know about the scandal of particular websites advising people on how to not eat without it being noticed by friends and family, which is very chilling indeed.

We need to continue to drive improvements in mental health services and ensure that everyone who needs high-quality mental health services, including people with eating disorders, has access to the care that they need when they need it. There is no denying that there have been positive first steps in increasing the visibility and public awareness of eating disorders and mental health challenges over the past decade. However, the demand on mental health services is so great that we must always seek ways to do better by those who need the specialist support that those conditions require.

Challenges remain for mental health services across the United Kingdom, and it is worth remembering that since the year 2000, the number of people diagnosed with eating disorders has risen by 15%, and that hospital admissions for adult males suffering from an eating disorder have risen by 70% over the past six years. That demonstrates the scale of the challenge that we face. On top of that, on average, it takes about 149 weeks before those experiencing an eating disorder even begin to seek help—that is almost three years lost. Offering support in ways that match young people's lives—in fact, these days, all people's lives—means increasing the amount of online peer support that can assist with recovery. That peer support allows someone living with this disorder to pair with a trained volunteer who has recovered from an eating disorder, who can share their experiences and offer support as and when it is needed.

Having this week dedicated to raising the profile of this illness, talking about it, and recognising its complexities and its stigma is a good start, and represents very good progress from where we were in the 1980s, when so many of us could not understand how Karen Carpenter died or appreciate the full extent of the difficulties that her family had gone through. We have come a long way, but we have a long way to go, and this debate shows that we are keen to go further down that road.

10.17 am

Chris Evans (Islwyn) (Lab/Co-op): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Bailey. I congratulate the hon. Member for Angus (Kirstene Hair) on having secured this debate, especially during this important week—Eating Disorders Awareness Week. Last month, we had a debate on eating disorders, during which I revealed my own struggle with body dysmorphia when I was a teenager. Since then, I have gone on a journey. My mother spoke to me after that debate and asked, “Why didn't you say anything?” I said, “Well, it was normal. That was how I thought everybody acted. I wanted to look that way, and it was normal and personal.” My mother said, “The only thing I noticed about you during that period was that you were a little bit obsessive and compulsive about things”, but that was a symptom of what I was going through.

I am one of the lucky ones, because my body dysmorphia went away on its own. I feel that I have gone on a journey since our previous debate. So many people have

[Chris Evans]

contacted me, including people I know or I have met through my job as a Member of Parliament, and talked about their personal struggles with eating disorders. Those I thought of as confident, or those I looked up to, have said to me that they struggled with the problem of an eating disorder. For them, it was a personal and private battle, as it was for me. I pay tribute to those people for the courage that they have shown in admitting that they had a problem.

I also pay tribute to Beat for all the work it does to ensure that people feel they have a safe space in which to talk about the problems they are going through. As the hon. Member for North Ayrshire and Arran (Patricia Gibson) has said, such a space did not exist when I was suffering from body dysmorphia in the 1990s, but it is there now. Another thing I learned when I met Hope Virgo and her fantastic Dump The Scales campaign team was that eating disorders are not necessarily about weight. So many people go to their GP, but get turned away because they are not light enough. They do not get help, so they turn to other mechanisms to cope.

A number of Members have talked about social media. I want to make it clear that in many respects, social media is a force for good. However, as the hon. Member for Angus said, there is so much pro-ana and pro-mia content, and it is widespread on social media. Instagram has made progress on banning images that contain suicide or self-harm. It has banned certain hashtags, but that does not stop people from going into them. It is a real problem. Some websites I have looked at are helpful and provide the type of support that sufferers of eating disorders need. People are allowed to post a diary. They meet a community that is there to help them, but other websites mask their communities. They start off by saying, “Yes, there is help for you”, but then it suddenly moves on to, “How to hide your eating disorder from your parent”, “How to hide your eating disorder from your school”, and “Anorexia and bulimia are normal.” I should make it clear that if someone does not have an eating disorder, those images of eating disorder will not bring one about. However, such images do affect the most vulnerable in society.

A recent BBC investigation in 2018 led to Instagram placing more harmful hashtags relating to eating disorders on an “unsearchable” list; if somebody enters one of those terms, no results will appear in the search box. Instagram now has more terms—including alternative spellings of “suicide” or “anorexia”, using “I” instead of “I”—that, when searched for, direct people to help and health warnings. One search term had 38 alternative spellings that could still be used by users to access harmful images. It is all very well Instagram using warm words to the Government about banning those harmful images, but it does not have moderators. It is self-moderated. If someone proactively searches for content that is against the rules, there is a good chance they will find it.

I do not want to eat into others’ time. I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Bath (Wera Hobhouse) for the work she has done in bringing eating disorders to the fore. I spoke in her earlier debate, too, so I will bring my remarks to a close. The Government have to be careful when they regulate social media. The content could simply be driven underground into WhatsApp groups or the dark web. I raised this issue with the Prime

Minister a couple of weeks ago at Prime Minister’s questions. She agreed to the Minister for Digital and the Creative Industries meeting me, Beat and Hope Virgo, who has her Dump the Scales campaign, to talk about how we can bring about a system that discourages eating disorders and provides the support that people need. I make one advertisement for Hope’s campaign: if people have not signed her petition, please do so. She is up to 68,000 signatures this morning. She needs 100,000 for the petition to be debated here, so that we can bring about a serious debate on eating disorders.

I say this to anyone suffering from an eating disorder: you are not alone. Look at the people around this room—not just the MPs, but the people in the Public Gallery. There is support there for you. This is personal and private, but when you find the courage to talk about it, there are people there for you. I urge anyone with an eating disorder to find it in themselves to talk to someone.

10.23 am

Wera Hobhouse (Bath) (LD): I thank the hon. Member for Angus (Kirstene Hair) for securing this important debate. It has already been said that this debate has cross-party support, and we have come a long way in recognising and understanding eating disorders. I find it depressing that although we have made this progress, increasing numbers of people are suffering from eating disorders. We must get away from just talking and start getting some change. I hope that Eating Disorders Awareness Week will bring about that change, so that we do not stand here next year without having made significant progress.

I will limit my remarks to the research that Beat has done that shows that eating disorders do not discriminate, and the importance of early intervention and prevention. Over the past five months, I have been campaigning to raise awareness. I have spoken before in this place about the need to recognise eating disorders early. Stories such as Hope’s highlight how ludicrous it is for people seeking help to be told that they are not thin enough.

At the heart of any improvement to eating disorders treatment lies education—of our medical staff, of the whole of society, of schools and of families. I have personal experience of a family member with an eating disorder, so I know very much how families and friends suffer around a sufferer. It is not just the sufferer who is affected, but those around them.

Eating disorders are too often trivialised and seen as an illness that exclusively affects one type of person. That is reinforced by research released this week by Beat, which found that discrimination was ingrained in how we view eating disorders. Beat’s research found that four in 10 people believed that eating disorders were more common among white people, and nearly 30% thought that eating disorders were most likely to affect people from higher socioeconomic backgrounds. The reality is that eating disorders do not discriminate.

The tragedy of eating disorders is that they are preventable. By focusing on early intervention, the numbers of those suffering can be greatly reduced, but the stereotypes around eating disorders mean that certain people are far less likely to recognise the condition and seek or be referred to treatment. For example, ethnic minorities are substantially less likely to be referred to eating

disorder services than white patients, but once referred, ethnic minorities receive the same treatment as white patients. A central problem is what doctors and the public understand about the population of people who suffer from eating disorders. The network of family and friends who surround those with eating disorders make a great deal of difference to their recognising the condition and receiving the correct help.

Research on specialist out-patient family intervention for children shows that it is highly effective and reduces the need for in-patient care, which eases pressure on the NHS. New ways of looking much more holistically at the treatment of eating disorders are highly effective, and we should look at them. The research identifies the importance of a truly joined-up approach to recovery, ensuring that the community around an individual with an eating disorder is supportive and supported by the medical team. Those types of programmes are being run in select areas across the country, and they must be extended, given their positive outcomes.

Treatment for eating disorders is a postcode lottery. We need to look at that. We must set standards and deliver training that will help doctors and medical staff to identify people who need treatment, regardless of any preconceived stereotypes. Additionally, it is vital that we continue to listen to the stories of real people who have suffered from eating disorders, and hear what they have to say about their experiences of the system.

The last thing I want to mention is the Local Government Association's "Bright Futures" campaign. It highlights to councils across the country the importance of increasing funding, and ensuring that all the promised £1.7 billion for children's mental health is spent in children's mental health, not elsewhere. Prevention and early intervention, as we have heard several times today, are absolutely key to saving many lives from being destroyed, including those of friends and families of sufferers. Together, we can make a real difference, but let us make it happen, rather than just talking about it.

10.27 am

Dr Lisa Cameron (East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow) (SNP): It is an absolute pleasure to serve under your chairmanship in this debate on Eating Disorders Awareness Week, Mr Bailey. We have certainly raised awareness today, cross-party, and have paid credit to the week. We will continue to work together on this.

I thank the hon. Member for Angus (Kirstene Hair) for introducing this important debate. She feels strongly about this issue and wants to contribute. She mentioned that she had contacted the Minister for Mental Health in Scotland and would like an appointment with her to discuss services. I am sure we can work together to take things forward, and to ensure that collaboration throughout the United Kingdom continues.

We want to improve our services. Today, we heard that there are gaps in eating disorder services in just about every area. We have also heard how things have moved on. When Karen Carpenter had an eating disorder and sadly died, there was not much awareness at all. Now, there is greater awareness, but that has raised demand. It is incumbent on us to ensure that we are able to meet that demand, so that when young people, or people of any age, come forward, they get help in a timely fashion.

The hon. Member for Angus spoke about stigma, an extremely important issue. She also spoke about how the stigma affects ethnic minorities, particularly males, and prevents them from coming forward. We must do much more to ensure equality in service provision, and send the message that eating disorders do not discriminate. We must support everybody who comes forward.

I want to thank the voluntary agencies who work in this field so tirelessly: the Beat campaigners, many of whom are here today; our NHS staff up and down the United Kingdom, who do their utmost every day, often going beyond the call of duty in the work that they do; and the Scottish Eating Disorders Interest Group, who also do a great deal of work in the field.

The hon. Member for York Central (Rachael Maskell) talked about the lack of psychological support, which I hope the Minister can comment on. We have heard eating disorders described as being about weight, which is wrong on so many levels. It is psychological as well as physical. Relying simply on physical manifestations of eating disorders means that many people do not get the treatment they should at the time that they should. Often people who have, for instance, bulimia might not have a reduction in weight, and it will therefore not be obvious to a practitioner unless they have specialist, or at least additional, training in primary care and specialist services.

We have spoken a lot today about anorexia and have mentioned bulimia, but there has been no mention of obesity, interestingly, around which there is a real stigma across the population. We need to do more to make sure that those who suffer from obesity have psychological support, too, because their journey to recovery is extremely important. Again, that is linked with mental health.

Crucially, the hon. Member for Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk (John Lamont) spoke about technology and images online. We have done a lot of work in the all-party group on textiles and fashion, which I chair, to look at the impact of social media and the industry on body image, and the negative and stereotypical images that very few of us will ever live up to, and should not aspire to. Often the images are not healthy, either. Much more has to be done. I agree with him on what he said about regulation of the companies, the information that is put out, and being proactive.

We also heard from the hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Tim Farron), who spoke about lack of support and comorbidity, mental health issues being very much conjoined with eating disorders. When I worked as a psychologist in mental health services, often referrals would come in for individuals who had depression or anxiety, but underlying that was a long-standing eating disorder. That is why it is important that training in primary care reaches out across community mental health teams, and is not just given to specialist eating disorder services, because often the initial referral will not give an indication of the underlying difficulty.

The hon. Member for Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock (Bill Grant) spoke about bulimia and the new guidelines for Scotland, which he welcomed. We know there is an issue with providing services for people in rural areas in a timely way. I am pleased that the Scottish Government have dedicated £54 million to look at that. There will be new guidelines in line with SIGN, the Scottish intercollegiate guidelines network, and we look forward to collaborating on taking those issues further.

[Dr Lisa Cameron]

My hon. Friend the Member for North Ayrshire and Arran (Patricia Gibson) spoke about peer support, which is extremely important. Young people are often much more able to reach out to other young people, so I ask the Minister: what best practice is happening around that, and what can we roll out across the United Kingdom? One of my local schools, Duncanrig Secondary, is doing mental health peer support work very successfully. It is that type of project that young people grasp hold of to make a difference for each other. I pay tribute to the Trust Jack Foundation in my constituency, which reaches out to young people with mental health problems and has filled a gap in our local services in Stonehouse. Its service is being used assiduously by our local young people.

The hon. Member for Islwyn (Chris Evans) spoke about his eating disorder, body dysmorphia, and personal struggle. That is such an important message to give in Parliament. In coming forward and seeking support, he is a role model for others, so I thank him for that. He also spoke about why it is so important to have person-centred and holistic care, and I entirely agree with that.

The hon. Member for Bath (Wera Hobhouse) is an absolute champion in the field. She has collected thousands and thousands of signatures, and we support her work across this House in a truly cross-party effort to ensure we get the services that people require. I am sure the campaign that she runs to raise awareness will be successful in making a difference to people.

When I worked in psychology in the NHS, it was difficult at times to bridge the gap between primary, secondary and tertiary care, and difficult for people to be referred smoothly. I have raised that with Ministers in Scotland. When people present with an eating disorder, they do not always say, "I have an eating disorder. Can you help me?", so it is key to have the training in place and a smooth care pathway—the two issues that I want the Minister to comment on. I know she is dedicated on this subject. I have met her numerous times, and I am keen to hear what she says today.

10.37 am

Paula Sherriff (Dewsbury) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Bailey. I sincerely thank the hon. Member for Angus (Kirstene Hair) for securing this very important debate today, particularly during Eating Disorders Awareness Week. I was deeply moved by her powerful opening speech and I thank her and the hon. Member for Bath (Wera Hobhouse) for their persistence in bringing the issue to the House. May that never stop.

It is only four months since we were last here speaking about this issue and how we could work together to remove the stigma around eating disorders. Many colleagues here today also spoke in that debate and I thank all of them for taking the time to be here again today. I have been struck, as I am sure many have, by the collegial nature of this debate. That is important and it is what people who experience eating disorders, and their families, want. They want us to put our party colours to one side and work together to try to bring about the much-needed improvements in this area.

My hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Chris Evans) talked eloquently and powerfully about the issue. As we all know, it is brave to talk about our personal experiences in this place, and he talked about his own experience of body dysmorphia. He also talked about the bravery of others, but I hope he takes time to reflect on his own bravery and courage. I am very proud of him and I thank him.

I also want to reflect on the comments made by the hon. Member for Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk (John Lamont) about what happens in schools, which is incredibly important. The hon. Member for Angus also touched on it. I recently attended one of the high schools in my area and talked about what psychological support was available to children, specifically teenagers.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I apologise that I could not be here earlier; I was at the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee. Over the years, I have had the opportunity to help some of my constituents, particularly ladies, who have had eating disorders, and we have been able to sort those things out. I have noticed a dearth among males, who unfortunately seem not to address these issues. I commend the hon. Member for Islwyn (Chris Evans) for speaking about that.

The hon. Lady talked about helping schools, youth groups, and other youth network facilities. I believe that there is a need for trained officials who can notice disorders and step in early. Early diagnosis and early intervention is the way forward. Does she agree?

Paula Sherriff: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. Frankly, a debate would not be complete without an intervention from him. I absolutely agree. When I was speaking to the professional at the Mirfield Free Grammar, she told me that much of what comes through her door relates to eating disorders, crucially in boys as well as girls. Sometimes we continue to stereotype that eating disorders affect only women. The reality is quite different.

As a number of Members have suggested, social media can be a double-edged sword. I will talk about Beat in a moment. Beat does excellent work and has fantastic online resources, as do a number of other mental health charities. However, other sites that we have heard about that encourage people with regard to suicide and their eating disorders can be problematic to say the least.

The Government have made a commitment that, by 2020, 95% of children and young people who are referred with an eating disorder will be seen within one month, or one week if it is considered urgent. That is obviously very welcome, but with 2020 just around the corner I am concerned that, given current workforce and funding pressures, that will be difficult to achieve, or will possibly result in manipulation of waiting time figures. A patient will get a first appointment within the timescale, but any follow-up or effective treatment will still come many months, or even years, after referral. I would be grateful if the Minister would say how it will work in practice.

Although that is all well and good for children and young people, there are still no clear plans for adults with eating disorders. I recently visited a NAViGO

service in Grimsby that supports people with eating disorders, and I was struck by how many people who were older than me were experiencing in-patient treatment.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Paul Farrelly) talked about his constituent Sarah. I have a constituent who was diagnosed with an eating disorder at 16. Owing to the severity of her illness, she was sadly admitted to hospital for a lengthy stretch. On her release, she attended fortnightly appointments with an eating disorder specialist. As her recovery was going well, my constituent decided that she would like to take up an offer of a university place in Manchester, because despite her very difficult illness she had achieved the most fantastic A-level results. She saw going to university as a positive step in her healing and as a way of getting on with her life. The local NHS trust that delivers mental health services in my area informed her that she would have to transfer over to mental health services in Manchester.

Neither my constituent nor her family thought too much about that, as it was not raised in such a way that allowed them to foresee any issues. However, five months on, my constituent is still waiting for the handover to be completed and, sadly, during that time she has suffered a serious relapse and is once again looking at in-patient care. I recently attended the all-party parliamentary university group, and we talked about transition when people go to university, and about mental health in general. We need to look at that in some detail.

Paul Farrelly: Clearly, the administration in the health services that led to that outcome is of grave concern. It is also concerning when specialist services in a particular area stop for young people when they turn 18. Only those people going away to university or college in areas that provide such services, or those people whose families have a lot of money and can fund treatment privately, have the prospect of change. The people who are left are effectively discriminated against.

Paula Sherriff: I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention. I absolutely agree. We had a very interesting discussion at the APPG about whether we could do more pre-screening when people go to university. We must also remember those in further education, not just those in higher education.

I ask the Minister whether what happened to my constituent would have happened had she been suffering from a serious physical condition. Earlier, a colleague made an analogy with cancer—“Your cancer is only at stage 1; we’re not going to treat you until it becomes more advanced.” As we all know, eating disorders carry the highest mortality rate of any mental illness; yet this young lady has been left to suffer, in a new city, away from family and friends and without any support network. We all have to ask ourselves how on earth that was allowed to happen.

I commend the fantastic work being done to raise awareness of eating disorders and to support sufferers, and crucially their carers and families, by the charity Beat, some of whose representatives are in the Gallery. They work relentlessly to battle against the stigma of this dreadful disease, and to push for better access to services and treatments. When my office spoke to them about the case of my constituent, they said that sadly it was very typical of the stories that they hear every day

on their helpline. How many families are going through the same mental torture day after day while waiting for that elusive appointment confirmation to drop through their letter box?

With no specific waiting time targets for adults with eating disorders and poorly funded mental health services, many overstretched mental health trusts are unable to put the necessary resources into those vital services, and treatment availability has become a hideous postcode lottery, as my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme highlighted. Service access and levels of funding vary widely from one area to the next.

Furthermore, there is a huge disparity between access to adult services and to those for children and young people, with adults on average waiting twice as long. The eating disorder charity Beat has had a huge rise in calls to its helpline over the last year. In 2017-18, Beat staff helped 17,000 people, and they estimate that by the end of 2018-19 they will have helped more than 30,000. It is commendable that they managed that increase in demand so well, and I know that with more funding they could help even more people.

In October 2018, following an eating disorder storyline, which Beat had been very involved in helping with, on the popular teenage soap “Hollyoaks”, calls to Beat’s helpline spiked to more than double those in any previous month. That highlights the need to raise awareness about eating disorders and, crucially, to quash the stereotypes and stigmas so that more people know that they can seek help earlier. Reportedly, it could take an adult with an eating disorder more than two years before they realise that they have an issue, and up to another two years to seek help. More needs to be done to increase awareness and access to treatments.

Beat recently undertook some research into eating disorder stereotypes. When people think of eating disorders they often think of young, white women, but that is a popular misconception. The reality is much more complex. More adults suffer from eating disorders than young people, and the number of male sufferers increases year on year, with people who identify as LGBT+ at significantly higher risk. Stereotypes prevent people from seeking and receiving medical treatment in the earlier stages, which, in turn, makes it harder for people to recover.

I am grateful that the hon. Member for East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow (Dr Cameron) raised over-eating. When we think of eating disorders, we often think of anorexia or bulimia. It is important that we consider the full spectrum of disorders. Beat’s research also found that people from black, Asian and minority ethnic and less affluent backgrounds would feel less confident in seeking help from a health professional for an eating disorder. That stigmatisation and fear of speaking out can have far reaching and dangerous consequences.

We also need to work to ensure better training for those on the frontline. The hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Tim Farron) made an important point about training for those in health professions so that they can better recognise and support those who present with eating disorders.

Another constituent of mine waited more than two years to be seen by a psychiatrist for depression and anxiety. During that time, sadly, she also developed an eating disorder. She was consuming less than 700 calories

[Paula Sherriff]

a day and avoiding any foods with even a trace of fat, and her weight had plummeted over a period of six months, but at her first psychiatric appointment she was told that she was not underweight enough to be considered to have a serious eating disorder. At her second appointment, the psychiatrist weighed her and congratulated her on her increased weight and body mass index. As hon. Members can imagine, that was the last thing that she wanted to hear. The psychological effect set her recovery back by weeks.

Sadly, that was not an isolated incident. There are many fantastic people working on the frontline of our health services, but there is also a minority who would hugely benefit from extra awareness training in what an eating disorder looks like, how best to treat it and where to refer patients for treatment.

I know the Minister well and am satisfied that she has huge compassion in the area, but equally I hope that she has listened to the points raised in this debate and will press the Government to put eating disorders higher up the agenda, make promises and set targets that will ultimately save the lives of sufferers. She will have my full support in doing so.

10.50 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Jackie Doyle-Price): I thank all hon. Members who have contributed to this very constructive debate. They all showed massive care and compassion, with a recognition that we have come a long way but need to go a lot further. I am grateful for their constructive contributions.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Angus (Kirstene Hair) on securing this debate in Eating Disorders Awareness Week. I thank her for her very frank exposition of eating disorders, and of the helplessness felt not only by those who are suffering, but by those around them. It is essential that we ensure that people have access to the right mental health support in the right place and at the right time, because time is of the essence. Improving those services is a key priority for this Government, as part of our wider agenda to improve mental health services.

As several hon. Members have said, eating disorders are serious: they have some of the highest mortality rates of any mental health disorder. We need to ensure, more than ever, that people get access to support as early as possible, because eating disorders quite often begin when people are young. Representations have been made today about why our targets are for children, rather than adults. Those targets recognise the fact that early intervention is best and that issues often surface when people are younger, but that does not in any way diminish the challenge of ensuring that adults also have access to services.

That brings me to a point that several hon. Members have made: the perception that eating disorders affect only young white women. They do affect adults. I have heard of a case of an elderly lady in a care home being diagnosed with an eating disorder that she had obviously been suffering from for decades. One of the tests that I will set myself is for that never to happen again, because we need to ensure that people get early diagnosis.

As the hon. Member for Islwyn (Chris Evans) very frankly reminded us, eating disorders affect men and boys too. If there is a perception otherwise, it may partly be because men and boys are much less likely to seek help than women and girls. We need to make it clear that the issue can affect absolutely anyone, as the hon. Gentleman showed very courageously by sharing his own experience; I am very grateful for his comments.

It is important to continue to raise awareness. We need to reduce the stigma associated with eating disorders so that people are more likely to talk about them. Like all hon. Members, I pay tribute to the campaigners who do so much to raise awareness, particularly the charity Beat, which does absolutely excellent work. I also pay tribute to Hope Virgo for her campaign and look forward to meeting her very soon.

We cannot emphasise strongly enough that this is not about weight; it is about the mind. Some of the stories that were shared in this debate were quite horrific. If there is such lack of understanding among medical professionals—if the people we trust to look after us end up doing harm because they see eating disorders as a weight issue—we have a serious problem to tackle. Of course training has its part to play, but I should add that we expect a lot of our GPs. One of the real challenges is to continue to roll out multidisciplinary GP service teams to ensure that there is much greater expertise in each medical practice, rather than relying on one individual to be the expert on everything. Frankly, they are only human beings—they are not God.

Wera Hobhouse: I thank the Minister for giving way; I know that her time is very limited. When services let people go too early, the danger of relapse is much higher. We could prevent relapses by not letting sufferers go too early, when they are half better but not fully better.

Jackie Doyle-Price: The hon. Lady makes a good point that I will address further if I have time. We need to look carefully at the care pathway and at the whole practice of referrals and the journey that people take, so that we can ensure that they are in a position to manage their disorder. The truth is that no one is ever cured of these things; it is a matter of managing their wellbeing to tackle them.

I thank the hon. Member for East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow (Dr Cameron) for her acknowledgment that we have come a long way. She is right that we need to ensure that we have proper specialist services to do this work, because of the risk of harm. She is also right to mention obesity, which we could do an awful more to address. I watch a lot of rubbish TV—we work long hours here, so that is my relaxation—and I am horrified by some of the channels, which basically run a succession of programmes about weight that are almost freak shows. That is not how we should be talking about the issue if we want to encourage people to access help. We need to tackle the stigma around obesity as much as the stigma around any other disorder.

The hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Tim Farron) and I have already discussed his concerns about his area. I know that there are challenges and we need to ensure that provision is sufficient. He spoke very frankly about the guilt and terror that people around those who suffer from eating disorders feel,

because they genuinely do not know how to help their friend or loved one. Reducing stigma and raising awareness is partly about helping people to understand what they can do. Everybody wants to help, because nobody wants to see people suffer so much.

Social media has been mentioned a lot. I absolutely recognise that it can be a force as much for good as for bad, but I must say that we are seeing content that encourages harmful behaviour. It is about the whole psychology of people joining communities. When people use social media regularly, they can become isolated from the physical world and join an online world in which everyone is like them. It becomes normalising, and it can worsen their experience.

Equally, social media can be a community of self-help. I agree completely with the hon. Member for Islwyn that we have to be careful: of course we must challenge companies to be responsible, but it is not black and white, and we need to handle the issue sensitively. I am pleased to say that some companies are very responsive, but not all, so we will continue to challenge them. The hon. Gentleman raised an issue that particularly concerns me. It is one thing to regulate public platforms, but encrypted direct contact is having a growing impact. We need to look at Snapchat, WhatsApp and so on, because the fact is the Government are always three steps—probably more—behind technology.

The hon. Member for East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow emphasised peer support. I could not agree more: peer support is important for mental health generally. If I could make one challenge to NHS commissioners, it would be to recognise that providing support to people who suffer mental ill health is not just about clinicians; it is about the voluntary sector and peer support workers. If we are to really step up to that challenge, I hope to see much more imagination in how services are commissioned.

I have so much more to say, but I am running out of time. With hon. Members' indulgence, I will write to them—not least the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Paul Farrelly)—to outline our response to the points that they raised. We have a lot of figures and have shown that we are meeting targets, but I think all hon. Members would be more confident if there were more granularity—not least because of the cases raised today in which people have not received the treatment that they deserve.

Motion lapsed (Standing Order No. 10(6)).

Adriatic Land 5 Ltd (Stevenage)

Mr Adrian Bailey (in the Chair): Order. Would the people leaving the hall please leave quietly? Another debate is about to begin. I call Stephen McPartland.

11.1 am

Stephen McPartland (Stevenage) (Con): I beg to move, That this House has considered Adriatic Land 5 Ltd, Stevenage.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Bailey, and to be here today to debate the impact of companies such as Adriatic Land 5 Ltd with the Minister. I know she has a personal desire to try to resolve such issues for leaseholders up and down the country.

Companies such as Adriatic Land 5 Ltd hold freeholds and charge ground rents. Often, the rents double every 10 to 15 years and there are other conditions, and it is that situation that is preventing homeowners in Stevenage from remortgaging or selling their properties. I want to talk a little about leasehold, about Adriatic Land 5 Ltd, and to give a few examples from constituents.

There is a discrepancy at the moment about how many leaseholders there are in the country. The figure ranges from 2.5 million, or 4.5 million, to the Leasehold Knowledge Partnership suggesting 5 million to 6 million in England and Wales alone. Scotland and Northern Ireland have different conditions. Today, I am addressing the situation in England and Wales, and in Stevenage in particular.

Leasehold is a form of residential tenure that has been abolished in most countries around the world. The Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act 2002 was passed with the best of intentions to give commonhold a big boost but, at the moment, that does not seem to have worked. My real focus and concern in this debate is leasehold and shared ownership. Often, first-time buyers have used Help to Buy to get on the ladder for the first time.

Adriatic Land 5 owns the freehold on a building in Stevenage called Six Hills House. Predominantly teachers, police officers, nurses and other public sector workers live there. They feel that they have been let down by their surveyors and the people that they purchased their properties from. They are first-time buyers who used Help to Buy; they now feel trapped by these conditions.

Who are Adriatic Land 5? We found it very difficult to find information about them, but we have had some help. We now understand that Adriatic Land is a residential freeholding company of various formulations, managed by the Long Harbour Ground Rent Fund. All Adriatic Land companies hide their ultimate beneficial ownership behind the directors of the Sanne Group, which has its headquarters in Guernsey. Long Harbour is a £1.4 billion fund and claims to have revenues of only £4 million on the ground rent fund, with a total of £340,000 in profits. Its sister company, Home Ground, told the Select Committee on Housing, Communities and Local Government in November 2018 that it collects £32 million per year in ground rent. Long Harbour claims to be investing in residential freehold primarily for pension funds, but there is no evidence of this, and there is a belief in the wider industry that predominantly hedge funds and speculators are behind it.

[*Stephen McPartland*]

Buyers of leasehold properties can be seen as tenants on a very long-term rental, while the freeholder owns the land that the home is built on. The homebuyer of a leasehold property is required to pay ground rent to their freeholder, and the consent of the freeholder must be sought before any changes to the property are made, such as installing new windows or, if it is a house, a conservatory. The issue in my area is with flats. In flats, the ground rent often doubles every 10 years or so.

There is an accepted understanding that, as flats have communal spaces, there needs to be some kind of mechanism to collect money so that if the lifts break or there is a problem with the roof, everybody shares equally in the pain of putting that right financially. At the moment, companies such as Adriatic Land 5 do not seem to be providing any services, but are charging tenants in order to make a profit, and that is causing a great deal of disruption. In Six Hills House in Stevenage, it is preventing mortgage companies from offering mortgages. The homeowners in the flats are trapped, and that has caused huge concern among these decent public sector workers, who have tried to do the right thing and get on the housing ladder, and now seem to be trapped in the first home that they have bought.

There is a feeling in the wider media that these people should have known what they were getting themselves into; they should have read the contract; they were overexcited when they made the purchase. A first-time buyer considering a ground rent of £10 or £100, which will double in 10 or 15 years, does not expect to be there in 10 or 15 years; it is almost as if it does not apply. They do not expect to be there. Given that the mortgage company has extended a mortgage to that buyer, they do not imagine that as the terms get more onerous another mortgage company would refuse to remortgage or refuse to extend the terms to somebody else who then tries to buy it from them. The situation is causing a great deal of disruption.

My real concern is that these are shared-ownership properties, but the tenants seem to be responsible for 100% of the freehold, even though they will often only own 10%, 15% or 25% of the actual property. That does not seem fair. All the barriers to moving forward in their lives seem to be loaded on the people who are 75% tenants and 25% homeowners. It does not seem fair.

Ground rents of as little as £1 a year used to be charged by many freeholders across the country. In the early years of this century, developers began inserting clauses where ground rent was set at £200 to £400 a year, with the charge doubling every 10 years or so. The Government have taken action on that; they have launched consultations and the previous Secretary of State announced that ground rents would be reduced on new home builds to zero or a £10 peppercorn rent. The current Secretary of State met a variety of leaseholder and retirement holder groups in late January. He also said that he thought a peppercorn rate was zero, so it could not double every 10 or 15 years and could not be a barrier to moving on in property.

The Government are trying to take action on the current situation—they are trying to stop it going forward—but there are real problems with retrospective action for people who are currently in these leases. The Minister and I have had some correspondence in the past on this issue, and I know she is keen to resolve it.

The hope was that developers would put pressure on the people who owned the freehold, then the freeholders would come to an agreement with the tenants, and as a result they would be able to move forward.

I will give some examples from the case of Six Hills House in Stevenage. One of my constituents said:

“I live in a fairly new department block of flats in Stevenage that were built in 2016 called Six Hills House. I moved in in November 2016 and bought a 45% share as a shared ownership help to buy scheme. This year it came to light that the lease has a clause in it that states the ground rent (which currently stands at £300 per year) will double every 15 years with a break at 90 years. Whilst this wasn't a problem for lenders in 2016 when the flats went on sale, it has since become illegal for leaseholds to include this type of clause and has therefore made the flats unsellable to anyone other than cash buyers. I have recently put mine up for sale and whilst I found a buyer within a week, no banks would lend on the mortgage and so the estate agents have advised that I cancel all other viewings and limit to cash buyers only.”

This is two years after the individual bought their property. The constituent continues:

“I feel this option is extremely limited as the shared ownership proposition is meant for first time buyers who wouldn't necessarily have the money to buy this share outright leaving a building of around 150 flats unsellable.

I have spoken with metropolitan housing who are the landlords for the rented part of the building who have said that they are trying to negotiate this clause with land charter who own the building however they have not heard anything back from them and they couldn't give a timescale that this would be sorted.

This now means that the people who have put their flats up for sale including myself have paid out for private valuation fees...to get the flats to sale we are left out of pocket with flats on the market that we are unable to sell. Plus I have now come out of a fixed mortgage rate thinking I was going to sell after 2 years which was the original plan and am now paying a higher interest each month without having the option to fix in again in case it does sell.”

She goes on to say that she wanted to get in contact and explains some of the other reasons why. I stepped in and asked Land Charter what had happened. It confirmed:

“Metropolitan Housing Association purchased all the apartments from us, and then sold them on to their clients. The freehold was sold soon thereafter to Adriatic Land 5 Ltd...Although we have sympathy we have not control over the matters raised by her.”

We are still not aware of whether it was Metropolitan Housing or the developer, Land Charter, that sold the freehold. I have spoken to Metropolitan Housing, which responded in December 2018:

“Thank you for your communication received...We can confirm that Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing are not the Freehold owner of this site. We have a head lease which requires us to pay Ground Rent to the Freeholder and we have created under leases for our residents which require them also to pay ground rent as per the head lease.

When the lease was originally entered into, it was common for ground rent clauses doubling every 15 years to be included. Whilst this is not illegal it is now not considered to be good practice and the Government are currently consulting on restricting ground rent on new leases. We do not believe they will be regulating existing leases which have already been entered into.

The ground rent payable at present is a reasonable amount, however when a resident attempts to sell their property, the mortgage company of the proposed purchaser declines to lend as the lease contains potentially onerous ground rent terms for the future. In effect, this means that the properties can only be sold to cash buyers.”

That is Metropolitan Housing Association, which owns most of the shared ownership, confirming that the people trapped in those 150 flats cannot sell their properties

unless they do so to cash buyers, because of the nature of the lease. In fairness, Metropolitan is trying to fix the issue. It says:

“We first became aware of this issue a few months ago and we wrote to the Freeholder asking them to vary the Ground Rent clauses in the lease in light of the wider publicity around onerous Ground Rent terms and the effect it was having on sales. The lease can only be varied if the Freeholder consents. The Freeholder refused to allow any variation in the lease stating that they purchased the Freehold in good faith based on the potential income from Ground Rent.”

It goes on to explain why Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing, as a social housing provider, cannot step in and resolve the issue financially.

I have had correspondence with the Minister on this issue, and other constituents have contacted me. People in this block of 150 flats are increasingly frustrated. I received an update from a constituent on the solution that has come forward from Metropolitan. The constituent states:

“They’ve given the option for us to extend the head lease. However, this will come at a cost and we will also be required to pay all our legal fees, including Metropolitan’s and the freeholder’s legal costs etc.”

She attached the letter for my reference, which I could read out, but I will just hand it to the Minister instead. It is easily working out to be around £10,000, which is half the deposit that the constituents saved up to get on the ladder in the first place and enter into the part-buy and rent scheme. She says:

“If I decided to go down this route and spend £10,000 to get out of this lease, allowing me to sell, I’d then be left with half the deposit I did have, unable to buy somewhere new or benefit from any other first-time buyer schemes again.”

As I say, Metropolitan has come up with a means by which it will vary the head lease and do what it can to try to extend that forward over the 90 years, so that the current tenants have to pay only a small, peppercorn rate. Unfortunately it will cost the tenants over £10,000, because although they own only part of these properties, they are responsible for 100% of the freehold fees. As a result, they have to pay both the shared ownership and freeholder fees, which come to over £10,000.

Essentially, no one really thinks this is fair. Everybody in the building is very upset about the escalating price, which is now between £10,000 and £15,000. My constituents feel frustrated and trapped, as can be imagined. From their point of view, they are missing out on any other first-time buyers schemes, because they are not currently first-time buyers, so they will never be able to benefit from any other schemes again—they have already used Help to Buy.

The tenants feel that the surveyors and the people working with them are part of a very large property industry and are involved in this field on a day-to-day basis, just as Members are. We can all use our own jargon about delegated legislation and statutory instruments—it is very easy for us, but it is not easy for someone out there to understand what any of that means. It is the same with those people who are very excited to be buying their first property. As the mortgage companies were happy to lend to them on their leases, most of the tenants felt that they would only be in those properties for five to 10 years maximum, and that they would be leaving before the ground rent began to double. It seems that within a two-year timeframe, 150 people—predominantly public sector workers—have now been trapped in a scheme in Stevenage, which is not fair. It is really frustrating my constituents and me.

The Government’s policy is to lean on developers and social housing providers to try to vary the leases, but those 150 flat owners are trapped because the freeholder—Adriatic Land 5 Ltd, which is registered in Guernsey—will not play ball. The simplest solution would be for Adriatic Land 5 Ltd to change the details on the deed, so that the ground rent clause is changed to something more appropriate. That would resolve all the issues with the mortgage companies and social housing providers. My question to the Minister is: how do we bring forward somebody who owns a freehold in a property, such as Six Hills House in Stevenage, but will not play ball? How do we encourage Adriatic Land 5 Ltd, which is registered in Guernsey, to help ensure that these 150 flat owners can move forward with their lives and sell their properties if they choose to do so?

11.17 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (Mrs Heather Wheeler):

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Bailey. I thank the hon. Member for Croydon Central (Sarah Jones) for being here; I did not realise this was a walk-on part—that does not need to go in *Hansard*. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Stevenage (Stephen McPartland) on securing this important debate on issues concerning leaseholders, and particularly the problem in Stevenage.

The Government are committed to improving consumer choice and fairness for the increasing number of leaseholders. That includes our work to make it easier and cheaper for leaseholders to enfranchise, the support we are providing for those with onerous ground rent terms, and our aim to make service charges more transparent for all. That work should act as a guard against the practices that form the subject of this debate, namely, where freeholds are sold on to a third-party investor without the leaseholder’s knowledge.

I am aware that many hon. Members have heard from their constituents on this matter, as have I and my Department, and the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee also received evidence on it, so I recognise the importance of the debate. It is clear that we need to act to address the issues; I will use this time to set out the work that is under way to drive these unfair practices out of the leasehold sector.

The problem here is the excessive ground rent that leaseholders are being asked to pay. My hon. Friend the Member for Stevenage has rightly highlighted many issues that are faced particularly by those in shared ownership properties, but I know that the issue of onerous ground rents affects many other leaseholders. As he says, leases with onerous ground rent terms can make it difficult for the leaseholder to sell their property or re-mortgage. In this instance, as I understand it, the ground rent is £300 a year and doubles every 15 years. We have heard from the Housing Committee that many regard this as onerous, and it could also make the property hard to sell, exactly as he mentioned. People can therefore feel trapped in these arrangements.

It is the Government’s view that, in most cases, any lease with doubling ground rents will be significantly worse than an inflation-based arrangement. A rise in line with inflation maintains the value of the ground rent over time, whereas a doubling term every 10 or

[*Mrs Heather Wheeler*]

15 years can significantly increase the value—too much—over time. The Secretary of State met freeholders last year and made that clear. There should be no reason why any clause that doubles ground rent every 10 or 15 years should be enforced. I welcome the proposals from some developers and freeholders to vary clauses so leaseholders pay less ground rent.

We have been clear that variations must have consumers' best interests at heart. We will not look kindly on those who reduce the cost of ground rents with one hand and rip off leaseholders with the other, whether through permission fees or anything else. We need a proportionate response. I want industry to take the lead and make the changes voluntarily. It is not right that hon. Members should have to highlight the sort of issues that have been raised here today.

I want to see support extended to all leaseholders with onerous ground rents, including second-hand buyers, and for customers to be proactively contacted. We will continue to work with the industry on a way forward to help existing leaseholders with onerous leases. I want to stress that leaseholders should seek impartial legal advice about potentially onerous ground rents contained in their leases. Free advice is also available from the Government's Leasehold Advisory Service—LEASE. Leaseholders and prospective leaseholders can get advice on all aspects of leasehold properties, including ground rents, service charges and the enfranchisement process, so I urge them to take advantage of that free service. We have recently appointed a new interim chair to that organisation, and I am confident that the standard of advice that leaseholders receive will be further strengthened. Furthermore, if the leaseholder's solicitor or conveyancer did not point out the onerous terms at the point of purchase, the leaseholder can make a complaint against them, which can be escalated to the legal ombudsman. I suggest that my hon. Friend takes that point back to his constituents.

I have also heard from leaseholders who have seen a sharp increase in the level of their service charges, often with poor value for money. Many leaseholders are unclear about their service charges, how they were calculated, and whether they are paying too much. I believe very strongly that service charges should be transparent and communicated effectively, and that there should be a clear route to challenge or redress if things go wrong. With that in mind, the Government asked Lord Best's working group to look at service charges and consider how they should be presented for both existing and prospective consumers. I have also asked the working group to look into fees and charges that go beyond service charges, and consider the circumstances under which they are justified and whether they should be capped or banned. That includes administration charges and permission fees. I am absolutely clear that we must see an end to leaseholders being charged excessive and unfair fees. I am following the working group's progress with keen interest. I look forward to receiving Lord Best's report in July, and I will be meeting him shortly.

I hope that my remarks demonstrate the Government's strong commitment to supporting existing and future leaseholders. Although this debate has been on a specific practice in the leasehold sector, it is clearly a wide-ranging area that is in need of reform. The Government will introduce measures to deliver that reform. The work that is under way makes that commitment clear. Although successive Governments have left that work unfinished, we are just getting started. Nothing, including legislation, is off the table. In that spirit, I thank my hon. Friend for his speech and questions, and I look forward to pushing ahead with our programme of leasehold reform.

Question put and agreed to.

11.23 am

Sitting suspended.

Future of DFID

[MS NADINE DORRIES *in the Chair*]

2.30 pm

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi (Slough) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House has considered the future of the Department for International Development.

It is a great pleasure to serve under your chairship, Ms Dorries. I have secured this debate because of deep concerns about the future of the Department for International Development and its funding, and threats to our proud tradition as a distributor of aid to the most impoverished places on the planet.

Today, I seek cast-iron guarantees from the Minister that my fears are misplaced, that we will continue to make our full contribution of 0.7% of our national income to the world's poorest communities, and that we will continue to address the deep scars of poverty and inequality that disfigure our world—the legacy of centuries of colonialism, wars, and unequal and unjust distribution of the world's resources. We must continue to consider ourselves internationalists—brothers and sisters with the peoples of the world—not narrow isolationists, cowering behind our drawbridge.

The Department for International Development has a proud history. As right hon. and hon. Members will know, it began as a separate Ministry under Harold Wilson's Labour Government in 1964. Wilson appointed Barbara Castle as the first ever Minister in charge of overseas aid—a reflection of his own internationalism and humanitarian beliefs—which then moved in and out of the control of the Foreign Office, depending on who was in Government.

Conservative Prime Minister Edward Heath put overseas aid under the control of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in 1970, before Wilson once again returned its independence in 1974. Margaret Thatcher downgraded it to an agency again in 1979 until finally, under Tony Blair in 1997, it became a full Department with a Cabinet-level Minister. It is to the credit of the coalition Government elected in 2010 that that cycle of upgrading and downgrading was halted, with DFID remaining part of the machinery of government, and that its budget was maintained despite deep cuts to the rest of Whitehall. Perhaps that shows how effective the work of DFID is, and how established and respected it has become, in Britain and around the world.

Some notable politicians have been at its helm. I mentioned the formidable Barbara Castle, but no less formidable were Clare Short, Judith Hart, my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn), and on the Conservative side, I should mention Chris Patten and Baroness Chalker. The first ever black woman to serve in a British Cabinet was Baroness Amos, who was appointed Secretary of State for International Development in 2003.

Jeremy Lefroy (Stafford) (Con): I am sure the hon. Gentleman did not omit him deliberately, but another great Secretary of State for International Development, my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr Mitchell), is taking part in the debate. In fact, it

was he and former Prime Minister David Cameron who ensured that DFID stayed under a Conservative-led Government. As the hon. Gentleman pointed out, DFID had been downgraded under previous Conservative Governments, but that time, it was not.

Mr Dhesi: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. I had only reached 2003, and was coming gradually to the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr Mitchell), but he makes a valid point. That is why I congratulate the coalition Government on their tremendous decision to keep DFID as a separate Department.

DFID works in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Iraq, Malawi, Nepal, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Sierra Leone, Syria, Tanzania, Yemen and Zimbabwe, to name but a handful. It tackles gender inequality, helps to build health and education systems, and works with communities shattered by war, genocide or famine. It is respected and admired in all the places that it operates, some of which are the hardest places to reach for other organisations.

Mr Gregory Campbell (East Londonderry) (DUP): I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on securing the debate. He has quite rightly drawn attention to the good work that has been done, with our 0.7% commitment, in the countries that he listed. Does he agree that we must continue to be extremely vigilant? In a small number of those countries—particularly on the continent of Africa—corruption is rife, and many people in the United Kingdom have concerns that some of that money is not going to those who would benefit most from it.

Mr Dhesi: The hon. Gentleman makes a valid point. We must ensure that aid reaches those who need it most and that it is not siphoned away by corrupt individuals in Governments, whether in Africa or in other parts of the world.

DFID is respected and admired in all the places where it operates. Wherever the UK aid logo appears, it shows the world how much the British public care. Since the passage of the International Development Act 2002, all overseas aid must be spent with the explicit purpose of reducing global poverty. That is an important piece of legislation, because it makes clear the distinction between aid and trade: one is not a quid pro quo for the other. The Pergau dam scandal showed that some aid in the 1980s and 1990s was being linked to trade deals. In that instance, despite clear objections from civil servants, there was a link between British aid for building the dam and British arms sales to Malaysia.

Alex Norris (Nottingham North) (Lab/Co-op): My hon. Friend mentions a very troubling incident and he will notice echoes of that today, with renewed calls for our aid budget to mirror trade interests. Does he agree that common global interests are what matter, rather than narrow self-interest?

Mr Dhesi: My hon. Friend makes an excellent point. Indeed, he may be telepathic, because I was just about to mention that, but I concur fully with his view.

The Pergau dam affair was declared unlawful in a landmark court case in 1994. More recently, as my hon. Friend says, fears have been raised that our aid budget has not focused solely on poverty reduction. An article

[Mr Dhesi]

in *The Guardian* revealed that charities such as Oxfam, Save the Children and ActionAid were deeply concerned that some of the funds were used by

“classing politically convenient projects as aid,”

rather than exclusively helping the most vulnerable. We must of course contribute vital overseas aid owing to our obligations as one of the wealthiest nations in the world. I am sure that the Minister will offer warm and emollient words. She will no doubt tell us of the commitment to DFID as a Department and that the 0.7% target remains in place.

At this point, it is pertinent to pay tribute to both the former Liberal Democrat MP Michael Moore, for introducing a private Member's Bill to enshrine the 0.7% target in law, and the then Government for allowing it to become law. We should welcome the commitment in the 2017 Conservative manifesto to maintaining that 0.7% commitment, which I am sure the Minister will mention in her speech.

Why exactly should we be concerned about DFID's future? The tectonic plates of politics have shifted in recent months and the voices that considered overseas aid a waste of money have become louder and more mainstream within the governing party—the critics are moving from the fringe to centre stage. The former Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for Witham (Priti Patel), seemed more aligned with the TaxPayers Alliance than with the global anti-poverty movement. She resigned after running errands for the FCO in Israel rather than running her own Department.

The previous Foreign Secretary, the right hon. Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Boris Johnson), called the establishment of DFID in 1997 a “colossal mistake”. This month, he endorsed a report by the Henry Jackson Society that calls for a dilution of DFID's role in alleviating poverty, with a diversion towards broader international policies such as peacekeeping. He told the BBC's “Today” programme:

“We could make sure that 0.7 % is spent more in line with Britain's political commercial and diplomatic interests.”

Commercial interests? What could he possibly mean by that?

My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Dan Carden) has made it clear that he believes this is the opening act in a move to downgrade DFID and to slash overseas aid. It is hard to disagree that that is the Secretary of State's secret agenda.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle (Brighton, Kemptown) (Lab/Co-op): On that “Today” programme, it was telling that no Minister was put up to defend the Department or to shoot down such ideas. To me, that suggests complicity with the idea itself.

Mr Dhesi: That is precisely why I and others of like mind applied for and secured this debate. We are concerned about the lack of leadership in the Government, or of Government members saying “We do not agree with that.” I will elaborate on that shortly.

We are rightly concerned that UK aid and the Department with the primary responsibility for spending it are under threat, or will be diverted from the alleviation of poverty and into being linked to trade. Today, will

the Minister go beyond the same old stock phrases committing the Government to the continued existence of DFID and the 0.7% target, and instead give us some cast-iron guarantees?

First, will the Minister distance herself absolutely from the comments made by the former Foreign Secretary, the right hon. Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip, about the future of DFID? Secondly, will she guarantee that any review of DFID's departmental policy post Brexit will in no way undermine, downgrade, obfuscate or dilute the commitments enshrined in the International Development Act 2002 and the International Development (Official Development Assistance Target) Act 2015? Thirdly, will she guarantee that her party will enter the next election with a manifesto commitment to maintain, as a minimum, the existing levels of expenditure on overseas aid, with the aim of eradicating poverty and tackling gender inequality? The Minister has an open goal; will she settle the issue once and for all?

Finally, I am sure that we all stand united in our gratitude to the staff of DFID, whether they are freezing in the mountains of Tajikistan or sweltering in the heat of Mozambique, or are in the offices at Abercrombie House or just up the road at 22 Whitehall. We offer them our thanks—they are truly the best of British.

2.42 pm

Mr Andrew Mitchell (Sutton Coldfield) (Con): I congratulate the hon. Member for Slough (Mr Dhesi) on securing this debate and on his very good speech.

No Department should feel that it is there in perpetuity—Departments have to justify their existence, and changes come from time to time. I therefore make no criticism of those who argue that such matters should be reviewed, but I am in the Chamber today to make it clear that the existence and role of DFID have been settled, and should remain settled. Mercifully, I think DFID's role was settled in the time of Michael Howard, when he was leader of the Conservative party, and by David Cameron, both in Opposition and in Government. We made it clear that we strongly supported the decision of the then Labour Government to set up the Department for International Development. Since then, everything that DFID has done has justified those decisions.

Development is very long-tail; it is different from the disciplines of foreign policy. Tony Blair, I think, used to say that just as the Foreign Office was extremely good at prose and not at numbers, DFID was very good at numbers, but not necessarily at prose. Development is long-tail and different from Foreign Office disciplines, and I used to tease diplomats when I had some responsibility for such matters by saying that they thought that development was the favourite charity of the ambassador's spouse. That, however, is not development; development is not building schools, but ensuring that when a teacher retires there is someone to replace that teacher in his or her role.

DFID had teething problems as a new Department. From time to time, it stuck out in the Whitehall archipelago as a bit of a sore thumb; sometimes, it looked like a well-upholstered charity moored off the coast of Whitehall. Those difficulties, however, were dealt with and addressed by the time the Department came of age under the coalition Government. The National Security Council,

which wired together development, defence and development, clearly brought DFID into the Whitehall constellation—it has never looked back.

Sometimes, we can become inward-facing, focusing our own problems, so we should be clear that DFID is respected around the world as the most effective organ of development policy. It is a world leader and, as I used to say, just as America is a military superpower, so Britain is a development superpower. British academia, ideas and development policy, and Britain's brilliant international charities and non-governmental organisations, show real world leadership. Today, many people talk about global Britain and Britain post-Brexit. I would argue that Britain's exercise of soft power—the Government's work in development led by DFID—is a compelling part of what global Britain means: some might say it was the only aspect of global Britain.

To focus directly on DFID, it is no surprise to find that the Department has attracted to leadership roles some of the most effective civil servants and public servants Britain can boast. There have, I think, been four permanent secretaries: Suma Chakrabarti, who is now head of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and highly respected; Minouche Shafik, who became deputy head of the International Monetary Fund and deputy governor of the Bank of England, and is today director of the London School of Economics; Sir Mark Lowcock, with unrivalled experience and now Britain's lead official at the United Nations, in charge of the UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs; and, today, Matthew Rycroft, formerly the UK's permanent representative at the UN.

When I left university, people who wanted to go into public service went first and foremost to the Treasury and the Foreign Office; my equivalents today want to go to DFID or the Treasury. The Department exercises a powerful appeal. I am always keen to say that this is not an area of policy that is Labour or Conservative; it is an area that is British. We should all, whatever party we are from, be very proud of the work that Britain does in development. In that spirit, it would be wrong not to mention Clare Short who, in my opinion, although she and I are polar opposites politically, did an absolutely outstanding job in setting up DFID. The right hon. Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn) and Valerie Amos, Baroness Amos, were both outstanding Secretaries of State who drove forward that British agenda with such effectiveness.

I will make a final point. I am incredibly proud to have served in a Government that, notwithstanding the austerity then in place in Britain, declined to balance the books on the backs of the poorest people in the world or in Britain, and stood by the commitment to the 0.7%. Although Labour Governments had talked about the 0.7% for many years, it was a Conservative-led coalition Government who introduced it. The hon. Member for Slough, who led the debate, was good enough to make that point clear.

Our commitment is not only to the 0.7%, however, but to the rules. That is the point that came out in the "Today" interview that has been mentioned, in which I had a walk-on part. If we lose the rules, we can forget about the 0.7% because it will be plundered by stronger Departments such as the Ministry of Defence and the Foreign Office. We must not forget that a large part of the Foreign Office budget is paid for from the official

development assistance DFID budget, because much of what it does is eligible under the rules—but the rules have to be kept. My comment on that "Today" programme, which I repeat, is about my right hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Boris Johnson). We all know his views, but on DFID he is in the role of a medieval pirate whose eye has alighted on a plump Spanish galleon, laden with the gold and silver of the development budget. He wants to board it and plunder it. I understand that but, nevertheless, it is wrong.

The rules are therefore probably more important than the 0.7% figure, although both go together. They are hugely to the credit of Britain and of our generations. We should be immensely proud, and we should use this debate to celebrate the effectiveness and brilliant world leadership of this great Department.

2.49 pm

Lloyd Russell-Moyle (Brighton, Kemptown) (Lab/Co-op): I am grateful for the contributions from the Members who spoke before me—generally, I agreed with what they said.

In my role on the International Development Committee I get to see some of the fantastic projects we are doing around the world, whether supporting M-KOPA, which is a solar power scheme in Uganda, Kenya and the wider region, investments via DFID alone and working with CDC Group, or garment workers providing safety and education in Bangladesh after that awful tragedy only a few years ago. DFID and British aid lead the world not only in transforming lives but in ensuring that the goods we receive in Britain are safe and help people around the world. It is right to say this is the best of British.

I begin by discussing why we have a moral responsibility to show leadership in development. Three months after becoming Britain's first Secretary of State for International Development, Clare Short said:

"Out of our complex history—all the bad and good of it, and the role it leaves us with on the international stage—I want us to do all we can to mobilise the political will for poverty elimination."—[*Official Report*, 1 July 1997; Vol. 297, c. 126.]

Of course, "our complex history" is a reference to hundreds of years in which UK foreign policy was literally designed to extract the wealth of poor countries, although not so poor at the time, around the world under our Empire or under other spheres of British influence. It is therefore a reference to our duty to pay some of that back and to the post-colonial days of tied aid; we have already heard about the Pergau dam scandal where €200 million of UK aid went to Malaysia to buy billions of pounds of weapons. That complex history is why Labour untied aid by scrapping the aid and trade provision, why we passed the International Development Act 2002 and why Labour established the stand-alone Department.

The Cameron Government must be applauded for continuing the Department and breaking the previous tit for tat. But I am afraid that this Government are wilfully unlearning past lessons, to ally not the majority of the Conservative party but a lunatic fringe of their own party—including a "pirate", according to the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr Mitchell). That fringe is against the 0.7% and the rules-based system. It

[Lloyd Russell-Moyle]

is undoing the good that the coalition and Cameron Governments did following the good that the Labour Government did.

Over the course of this Parliament, aid spent outside DFID has tripled—something the cross-party International Development Committee has criticised. Most of that money is channelled through organisations such as the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund, which is constituted of many dubious programmes by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Ministry of Defence, often based on training and equipping militaries rather than alleviating poverty or creating long-term peace.

Mr Mitchell: Surely, it does not matter who spends the money, but that it is spent in accordance with the rules as well as it can be. If it appears that it is not spent as well as it could be, the Independent Commission for Aid Impact is the right vehicle to find that out. It does not matter who spends it; what matters is that it is spent well and within the rules of ODA.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle: I agree that ICAI has a key responsibility. Last year, ICAI—the Government watchdog—said that aid spent through the CSSF could not be proved not to be making the problem worse. I agree with the right hon. Gentleman that we need scrutiny, but if the money is spent by many Departments, there is not one head to be held politically accountable. The Government can spend it where they want, but the political responsibility must be with the Department, otherwise the expertise and the political responsibility are gutted from the Department. That was the case with CSSF, which cannot prove that it is not making the situation worse.

Things were already bad enough, but they have been made considerably worse by the Secretary of State feathering her leadership ambitions and sending signals to Tory Members rather than focusing on poverty alleviation. We need look no further than her recent speeches; even senior civil servants in her own Department cannot identify any of the changes in policy from those speeches. In recent months, her office has said that our commitment to 0.7% is “unsustainable”, and it would like aid spent on building UK battle ships to “take pressure off a stretched fleet”.

That is not part of a rules-based system.

We have heard that CDC profits should be counted as aid, which in anyone’s book is double counting and is against the rules-based system. We have even heard threats of leaving the Development Assistance Committee if it does not agreed to all our demands. Finally, there was nothing but silence when another leadership contender, the right hon. Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Boris Johnson), backed a plan to decimate DFID and the Department for International Trade—a barmy proposal to reduce the aid budget and to spend the remainder on propping up the BBC. In no terms is that aid spending.

When my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Dan Carden) asked the Secretary of State why we should trust her to spend the UK aid budget when she makes those sounds off, even though she is not acting on them, she said:

“They should trust me as the Secretary of State and as someone who has been an aid worker.”

It is astonishing that the Secretary of State’s defence is not one of policy or action but a personal anecdote that she happened to be a gap year worker for one year, 30 years ago, in Romania. That demonstrates clearly how much we need DFID to be governed by people who understand what aid is about. The joint Ministers of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and DFID do, but those at the top do not. We need someone at the top who does not wave red rags at the Conservative party.

Last year, the International Development Committee published the report “Definition and administration of ODA”, for which I acted as rapporteur. Almost all its recommendations were dismissed out of hand by the Government, although I understand many civil servants in the Department were friendly to the ideas. The report offers a very good basis for rebuilding the Department. Why can the Minister here not commit to our request that

“The Secretary of State for International Development should have ultimate responsibility for oversight of the UK’s ODA and the Department should have the final sign off of all ODA”?

That sounds pretty reasonable to me, but it was rejected. Perhaps the Minister could reconsider.

We put heavy emphasis on our concerns that the prosperity fund promoted UK trade above poverty reduction. Could the Minister allay our concerns? Finally, will the Minister reconsider the rejection of our request that

“The Government should make systematic improvements to coherence, transparency and—most crucially—the poverty focus of cross-government fund projects before increasing their share of UK ODA any further, and ensure that DFID”—

and ICAI—

“has oversight of all ODA spending”?

In some cases with the CSSF, ICAI has had restricted access to investigate spending, on national security grounds. That is no basis for finding out whether funds have been spent effectively—I grant that it could have been done in camera.

In total, the Committee made 34 recommendations, which were generally dismissed by the Government. I believe that implementing those recommendations would have strengthened the hand of the world’s best deliverer of aid projects, which we can be genuinely proud of and, as we have already heard, has fantastic staff. However, those recommendations were not accepted. Instead, we hear hyperbole about getting out of the DAC, double counting and other dodgy deals with aid. I am afraid that is the wrong tone to strike about our great Department.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Ms Nadine Dorries (in the Chair): Order. I have to impose a five-minute limit on speeches. Anybody who goes over that limit will, unfortunately, take time away from the people who come after them, so please stick to it if possible.

3 pm

Jeremy Lefroy (Stafford) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Dorries. I very much welcome this debate, and I thank the hon. Member for Slough (Mr Dhesi) for his excellent remarks. Like

the hon. Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Lloyd Russell-Moyle), I had the pleasure of serving on the International Development Committee. In my seven years on the Committee, I saw the great work that is being done in so many countries by DFID staff and by organisations that are financed by the Department. I pay tribute to them, because they put themselves on the line, sometimes at great risk. They sometimes even pay the ultimate price for their work in development.

I am a great supporter of the Department for International Development, for the reasons that my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr Mitchell) outlined. It gives aid and development a real independent voice in the Cabinet, and it allows a long-term view to be taken of development. I fear that if international development were put in another Department, that Department's priorities would take precedence, whereas the Department for International Development can take that long-term view. I will say more about that in a moment.

As chair of the all-party parliamentary group on malaria and neglected tropical diseases, I have seen the tremendous progress that has been made against those infectious diseases and others, such as tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS, as a result of the investment by the Labour Government from the early 2000s through the global fund and bilateral aid, and by subsequent Governments. That investment has resulted in many millions of people being alive today who otherwise would not have been. DFID and the United Kingdom have played a huge role in that, through universities in England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales—right across the United Kingdom—and the work that people have done on the ground.

DFID has also played a major role in humanitarian responses. I remember someone in Sierra Leone telling me that the Royal Navy ship—I think it was HMS Bulwark—sitting in Freetown harbour that was used to support the Sierra Leonean Government to tackle Ebola gave them confidence that the world cared about bringing that appalling epidemic to an end. That was an example of joint working between UK Departments.

I stress the importance of long-term projects. I was honoured to see the community forestry project in Nepal. That joint piece of work by the Government of Nepal and DFID has run for more than 30 years and has led to a huge amount of afforestation. I ask the Minister to ensure that we look at projects in the longer term rather than on four-year cycles.

On funding, I am a firm believer in the 0.7% target. I was a sponsor of Michael Moore's Bill, which became the International Development (Official Development Assistance Target) Act 2015. There are opportunities to look at the OECD/DAC rules—sometimes they are a bit out of step—but, ultimately, they have to be concentrated on the alleviation of poverty. I point to peacekeeping: without peace, we can have no development, so it does not seem right that only a small part of peacekeeping in countries in conflict is attributable to ODA. That is just one example, but we have to be very clear and to abide by the rules that are in place.

On gaps, I believe we need a development bank in the United Kingdom. That would give us much greater opportunities to fund long-term projects that cannot be funded through short-term grants. Every other major development actor—the Germans, the French, the Japanese, the Brazilians and the European Union, of which we

will no longer be a member—has a development bank, so it is important that we look at establishing one. I am delighted by the establishment of the small grants fund. That needs to be expanded, because it brings our constituents right into play with what is happening on the ground and enables them to see that their work in support of local charities is supported by the UK Government. Finally, DFID is very good at data, but it needs to do an awful lot more. We need to ensure that all action is data driven.

There is so much more I want to say but not enough time to say it, so let me say in conclusion that DFID is an excellent Department. Of course there is much more that can be done, including more scrutiny, and there are times when the work is not good enough, but the answer is not to abolish the Department. The answer is to strengthen it, to scrutinise it and to ensure it does the job it was set up to do—to relieve poverty.

3.5 pm

Gareth Thomas (Harrow West) (Lab/Co-op): I rise to support my hon. Friend the Member for Slough (Mr Dhesi), whom I commend for securing this debate. He and my hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Lloyd Russell-Moyle) rightly criticised the Secretary of State's effort to get the rules on development assistance changed. She seeks to undermine rules that have rightly forced Governments around the world, including ours, to be held to account for the amount of development assistance they give the world's poorest people. It was good to hear the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr Mitchell) make a similar point. I take credit for much of his success as Secretary of State, because I schooled him while he was in training as the shadow Secretary of State.

There are three compelling arguments both for Britain sticking to its 0.7% level of funding for international development assistance, and for retaining the Department for International Development. First, there is a moral argument. We are one of the richest nations in the world. Surely we have a responsibility to help those in other countries who, through no fault of their own, live in terrible circumstances.

Secondly, it is surely in our country's interests to try to support countries around the world in becoming stable, so their populations do not have to flee either to our country or to neighbouring countries. We should help them become stable so that their economies can grow, and they can have strong public services of the sort we would recognise. Given that conflict is much more likely to break out in a country where there has recently been conflict, if we continue to want to reduce the amount we spend collectively on peacekeeping, it is surely sensible to put in the hard yards by providing development assistance to help those countries get strong, effective Governments who are respected by people of all opinions.

The third argument is about soft power, which others mentioned. As a result of its huge commitment to international development, Britain is highly regarded at the United Nations. It was always highly regarded in the European Union and in a whole series of other international forums because of the work it did on development assistance, and the knowledge that everyone in the

[Gareth Thomas]

Government was committed to maintaining and enhancing the role of the Department for International Development and the aid budget.

Arguments against spending 0.7% are being made again, predominantly by people from the right of political discourse. It is argued that charities know best. I have a lot of respect for charities, particularly Britain's charities. They make a considerable difference in the areas in which they are able to operate. However, no global player other than the Department for International Development can operate at the level that is needed to transform the poorest countries by providing aid that helps to build up the effectiveness of their Governments. Charity has a role to play, a demonstrative role in particular, and it certainly plays a useful role when a tsunami or other humanitarian crises occur, but we need to build up Governments in other countries.

Corruption is a risk, but if we use our aid money effectively, we help to strengthen the systems that stop corruption continuing to be a problem. As for the idea that charity should begin at home, every Member of the House can give examples of further Government funding being required in their constituency, and I hope we will see a change in direction when a new Government are in place, so that more resources can be made available for all of us, but I again make the point that we are one of the richest nations in the world, and we should be able to provide further development assistance.

I simply do not buy the idea that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is somehow diminished by the effectiveness of the Department for International Development. They have different roles, and they complement each other. We want a strong Foreign Office, but its strength will not be ended by an effective Department for International Development. I hope that the Secretary of State changes the language that she deploys, and that the Department's future can be guaranteed.

3.11 pm

Alex Chalk (Cheltenham) (Con): Britain is an instinctively compassionate, outward-looking and humane nation, and we rightly expect our country to lend a hand in the struggle against poverty, misery and injustice; long may that continue. However, our country also has a keen sense of fairness. The British people want and expect taxpayers' money to be used with integrity, and allocated sensibly and in accordance with their international priorities. Before I look at the central tenet of the speech made by the hon. Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Lloyd Russell-Moyle), it is worth considering the sums of money we are talking about; that has not yet been discussed.

The 0.7% translates to approximately £14 billion. To put that into context, I was at a meeting this morning looking at legal aid in the criminal justice system—indeed, in the overall justice system—and we spend about £1.6 billion a year on legal aid. Or what about the schools high needs block, which funds such things as special educational needs, a big issue in my constituency? Its budget is about £6 billion. Our entire prisons budget is about £4 billion. Although the hon. Member for Brighton, Kemptown, is right and is entitled to criticise, let us not forget the very significant sums of money allocated by this country. We can hold our heads high

because we meet the commitment. The United States, France, Germany, Italy and Spain do not. This House must not fall into the trap of thinking that we are somehow skimping on our international obligations. Far from it. We stand comparison with any nation on earth. The former Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr Mitchell), who spoke with his customary passion and eloquence, made that point crystal clear.

If we are to ensure that the British people retain their enthusiasm for meeting international commitments, it is critical that the rules be modernised and the money allocated in a way that meets priorities. Lest we forget, priorities change all the time; we must not be tone deaf to those changes. Although it is appropriate to keep a separate Department, there is a case to broaden its scope. I am delighted that the Government have acted with a great sense of purpose. I note, for example, that where the Development Assistance Committee's rules are outdated, the Government have led the way in pushing for reform, so in October 2017 the UK secured an increase in the proportion of aid spending that can be contributed to peacekeeping missions. That is perfectly understandable and reasonable, but there is one central point that we also ought to consider in this House: the Department for International Development. Is it the exclusive purview of the £14 billion budget, or are there other broad areas that we ought to consider?

When I go to schools in Cheltenham—we ought to consider the next generation—one of the key concerns about Britain's role in the world and how we want to express ourselves internationally is not so much to do with development but with conservation. The people in Charlton Kings Junior School that I spoke to are deeply concerned about plastic pollution, flora and fauna, biodiversity, habitat protection and climate change. The point that I want to make gently is that of course we must be internationalist and globalist, and we must continue to have a role in the world that shows that Britain is on the right side on the great moral issues facing our planet, but should that exclusively be about development? I think we need to have a debate in this House about whether there are other global priorities that we ought to consider.

When I see the tide of plastic in the Pacific ocean, I want us to do more. When I see species losing their habitats in sub-Saharan Africa and the hideous effects of climate change, I want to do more.

Mr Mitchell: My hon. Friend rightly talks about conservation, but that comes under the 0.7%, and the three things he has just mentioned are within the official development assistance rules and also come under the 0.7%, so I think I can lift his spirits a little.

Alex Chalk: To some extent it does, but cosmetic changes could be made. Why can the Department for International Development not be the Department for International Development and Conservation? That would send an important message. Also, we ought to be far clearer about the amounts that we can allocate to such causes. There is a huge amount of pushback, inevitably, from the likes of Oxfam. I understand why they would want to protect their realm, so to speak, but we could lean into these areas far more effectively; that would be more consistent with the instincts of the British people, and would gain further support.

3.16 pm

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): It is a pleasure to speak in this debate, Ms Dorries. I congratulate the hon. Member for Slough (Mr Dhesi) on securing this debate, and thank him for giving us a chance to participate. Like other Members, I add my thanks to the Department and the Minister for what they do. The right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr Mitchell) referred earlier to the soft power that DFID generates across the world.

I got a very helpful parliamentary briefing from Christian Aid, which is very active in Newtownards in my constituency. I want to pass on some of its comments, which I wholeheartedly support. Clearly, DFID is able to address many things, including the root causes of poverty: discrimination, tax avoidance, climate change, unsustainable debt and unfair trade rules. However, it cannot be forgotten or overstated that aid is vital for saving lives—DFID aid has saved lives; I reiterate that—as well as making sustainable investments for a fairer and brighter future.

It is estimated that UK aid saves a life every two minutes, for less than a penny in every pound. Between January 2015 and December 2017 alone, UK aid supported the immunisation of approximately 37.4 million children, saving 610,000 lives. If we ever needed a reason for DFID, the best reason I can think of is that it saves lives. Over the past 30 years, we have seen impressive progress on global poverty. Our Minister, her Department and our Government can take some credit for that, and I support what they do. It is nice to see the Minister back in her place. She seems to be as regular in Westminster Hall, as am I—and, indeed, the rest of us.

The UK has led many of the international responses to humanitarian crises across the world, providing life-saving health services, food, clean water and sanitation to those in need. The UK—with the support of all parties, rightly—has been first to help those affected by earthquakes and tsunamis. Christian Aid believes that Britain's commitment to providing effective aid is a badge of honour worthy of pride and fierce defence, and I agree; long may it continue. There has been some negative publicity about the 0.7% of GDP, but there is still strong public support for international development. I see that every year in my constituency when Christian Aid engages with the general public to ensure that money is raised. The people of Newtownards and Strangford are very generous every year.

As to possible changes, such as the merging of DFID with the FCO, I must express concern. In 2017, the independent Institute for Fiscal Studies concluded that poverty reduction in the world's poorest countries is at risk of being diluted by the Government's increasing tendency to prioritise UK national interest in aid spending. I want the present arrangement to be retained, because it works. If it works, why change it?

Many people say that aid should be given primarily to fight poverty. I am quite happy with where it is going, as long as it goes to the right place, and there is not the corruption referred to by other Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for East Londonderry (Mr Campbell), who is not in his place.

UK overseas assistance is one of the most heavily scrutinised areas of Government spending, with oversight from the Select Committee on International Development,

the National Audit Office and the Independent Commission for Aid Impact. There is international recognition that the UK leads in the shaping of the global development agenda, and the Department for International Development scores highly on the international aid transparency index. I see many reasons to continue to support DFID as it is. I would consider a decision to take money away from a Department that meets the gold standard to be wrong, and I urge the Minister and the Government to stand firm to ensure that it continues to do what it does—saving lives, addressing global poverty, ensuring that immunisation programmes can continue, and helping with sanitation and water quality. Many Members have spoken in the debate, and those still to speak will cover similar issues. Those things are important; my constituents want them to be dealt with, and the House should support that.

3.21 pm

Huw Merriman (Bexhill and Battle) (Con): It is a pleasure to speak under your chairmanship, Ms Dorries, and to go where the hon. Member for Slough (Mr Dhesi) has taken us in this debate. I am thrilled to be sitting next to my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr Mitchell), who has done so much work in the field of international development.

The key statistic for me is that it is estimated that for less than a penny in every pound, UK aid saves a life every two minutes. When it comes to value for money, the DFID budget is more important than many others, because it has such an impact. That is what brings me here, to stand up for DFID. I take the point made that it feels as if there has been a change of tone in the past couple of years. There has always been negativity and criticism about aid being sent abroad. We should make the case for what it does for the people of this planet, and what it does for our country. It is essential to stand up for a Department that spends money well. Interestingly, in the recent transparency index, out of almost 50 countries—and, in our case, two Departments—DFID scored third for value for money, which is “very good”. The Foreign Office's score level was “poor”; it was pretty much towards the end of the list. As a Conservative who values the concept of getting good value for money, why would I want money to be taken from a Department that spends it well and to go to a Department that has been spending it poorly?

I had a meeting at the FCO to discuss attempts to have one Minister across both Departments, and questions were asked about why the Foreign Office had got things wrong. DFID has often been beaten for mistakes, and in some of the stories that the *Daily Mail* has been so fond of, when the projects in question were not DFID's, but the Foreign Office's. The answer to the question was that whereas DFID has a ministerial requirement to go through every spend above £250, in the Foreign Office, officials have that remit. There is not the same ministerial oversight, so I can see why issues may arise. However, I believe that almost a third of the UK overseas aid budget will be spent outside DFID by 2020, and it is that creep that causes me concern, because I want our money to be spent well, and to save the 610,000 lives that the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) mentioned in connection with immunisation. That is what DFID does, whereas the Foreign Office has to

[Huw Merriman]

focus its attempts on diplomacy and other key areas. When it comes to spending aid money, I believe that DFID is the Department that should do it.

I have travelled with DFID officials and charity aid partners to see how the money is spent, and have been very impressed. When I first went to Jordan and the Syrian border to see whether our money was spent well, and to see different approaches, it was with an open mind. I was incredibly impressed by DFID's work with international partners that deal with distribution on the ground, and with partners within Government. The Jordanian Government are a classic example: they are hosting 600,000 refugees in a relatively peaceful country, propped up by a lot of aid from this country. Other countries in Europe took the view that they would take migration, but the people we met did not want to come to Europe. They wanted to stay in their country—or, I should say, go back to Syria when it is safe to do so. It is UK aid that is keeping them well. The sanitation I saw was heart-warming compared with what I thought it would be. When I compare what I saw at Sangatte in France with what we are helping countries such as Jordan to deliver, it fills me with pride at being British.

I recently went to Africa. In response to the point made by the hon. Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Lloyd Russell-Moyle) about our colonial past, I would issue a warning that it is the Chinese who are now doing what he described happening in Africa. Perhaps that is where the Foreign Office could intervene—by putting more pressure on China not to take from countries, treating them almost as a back office to China, but to put something into them. The corruption that is going on in Africa is a disgrace. However, I was heartened by the fact that in Djibouti, where 40% of the population are children, the mortality rate has halved as a result of UK aid helping our partners on the ground. There is much that we do, and we do it well. In April, I am going to Iraq to see what is being done.

I absolutely support the Minister in her post. I look forward to DFID continuing in its role, and to all of us standing up to champion what it can do, and pushing back on those voices that, I am afraid to say, do not always have its best interests at heart.

3.26 pm

Craig Tracey (North Warwickshire) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Dorries. I congratulate the hon. Member for Slough (Mr Dhesi) on securing the debate. The topic is incredibly important. A challenge for MPs is the fact that it is sometimes a hard sell with our constituents. Often they do not see the results of what is done; they just hear about the money going in at the front end. They do not see what good comes of it.

I must admit that I was slightly sceptical when I was elected in 2015, but subsequently I was appointed a Parliamentary Private Secretary in DFID—on two occasions. First I assisted the ministerial team—or un-assisted them, depending on how you looked at it. Afterwards, I worked with the Secretary of State. I saw at first hand the complete and utter dedication of the Secretary of State, the ministerial team and the civil servants who helped to pull the whole thing together.

Those people have great pride in what they do and the way they deliver it. They are delivering life-saving changes around the world.

I disagree with some comments by Opposition Members that the Secretary of State does not care as much as previous Secretaries of State. I have seen at first hand that she absolutely does. I was struck in my first meetings in the Department by her insistence that it was important to prove not only that money was being spent well, but that it could not be spent better. That is a critical point that we should always have at the forefront of our mind. In January 2018, she set out five pledges, which included a proposal for boosting trade and investment with developing countries, helping developing countries to stand on their own feet with sustainable health and education systems in which they invest, and finding ways to help other Departments make their spend more effective. There is a commitment to deliver on those things.

I want to make two quick points, relating to my earlier comment about our constituents not always necessarily understanding the importance of the Department. We are talking about huge sums of money—billions. It is worth reminding the House and our constituents of some of the things that DFID helps to deliver. Between April 2015 and March 2018 it reached 26.8 million people with humanitarian assistance and supported 11.4 million children in getting a decent education. It also supported 40.3 million people in accessing clean water and better sanitation. Since 2015, UK aid paid for more than 37 million children to be immunised, saving more than 600,000 lives across the world—the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) raised that point.

As I said earlier this week during Second Reading of the Children Act 1989 (Amendment) (Female Genital Mutilation) Bill, DFID has supported programmes to help more than 8,000 communities—representing more than 24.5 million people—who pledged to abandon FGM and let more than 3 million women and girls get FGM protection and care services. Those things are being delivered around the world as we speak.

We should not underestimate the benefits of soft power because, as colleagues have said, that is why we are respected around the world. That is not because of our football teams—certainly not my football team, Newcastle—our pop music industry or our cars, but because we are known to be a reliable partner that is there to help less fortunate countries when they need that support. As the world's fifth largest economy, we have a responsibility to help those countries, but that help also benefits Britain. By investing at source, problems are less likely to escalate and become more difficult, or perhaps to end up on our shores, meaning that we have to deal with those issues here, thereby putting pressure on other services. Work to prevent conflict, disease and disasters helps make this country more secure, and for those reasons I am very proud of DFID's work. It is important that DFID remains a standalone Department, not only so that it can continue to deliver services, but so that the quality and oversight of what is being delivered receives the best possible scrutiny.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Ms Nadine Dorries (in the Chair): Order. We have gone slightly over time so I would be grateful if Front-Bench speakers kept their speeches to nine minutes.

3.31 pm

Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Dorries. It is a rare experience for me to be in Westminster Hall these days, but I am delighted to speak about the Department for International Development. Once upon a time I was the SNP spokesperson for international development, and our current spokesperson, my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee West (Chris Law), is currently attending the International Development Committee—this debate has slightly unfortunate timing because I know the Committee is hearing important evidence, but it is good that some of its members have made it here today.

I warmly congratulate the hon. Member for Slough (Mr Dhesi) on securing this important and timely debate, and I agreed with practically every word he said, just as I agreed with other Labour Members and more broadly across the Chamber—there has been a fair degree of consensus today, which is positive. The hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) defended the Department for International Development and the 0.7% target, and if the Government's confidence and supply partners are keen on DFID, I think its safety is secured for the foreseeable future. We look forward to hearing from the Minister—she will also bring a bit of gender balance to the debate, as there has not been much of that. By way of an informal declaration of interest, I serve on the board of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy on behalf of the SNP, and I chair the all-party group on Malawi.

In the short time available—we want to hear from the Minister—I wish to reflect on some of the things we have heard and offer some perspectives from Scotland. In opening the debate, the hon. Member for Slough gave a good overview of DFID's history, particularly of its achievements in its current incarnation. DFID was one achievement of the new Labour Government, and for all the faults that some of us might have seen during those years, the establishment of the Department and its continuation has been a significant achievement. The United Kingdom played a huge role in the establishment and delivery of the millennium development goals, and it has gone on to do the same with the sustainable development goals. Again, we should give credit where it is due and to the role of the coalition Government in drafting the SDGs, under the leadership of the then Prime Minister, David Cameron. However, writing down goals on a piece of paper is one thing, but ensuring they are delivered is another, and that responsibility must be maintained by the Department.

DFID is one of the most scrutinised Departments, and as the former SNP spokesperson on international development I regularly took part on debates on aid spending—I know such debate continue to occur. We have the Independent Commission for Aid Impact, the International Development Committee, and there are all kinds of mandatory reporting mechanisms. It is perhaps no wonder that, as the hon. Member for Bexhill and Battle (Huw Merriman) said, stories end up in the *Daily Mail*, precisely because there is so much scrutiny—far more than for some other Departments.

Such scrutiny leads to a mismatch in public perception. According to opinion polls, analysis and focus groups, the public seem to think that not 0.7%, but closer to 7% or even 10% of national income is spent on aid. The perception is different from the reality, and when people see first-hand and understand the impact that aid is making, attitudes change—that point was emphasised very personally by the hon. Member for North Warwickshire (Craig Tracey). As the hon. Member for Stafford (Jeremy Lefroy) said, the small grants scheme is an important and welcome innovation, and for many years the Scottish Government have used their budget to allow that localised connection.

The amount of money spent on aid is about one tenth of spending on the health service. We spent £2 billion a year on Trident, and multiples of that on arms sales—that issue was raised by the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Alex Chalk). If money was diverted from that sort of spending, it could well complement the relatively small amounts that still go on aid. Importantly—this theme has come out of today's debate—DFID must maintain its role as the lead Department, and we must recognise the importance of investing in the long term.

There is a proper debate to be had about quality versus quantity, and although it can be difficult to measure the long-term impact of aid programmes, that does not mean they do not have an impact, or that years down the line it will not be clear that the investments have paid off in the long term because cultures, habits and attitudes have changed. That is why investing in monitoring and evaluation is important—it is part of delivery, and part of what the spending is for. Recent Secretaries of State have attempted to cut bureaucracy or reduce some of DFID's spending, and that is when we end up with money that has to be shovelled out the door and it is perhaps not monitored as effectively as possible. We must get right the balance between quality and quantity.

Since 2005, the Scottish Government—again on a cross-party basis—have run a small international development programme, and they continue to prioritise human rights, sustainable development goals, global citizenship, and a concept of ultimately moving beyond aid. There will always be a need for aid in some shape or form, but ultimately we need an holistic approach across the Government. Part of the point of the sustainable development goals is that global vision of how to achieve a better, more sustainable planet for everybody. We must implement those goals here in the United Kingdom, as well as ensuring that they are implemented effectively in developing countries.

In Scotland we sometimes hear that DFID is one of the United Kingdom's great assets, and a reason why Scotland should not consider embarking on its own constitutional independence. If DFID is to be undermined, and if we are to be told that the aid budget needs to be scrapped and is not effective—perhaps people should be a little careful about the logic of that argument if we in Scotland want to maintain our role as global citizens. That is why the rhetoric that we hear from Ministers about aid working in the national interest must be questioned.

I have never understood—no Minister has ever been able to tell me—how achieving the sustainable development goals, eradicating poverty, and ending the impact of climate change is not in the national interest. It is in our

[Patrick Grady]

collective interest as human beings to meet those development goals, and we should not need to try to make some sort of distinction. It is correct to have these debates and for DFID to be properly scrutinised, but the immediate context of this debate is worrying. As the hon. Member for Slough said, the Government must immediately distance themselves from the report by the Henry Jackson Society, and say that that is not their direction of travel.

The metaphor of pirates cruising around looking for galleons filled with gold is slightly unhelpful, because the amounts of money we are talking about are not vast, and the returns that we get from them vastly outstrip that investment. Finally, I say to people who think they can undermine the aid budget that there is a majority in this House and in this country who support the work of DFID. The people who campaigned, marched and lobbied for the Jubilee Campaign, the Trade Justice Movement and Make Poverty History have not gone away. They will use their voices and votes to stand up for the poorest and most marginalised around the country and the world. They can be assured of the SNP's support and, I believe, the support of the majority of Members in the House.

3.40 pm

Dan Carden (Liverpool, Walton) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Dorries.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Slough (Mr Dhesi) for securing this important debate. It is a shame that Members feel that they have to bring such debates to the House, when we thought we had settled the matter of the Department for International Development, as has been said over and over again today.

It is a pleasure to follow so many assured and supportive speeches, the majority of which gave total support for the future work of the Department for International Development, and to follow the former Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr Mitchell). The hon. Member for Stafford (Jeremy Lefroy) gave an excellent speech; he does a lot of important work with the World Bank on behalf of this House. The hon. Member for Bexhill and Battle (Huw Merriman) gave an outstanding speech that showed that if we look at this matter independently and objectively there is no question about the need for the independence of the Department, the 0.7% and all the arguments that he went through. On my own side, I follow the former Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow West (Gareth Thomas), and my hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Lloyd Russell-Moyle), who is a member of the International Development Committee.

In 1997, when Labour established the Department for International Development, Clare Short, the first Secretary of State for International Development, told the House of Commons that her Department had

“been given the most noble and honourable work that anyone could be asked to do.”

She said that eliminating global poverty, while

“both...affordable and...achievable”,

was also

“the single greatest challenge the world faces.”—[*Official Report*, 1 July 1997; Vol. 297, c. 116.]

In the two decades since then, politicians from across the political spectrum have ensured that this country steps up to that challenge.

The International Development Act 2002 ensures that all aid spending remains tightly focused on poverty reduction overseas and is not diverted to other ends. In 2014 Parliament improved on that and passed the International Development (Gender Equality) Act, to ensure aid spending strives to tackle the associated challenge of discrimination against, and oppression of, women and girls. In 2015 Parliament enshrined in law the commitment to spend 0.7% of national income on overseas aid, making us one of only five donor countries to meet the internationally agreed commitment.

Since DFID was established 22 years ago, it has become a global leader in international development. Every year it spends UK aid in ways that make tangible differences to people's lives the world over. DFID has helped some of the world's poorest people realise their right to health and education. It has provided emergency life-saving aid for people caught up in major humanitarian crises and has led the way in bringing gender equality into the mainstream through its development work. The UK public should be proud of the development work that their money has supported over recent decades, but all too sadly they do not hear the success stories of UK aid and the work of DFID. Instead, they hear a loud and vocal anti-aid lobby, which does its best to discredit the work, as many Members today have mentioned.

The charge against the country's aid programme is spearheaded by a small number of major media outlets, who revel in spinning and stirring the few occasions when UK aid programmes might not have worked as we had hoped. They are hell bent on driving a hysterical hatred of the UK's work to end global poverty. The anti-aid media narrative is a serious problem, but even more worrying are attacks from a number of Tory Members, which have many guises. I will mention three of them.

First, there is the straightforward misspending and diverting of aid away from poverty reduction. Last weekend *the Guardian* reported a letter sent to the Chancellor from 23 international development agencies, raising their concerns about the way Ministers are spending aid. They warned him that aid is being diverted away from the poorest countries in order to promote commercial and political interests. From using aid to help UK companies expand their businesses overseas, to suggestions that aid be spent on UK naval ships, we are seeing more aid than ever being spent on projects that no one sincerely believes are about reducing global poverty. Those attempts do nothing but feed into the idea that the UK aid programme is a waste of UK taxpayers' money.

Secondly, there are blatant attempts to dissolve the Department altogether. It is no secret that the former Foreign Secretary wants to see the Department dismantled. Earlier this month, he threw his weight behind a report that said DFID should be folded back into the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and that the UK's aid budget should be slashed. Such a move would be a disaster for the country's aid programme. It is only DFID that has the specific and sole purpose of poverty alleviation and a dedicated staff working to achieve this goal. Merging the Department with the FCO—or any other Department

for that matter—would dilute the agenda and see more money diverted away from poverty towards other foreign policy interests.

We can learn from Australia, where the international development department was merged with the foreign office, with a number of negative knock-on effects. The country's strategic vision for aid was lost, the Government witnessed a brain-drain of development expertise and an estimated 2,000 years of collective experience left the department.

We already know from our own experience, where almost one third of our aid is spent outside DFID, that only DFID meets the highest spending standards. The Aid Transparency Index, the only independent measure of aid transparency among the world's major development agencies, rated DFID "very good", while the FCO's aid spending was rated "poor", according to the same measure. Likewise, the ONE Campaign recently launched an aid index that rates aid spending by different Departments. It found the FCO to be "weak" on its ability to keep aid focused on poverty, and that no other Department spends aid as well as DFID.

The third threat, which is related, is the worrying challenge to our aid and development work presented by the persistent undermining of the very concept of aid. The Secretary of State has made clear her desire to change the definition of aid. She recently launched a consultation on her plans to reduce the amount of public money that needs to be spent on aid by counting profits from private investments towards the aid budget. There are no two ways about it—aid is either spent to alleviate poverty and the causes of poverty, or it is invested to make a profit. The Labour party rejects any attempts to commercialise the UK aid budget.

The Secretary of State has said that she thinks the 0.7% of aid spending is unsustainable. Will the Minister expand on that comment, which was reported to have been made in a Cabinet meeting? We know that the Secretary of State wants to rewrite the international rules set by the OECD that govern aid spending. In the context of the sustained threat that is faced by DFID and ODA, I am delighted this debate has been called.

Anyone who believes that this country has a role to play in international development must be ready to defend the Department and the budget. I cannot fathom why some people are so obsessed with eroding and ending aid.

Alex Chalk: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it was right for the British Government to seek to rewrite the rules to allow aid spending to be used to deal with some of the appalling consequences of the dreadful storm in British Overseas Territories? Does he agree that it was appropriate that British aid should go towards that deserving cause?

Dan Carden: As we heard from the hon. Gentleman's earlier contributions, maintaining the focus of the 0.7% is the most important issue. If we keep trying to erode and change the definition of aid, we are not backing that concept.

It disgusts me that people put so much energy into blocking support for the world's poorest people, when a fraction less than 1% of our country's income is spent on aid. I am a proud internationalist and I am proud

that my party was responsible for setting up the Department for International Development. I believe the country's aid programme is about morality, justice and pragmatism.

It is a shame that we are debating whether we should continue with our UK aid commitments and whether our world-renowned Department for International Development can survive many more years of Tory in-fighting, or be saved from being turned into a political football in any future leadership contest. I hope the Minister can give some guarantees on behalf of the Government.

3.49 pm

The Minister of State, Department for International Development (Harriett Baldwin): I congratulate the hon. Member for Slough (Mr Dhesi) on securing today's debate. It is worth highlighting that we have had a range of excellent speeches, eight of which were from Conservative and Democratic Unionist party colleagues, while there are five Labour Members here. The way in which the issues were raised in the debate, and the endorsement that the Conservative manifesto at the last election gave to the 0.7%, sets our record straight right off the bat, in terms of our commitment and our pride in being part of the movement that put 0.7% in statute—we are the only country in the world to have done that so far—and to the Government's policy to retain the Department for International Development as a stand-alone Department. The reasons for that were well articulated by a range of Members.

I am a Minister in both the Department for International Development and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. That makes a great deal of sense because, to highlight just one, South Sudan, of the worst humanitarian crises—where some of our biggest DFID budgets are—we can see that it is entirely a man-made conflict, and we need to work not only through providing humanitarian assistance, but by doing what we can on the political track to try to bring that conflict to a resolution. That is why it makes sense for me and the Minister for the Middle East to be in both Departments.

We have heard a range of excellent speeches, many of them focused on history and some of the lessons we have learned through history on how to do what we do more effectively. I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr Mitchell), who spoke eloquently about the role of the Department, many of the people who have served in the Department over the years, and the role of overseas development assistance in soft power and Global Britain. His characteristic modesty did not allow him to mention that he, I think, came up with "UK aid—from the British people". That is now widely used in our projects—I saw it on an Ethiopian water tank only last week. We should pay tribute to him for that; I know Ministers would like to see more of it.

The hon. Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Lloyd Russell-Moyle) spoke about M-KOPA and CDC. I was glad to hear that, because I have not always heard a consistent message of support from Labour Members on CDC, the private sector development arm. It brings a great deal of private sector capital into development issues and M-KOPA, which he highlighted, is a particularly good example.

[*Harriett Baldwin*]

The Conflict, Stability and Security Fund plays an important role. I reassure colleagues that 100% of our 0.7% spending comes in a form that is approved by the Development Assistance Committee. We have pushed to change some of the rules over the years and have been successful in doing that, and my hon. Friend the Member for Cheltenham (Alex Chalk) highlighted one of those successes. We have also been able to get the allocation for peacekeeping up from 7% to 15%. The role of the UN peacekeepers is important and the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund providing the foundation of peace and security for development is vital.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Jeremy Lefroy) rightly highlighted the important work that has been done through the aid budget to tackle a wide range of diseases, not just malaria and neglected tropical diseases but diseases such as polio. He spoke of the need for long-term development funding, which we do primarily through the World Bank now. He is making a powerful case for the UK to have its own bank. He rightly highlighted the importance of the Small Charities Challenge Fund and the aid match projects that allow us to match one-to-one the wishes of the British public with spending.

Gareth Thomas: The Minister will be aware of the SheDecides global movement, which supports the right of every girl and woman to make the decisions that only they should make. SheDecides Day is coming up fast. Will the Minister tell the House why the Secretary of State has not agreed to be an ambassador for the movement?

Harriett Baldwin: I cannot, because I was not aware of it, but I know that there is no one who women and girls around the world can count on more than our Secretary of State for her championing of the need to put women and girls first. It is putting women and girls first, and creating an environment where they do well, that enables the rest of the country to do well. That is vital and is incorporated in all of our programming.

The hon. Member for Harrow West (Gareth Thomas) also raised the issue of corruption, which is an example of where cross-Government working is so important, so that we can work with the National Crime Agency to tackle some of the financial flows and corruption that flow from some developing countries where we are spending overseas development assistance, through the UK courts and UK financial system. It is a good example of where we need to work across government.

Members discussed the fact that some other Departments spend overseas development assistance. Of course they do, for a range of things, whether that is trade, development, the work of the National Crime Agency, the work on

the environment and plastics through the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, or the work that we do on tackling climate change, which needs to be joined-up across government. There was a wide outbreak of consensus on that.

The hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) raised an important, underlying function: for us to save lives through what we do with aid. He was absolutely right to highlight that. My hon. Friend the Member for Bexhill and Battle (Huw Merriman) highlighted the importance of value for money and being able to tell the British taxpayer that we are getting it. The debate has allowed us to highlight some excellent examples of value for money.

My hon. Friend the Member for North Warwickshire (Craig Tracey), who I thank for the excellent work he did as my previous Private Parliamentary Secretary—he would be welcome back any time; he just needs to support the withdrawal agreement—highlighted that it is not just that the money should be spent well, but that it could not be spent better. The hon. Members for Glasgow North (Patrick Grady) and for Liverpool, Walton (Dan Carden) also made supportive comments.

I am glad to be able to reassure hon. Members that it is indeed Government policy to continue with the excellent stand-alone work of the Department for International Development. We can point to a strong track record of delivering results. We will continue to work across Government in a joined-up way in trying to achieve the sustainable development goals by 2030. We have heard a lot about the past of the Department. The future of the Department must surely be about focusing on achieving the sustainable development goals and on spending more of our money in areas of extreme poverty.

Mr Dhesi: Will the Minister categorically say that she is against the former Foreign Secretary's comments? Some of us are looking for the reassurance that post Brexit there will be no downgrading of our legal commitments.

Harriett Baldwin: I can give the hon. Gentleman that assurance.

3.58 pm

Mr Dhesi: I am very much heartened by the comments from the Minister, and her commitment. I am grateful to right hon. and hon. Members from both sides of the Chamber for their invaluable contributions to this very important debate and for the cross-party consensus that we have managed to maintain throughout.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House has considered the future of the Department for International Development.

Electoral Funding: Unincorporated Associations

4 pm

Martin Docherty-Hughes (West Dunbartonshire) (SNP): I beg to move,

That this House has considered the role of unincorporated associations in electoral funding.

It is very good to see you in the Chair, Ms Dorries; I believe this is the first Westminster Hall debate I have participated in where you have been in the Chair.

I will introduce this somewhat obscure topic of the role of unincorporated associations in UK electoral funding by setting the scene. We begin in the Glasgow suburb of Clarkston, the type of place that is usually prefixed with “leafy”. As many hon. Members from Scottish constituencies, especially in the west, will know, it is composed of the mid-century, semi-detached houses that are a familiar sight across the west of Scotland and, I am sure, elsewhere. Anyone who has watched “Two Doors Down” on BBC Scotland might know what I am talking about.

In one of those houses lives a seemingly upstanding citizen by the name of Richard Cook, a former vice-chair of the Scottish Conservative party and former Scottish Conservative and Unionist candidate for East Renfrewshire. A cursory search turns up photos of Mr Cook with numerous Tory grandees, including the current leader of the Conservative and Unionist party in Scotland, Ruth Davidson, Member of the Scottish Parliament, and her interim replacement, Jackson Carlaw, the local MSP. There is also a photo of Mr Cook with the former Prime Minister, David Cameron, who came to East Renfrewshire to campaign for Mr Cook in 2010, in the election campaign that, as we all know, made Mr Cameron Prime Minister.

During that campaign, voters in East Renfrewshire were given an impression of a candidate in a Tory target seat who fitted the zeitgeist well—a waste management consultant who could almost have been hand-picked by Conservative campaign headquarters to represent the new, green Tories. His leaflets spoke about protecting green spaces and improving recycling.

Incredibly, during the campaign, the company that Mr Cook founded, DDR Recycling, was involved in a scam relating to the illegal shipment of waste tyres around the world, as confirmed by the Environment Agency in the UK. During investigations into those shipments, it was alleged that Mr Cook submitted false evidence to authorities in the United Kingdom and in the Republic of India investigating the case. That case is the loose thread that pulls apart the Scottish Conservative and Unionist candidate’s carefully managed public persona.

Thanks to the excellent work of investigative journalists such as Peter Geoghegan and Adam Ramsay at openDemocracy, we have been led carefully through a mystery tour of Mr Cook’s business dealings, which belied the conventional suburban milieu from which he came. DDR Recycling is now in liquidation, owing the UK taxpayer £150,000, but before that, it became embroiled in a Californian court case brought by an international haulage firm, which alleged \$1.5 million of unpaid bills for waste shipments to South Korea.

That was only the beginning. Just before leaving DDR in 2014, Cook set up a company called Five Star Investment Management, with 75% of its shares held by the now late Prince Nawwaf bin Abdulaziz, a former head of Saudi Arabian intelligence, and the Saudi Arabian ambassador to the United Kingdom. A third partner, a Danish national by the name of Peter Hastrup, had previously been involved in a gun-running scandal in the Republic of India. That is only a glimpse into a dazzling array of international deals, including another \$1 billion environmental project in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, which looked to most trained observers like a litany of fraudulent deals.

Brendan O’Hara (Argyll and Bute) (SNP): While my hon. Friend wets his whistle, before he moves on from the role that journalists played in exposing the Constitutional Research Council and Mr Cook’s activities, will he acknowledge the role played by Jim Fitzpatrick of BBC Northern Ireland’s documentary series, “Spotlight”? His marvellous documentary, “Brexit, Dark Money and the DUP”, began this whole investigation and should be commended.

Ms Nadine Dorries (in the Chair): Order. That should be an intervention, not a speech.

Martin Docherty-Hughes: Perhaps I can remind the Chamber that my hon. Friend’s name is Brendan O’Hara. I totally agree with him and commend those who have assisted in exposing dark money to the light.

Why is all that relevant to a debate about unincorporated associations in the political process? Mr Cook is the poster boy for the way in which UAs have been used to funnel vast swathes of dark money into our political process. Even worse, the Electoral Commission allows fraudsters such as him effectively to mark their own homework. The Electoral Commission gave me a very informative briefing ahead of this debate, and I will use its definition of an unincorporated association:

“UAs are associations of two or more people, which do not fall into any of the other categories of permissible donors, are carrying on business or other activities wholly or mainly in the UK and have their main office here. They are permitted to donate money to political parties, non-party campaigners, individuals in elective office such as MPs, and referendum campaigners.”

The key phrase in that definition is,

“which do not fall into any of the other categories of permissible donors”.

That is what today’s debate is about. If the Minister answers only one question in this debate, I would like it to be this one: why, given all the ways in which individuals and organisations can donate money to political parties and groups in a transparent and straightforward manner, do we still allow this backdoor method, which seems to me to be easily exploited by those who would seek to obscure the provenance of funds?

Patricia Gibson (North Ayrshire and Arran) (SNP): My hon. Friend is giving an excellent speech. Is he surprised and disappointed, as I was, to learn that when SNP councillors lodged a motion asking Tory councils in North Ayrshire to make a statement on dark donations to local Tory branches, the Labour councillors abstained? Does he, like me, suspect that that is not unrelated to

[*Patricia Gibson*]

the much-denied informal confidence and supply arrangement that exists between Labour and Tory groups across Scotland?

[*MR IAN AUSTIN in the Chair*]

Martin Docherty-Hughes: It sounds like “Better Together”.

The case that proves my argument beyond doubt is the unincorporated association that Richard Cook leads: the Constitutional Research Council, or CRC. He describes the CRC as a group

“to start promoting the Union in all its...parts”,

and while it is based in Scotland, critically, it has managed to spread its tentacles across the rest of these islands. The CRC is most famous—or should I say infamous?—for the £435,000 donation it made to the Democratic Unionist party during the Brexit referendum.

Colin Clark (Gordon) (Con): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Martin Docherty-Hughes: Not at the moment, no.

That was a vast sum for a party whose election expenses do not normally even get past five figures. Some £280,000 of that donation was spent on a wrap-around advert in the *Metro* newspaper in the lead-up to the Brexit referendum, despite the fact that the only part of these islands where the *Metro* is not distributed is the part in which the DUP itself stands.

The bizarre situation, Mr Austin—it is good to see you in the Chair, sir; perhaps you will remember folks’ names, if they are allowed an intervention—allied with the fact that the advert itself closely resembled the type of advertising promoted in the official “Vote Leave” campaign, meant that the case soon came to the attention of those investigating illegal collusion between the campaigns, including this Parliament’s own Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee.

While the where or why of that collusion is not relevant to the debate, the vehicle used by the campaigns as a conduit for this cash—the CRC—is. Because the CRC is an unincorporated association, it could mask the ultimate sources of those funds. I will let the Committee report say it, as it is incredible.

Colin Clark: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Martin Docherty-Hughes: I will not, no. The Committee stated that

“this Committee and the wider public have no way of investigating the source of the £435,000 donation to the DUP made on behalf of the CRC and are prevented from even knowing whether it came from an organisation, whose membership had either sanctioned the donation or not, or from a wealthy individual.”

This is a political donation equivalent to twice the price of the average house in most parts of these islands. It is almost 60 times greater than the £7,500 threshold for naming normal political donors, but we know absolutely nothing about its source, and the Electoral Commission cannot tell us, as elected Members in this Parliament, how it verified that it was permissible.

Stewart Malcolm McDonald (Glasgow South) (SNP): Will my hon. Friend give way on this point?

Martin Docherty-Hughes: I will briefly, yes.

Stewart Malcolm McDonald: I am extremely grateful. Sometimes this stuff is hiding in plain sight. The Electoral Commission figures released earlier today tell us that the Conservative party has received a total of £400,000, with one donation coming from the household of a former Putin Minister eight months after the Salisbury poisoning, which killed a British citizen, and the other one coming from a weapons dealer and gunrunner who is a personal friend of the President of Syria, Bashar al-Assad. Does my hon. Friend agree that if that money is not returned, it confirms the Tory party’s status as a complete moral sewer?

Martin Docherty-Hughes *rose*—

Colin Clark: On that point, will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Martin Docherty-Hughes: No, I will not. I will make it clear that I fundamentally agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow South (Stewart Malcolm McDonald), and the Minister will not be able to turn to civil servants to answer on behalf of the Conservative party, because this is purely political. Let me also make it clear that this is the exact opposite of the probity and good governance that we would expect from a properly functioning liberal parliamentary democracy. I am sure that I am not the only one to come to the same conclusion as the DCMS Committee—that the CRC used this method.

Let me quote the Committee again. It stated that

“in order to avoid having to disclose the source of this £435,000 donation, the CRC, deliberately and knowingly, exploited a loophole in the electoral law to funnel money to the Democratic Unionist Party in Northern Ireland.”

I am of course disappointed not to see, for the first time ever, a member of the Democratic Unionist party at a Westminster Hall debate.

Mr Jonathan Lord (Woking) (Con): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Martin Docherty-Hughes: No. I know that the hon. Gentleman wants to speak on behalf of the DUP, but I will not give way. I wonder how many DUP Members know what the true source of the money was and whether it did the requisite due diligence before accepting it. Why do we continue to let cowboys such as Richard Cook effectively mark their own homework? Surely there must be a way to ensure that the probity of major political donations can be assured.

Let us not forget that there is a legitimate reason for UAs to exist; it is not my intention to suggest otherwise. In a legal sense, it is understandable that certain groups may want to keep structures that have no legal existence separate from their members.

Colin Clark: On that point, will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Martin Docherty-Hughes: No. As someone who worked for many years in the third sector in my constituency, I know very well—[*Interruption.*] Perhaps hon. Members will listen, rather than asking for an intervention they will not get. I know very well the value of UAs to organisations that do not want to be encumbered by the bureaucracy of other statuses.

Mr Lord: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Martin Docherty-Hughes: Once again, no. Political parties do this, of course. My own SNP branches—Clydebank, Dumbarton and the mighty Vale of Leven—make donations to the party, and vice versa, but the point is that they are able to do so in a transparent and accountable manner. Political parties and the sub-units therein are already, as you will know, Mr Austin, regulated as accounting units. Anyone going on to look at the list of donors to my political campaigns will know exactly where the money came from, and if it is not from an individual, people can be certain that it is from a group whose aims are well stated and well understood.

However, as we can see from the outcomes of the DCMS Committee report, donors who want to obscure the source of their donations are using unincorporated associations as a vehicle to do that. Quite simply, unincorporated associations beyond regulated political parties are a subtle legal fiction that allows fraudsters to dump dark money in our system, which is not confined to the outer reaches.

Mr Lord: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Martin Docherty-Hughes: No.

Mr Lord: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Martin Docherty-Hughes: Again, no, I will not. [*Interruption.*] One moment. It turns out that using UAs and similar convenient legal fictions to funnel dark money into our political system is the favoured modus operandi not only of Richard Cook, but of the Scottish Tory party of which he used to be the vice-chair.

Deidre Brock (Edinburgh North and Leith) (SNP): My hon. Friend is making a really powerful speech. He speaks of transparency and accountability being important and of a functioning liberal democracy being something that we should all support. Does he share my astonishment, because of course electoral support comes in forms other than hard cash, that the Prime Minister has yet to reply to my letter of 7 January about the visit of AggregateIQ to Downing Street? That follows on from her failure to write to me after Prime Minister's questions as she said she would on 12 September.

Martin Docherty-Hughes: It does not surprise me, because the leader of the Scottish Conservative party has never even responded to my request in terms of a letter about dark money.

Mr Lord: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Martin Docherty-Hughes: No, I will not at the moment. I am going to make some progress, because I know we are short of time.

Let us be quite open: news outlets such as openDemocracy and the Ferret have documented how UAs and similar legal entities designed to obscure donations have been used to flood Scottish politics with cash. During the 2016 Holyrood election campaign that saw the Scottish Tories become the official second party, hundreds of thousands of pounds were funnelled through other organisations with an illegal remit such as the Irvine Unionist Club, the Scottish Unionist Association Trust, the Scottish Conservative Club and, of course, Focus on Scotland. Indeed, during the election to this place, in which Members from the other parties were elected, several elected candidates from the Scottish Conservative party accepted donations from opaque organisations.

Quite simply, I do not think it is befitting of our political system to continue with this type of ambiguity. In 2017, all my colleagues and I stood on a manifesto to enhance the powers of the Electoral Commission and increase the punishments available to it. The manifesto stated:

“SNP MPs will support new powers for the Electoral Commission, providing them with legal authority to investigate offences under the Representation of the People Act 1983. We will also support the Electoral Commission’s call to make higher sanctioning powers available to them, increasing the maximum penalty from £20,000 to £1,500,000.”

Bill Grant (Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock) (Con): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Martin Docherty-Hughes: No. I think that we are all very rapidly—[*Interruption.*] If this is a debate, perhaps a member of the Democratic Unionist party should have been here, rather than members of the Scottish Conservative party.

Mr Lord *rose*—

Colin Clark *rose*—

Bill Grant *rose*—

Martin Docherty-Hughes: No. I think that we are all very rapidly—[*Interruption.*] One moment. I think that we are all very rapidly becoming aware, if we were not already, that the current regulations and various pieces of legislation that police our electoral system are being tested to the absolute limit, and most certainly at the wrong time.

In learning about the activities of shysters such as Richard Cook in our own political process, I was sadly reminded of some of the characters in the recently released book “Moneyland” by the investigative journalist Oliver Bullough. In that book, we see how the unscrupulous and corrupt have used the mechanisms of international finance and regulation effectively to create a place—Moneyland—that puts them outside the normal jurisdictions that mere mortals such as ourselves must live under. One of the more upsetting aspects of the book is the way in which this city has become the clearing house par excellence for both the money and the reputations of a whole host of unsavoury characters who see the banks, the legal services and a whole range of other civil society bodies and institutions as ready and willing to help them in that regard, and do not ask too many questions about it. [*Interruption.*] Not at the moment.

[*Martin Docherty-Hughes*]

Ultimately, this is what Richard Cook has done with the CRC. He has used his reputation as a former chair of the Scottish Conservatives and as a former candidate in East Renfrewshire to create the appearance of probity in the organisation, while at every turn refusing to reveal the ultimate source of its donations or even who constitutes its membership. It would be interesting to hear from the Minister whether she is happy to see the reputation of her party being used for that purpose. Although I have many profound disagreements with the Conservative party on policy, I understand that, in terms of parliamentary democracy, its reputation affects the entirety of our political system, and I cannot for the life of me understand why anyone would be happy with those realities.

Bill Grant: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Martin Docherty-Hughes: No. This Government have undoubtedly allowed that to happen to our political system, with dark money now flooding unhindered through it. Dark money is a cancer in our political system, and unincorporated associations are the most prominent way in which that cancer enters the bloodstream. It is a malignancy that works by removing transparency and confidence in the system of political funding—something that undermines trust in the political system as a whole.

Colin Clark: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Martin Docherty-Hughes: No. And we must be—

Colin Clark: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Martin Docherty-Hughes: No. We must be unflinching in our determination to root this out. As Oliver Bullough writes near the end of “Moneyland”, political parties have been guilty of accepting money when they cannot be entirely clear about the ultimate source of those donations. Whether it be the Conservatives, the Democratic Unionist party or the Vote Leave campaign, they have simply failed to do the correct due diligence. I will draw my remarks to a close with a quote from that book:

“Disapproval of these surreptitious payments should not depend on whether they are befitting your own side or not. They are inherently harmful. Without trust, liberal democracy cannot function.”

I shall recap and pose the questions that I would like the Minister to answer. Given all the ways in which individuals and organisations can donate money to political parties and groups in a transparent and straightforward manner, why do we still allow unincorporated associations, which are not political parties, to participate so freely, especially in a way that is easily exploitable by those who would seek to obscure the provenance of funds? Will the Government support the Scottish National party’s manifesto commitment to increase the sanctioning powers available to the Electoral Commission from £25,000 to £1,500,000? Will the Government do the right thing and extend the transparency rules around donations made in Northern Ireland from 2014? The cancer of dark money must be removed from our political system. I call on the entire House to join us in that process.

4.21 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office (Chloe Smith): It is an absolute pleasure to see you in the Chair, Mr Austin. I am grateful to the hon. Member for West Dunbartonshire (Martin Docherty-Hughes) for calling this debate, and for the contributions made by various hon. Members. I am only amazed that he took no intervention from anyone other than his friends.

Mr Lord rose—

Chloe Smith: I would be delighted to hear from my hon. Friend.

Mr Lord: I am hoping that the Minister will say that the Government and all political parties want to root out any wrongdoing. I came here for a Westminster Hall debate, but the sewer of accusations spewed forth by the hon. Member for West Dunbartonshire (Martin Docherty-Hughes) is an absolute disgrace. As the Minister said, he took many interventions from his own party, but refused dozens of interventions from others. This was not a debate; it was a diatribe, and he should be ashamed of himself.

David Linden Glasgow, East (SNP): On a point of order, was there a question to the Minister in that last intervention, or was that also a diatribe?

Ian Austin (in the Chair): As far as I can see, nothing disorderly has taken place so far. The Minister can respond to Mr Lord’s question, if she wishes.

Chloe Smith: Thank you, Mr Austin.

I will set out the rules surrounding the involvement of unincorporated associations in election funding, which will be helpful in responding to the debate. These associations are included in the list of permissible donors set out in section 54 of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000. The additional Political Parties and Elections Act 2009 introduced reporting rules for UAs that supported political activities; those rules are in schedule 19A of the 2000 Act.

Unincorporated associations must notify the Electoral Commission if the political contributions that they make over a calendar year are more than £25,000, whether that is through a single contribution or several. An unincorporated association must also notify the Electoral Commission of the reportable gifts that it received in the calendar year before it made the contribution, the calendar year of the contribution, and the calendar year following the contribution. That information is published by the Electoral Commission in its register of unincorporated associations and its register of recordable gifts to unincorporated associations. In this way, there is transparency as to who is providing the funds that are paid out by the associations.

Patricia Gibson: Will the Minister give way?

Chloe Smith: No, I will not, for entirely unsurprising reasons.

Reportable gifts include a single gift of more than £7,500, two or more gifts of over £500 given by the same person in the same calendar year that total more than £7,500, and any additional gifts of more than £1,500 given by a source from which the UA has already

received a gift of more than £7,500 in the same calendar year. Electoral Commission guidance also states that any UA that intends to make contributions of more than £25,000 should keep records of all the gifts it receives that are worth more than £500.

There are various ways in which offences are deemed to have been committed. As hon. Members are aware, responsibility for regulating political finance sits with the independent Electoral Commission. It is right and proper that that should sit with an independent body. Any concerns about breaches of the law should be reported to the appropriate authority, and a record of the regulated groups who make and receive donations, including MPs, MSPs and other politically active people, is publicly available on the Electoral Commission's website. That data is a treasure trove of information, because it reminds us that the Scottish National party and pro-independence campaigners have accepted political donations from unincorporated associations. Who would believe it?

Colin Clark: It is very good of the Minister to give way; it is unfortunate that the hon. Member for West Dunbartonshire (Martin Docherty-Hughes) would not. As the Minister was about to say, the Scottish Women's Independence Fund Trust, an unincorporated association, has donated money to the SNP. On an associated subject, I would like to ask her opinion of another way of raising finance. The SNP have mentioned sewers; the former First Minister, Alex Salmond, raised £100,000 for a court case—and may have raised more money subsequently. We are talking about a different way of raising money, but does the Minister agree that perhaps Alex Salmond should give that £100,000 back? *[Interruption.]*

Ian Austin (in the Chair): Order. I call the Minister to respond.

Chloe Smith: Thank you very much, Mr Austin. My hon. Friend reminded us that all parties ought to be above board and transparent about their donations. I can confirm that the Conservative party is above board and transparent, as I would expect it to be.

The Government believe that the rules governing permissible donors and the reporting rules for unincorporated associations are sufficiently comprehensive. The permissible donor rules capture the groups that operate in this area, and the relevant reporting rules provide appropriate transparency, but do not swamp these often small organisations in red tape, which is a consideration. The Government therefore have no plans

to amend the law. The 2000 and 2009 Acts introduced greater transparency into this area. We welcome that, because it means that we are able to have this debate backed up by a record from the Electoral Commission of who has received what, allowing us all to be transparent.

I will address transparency in Northern Ireland before closing my remarks. The anonymity provisions there have an important historical provenance. They were introduced by the Labour Government in 2001 and were based on careful recommendations in the Committee on Standards in Public Life's fifth report, published in 1998, which concluded that it would be unsafe to disclose the names of those who had made donations to the Northern Ireland parties, as it might result in their intimidation. The retrospective removal of anonymity could put individuals' safety at risk. We understand the history of that rule. That is why the donations and loans regime for political parties in Northern Ireland was different from that in Great Britain, and that is a matter for the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

However, thanks to this Government, there is once again greater transparency around those donations and loans; the Electoral Commission publishes full details of all donations and loans to Northern Ireland parties from July 2017. That start date was set because it represented a consensus across the Northern Ireland parties, which is very important.

Finally, donations to the Conservative party are properly and transparently declared to the Electoral Commission. It is unhelpful when hon. Members make accusations that do not seem to fit with what senior members of their parties say. One might note what the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire (Pete Wishart) said on "Good Morning Scotland" in July 2018. Was there any evidence that the Conservative party had improperly received donations? "No. Absolutely not." Let us have some consistency, and an understanding of what our elections rules exist to do and the way in which they provide transparency. That applies to unincorporated associations, as well as to the range of other organisations that are correctly mentioned in our electoral law. It is important that we have those rules.

I hope that I have set out why those rules exist, and how they provide transparency to the public. Through that transparency, some perhaps surprising points have arisen from the records. I hope that that is helpful to the House. I hope it allows us all to conduct politics in the respectful manner that we expect, and to display such respect to our constituents.

Motion lapsed (Standing Order No. 10(6)).

Residents of Leisure Park Homes

4.30 pm

Helen Whately (Faversham and Mid Kent) (Con): I beg to move,

That this House has considered rights and protections for residents of leisure park homes.

It is a pleasure to open this debate under your chairmanship, Mr Austin. If you were to visit my constituency, drive along the A20 past Harrietsham, then turn up a winding single-track lane into the rolling hills of the North Downs area of outstanding natural beauty, after about five minutes you would find yourself at Pilgrims Retreat. It is a beautiful spot surrounded by fields and woodland, and there is hardly a building to be seen other than on the site. It is an ideal spot for a holiday, within easy reach of Leeds castle and the Kent coast, and a lovely place to retire to. That is the dream that several of my constituents gave their life savings to buy into.

The reality is a long way from the rural idyll that they were hoping for. Some have spent a six-figure sum on a park home that they believed they could spend the rest of their days in, only to find that they have bought a holiday home, which means that they do not have the same status as permanent residents and leaves them vulnerable to exploitation.

Some arrived at their new property and found that they could not get in, because there was no path or steps up to the front door. The site owner, Fred Sines, a man with a record who has been previously mentioned in the House, then demanded thousands of pounds in cash to fix the problem. I am told that he has also hiked pitch fees overnight with little warning, and that there is a culture of fear and intimidation, with people being banned from using facilities such as the club room, and threatened with having their properties demolished. All the while, they are paying council tax to the local authority, even though they are not permanent residents.

I recognise that leisure park homes or holiday homes are a significant part of Britain's tourism industry. They are often in beautiful rural or coastal settings, and can be important drivers of the local economy when used for their true purpose: holidaying. According to a recent report by the UK Caravan and Camping Alliance, holiday homes in mobile home or caravan parks make up 8% of the UK's tourism sector, generate £3.9 billion in visitor spend, and support 170,000 jobs.

When run in a decent and proper way, holiday parks support local economies and provide much-needed jobs in areas where work can be hard to find, but that is not always the case, and Pilgrims Retreat is not a one-off. In my constituency and elsewhere, holiday homes appear to be being mis-sold as residential homes, depriving the local area of tourist income and leaving residents, some of whom are elderly, in poor health and vulnerable to exploitation, with few rights or protections.

The situation is compounded by the failure of local authorities to enforce the terms of holiday home licences consistently by checking whether people are living there all year round—they should not be—and that they have another, main address. There are undoubtedly many wonderful holiday parks where the owners follow the rules, holidaymakers come and go in peace, and the local economy benefits, but that is not always the case.

John Lamont (Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk) (Con): My hon. Friend is making a strong case as to why the subject needs to be looked at, and is highlighting the problems that her constituents have experienced. Does she recognise, however, that many operators do a good job and provide employment for local people? I have several examples in my constituency, such as Meadowhead Ltd, which provides a good service. It is important that the whole industry is not tarnished by the way that those bad examples have conducted themselves.

Helen Whately: My hon. Friend makes a good point. There are also well-managed park homes sites in my constituency, which is a reason to take action where the system is not working. We have to make sure that the whole industry is not tarnished by the actions of an unscrupulous minority.

For a subset of sites, there is a problem. Gaps in the law and inadequate oversight by local authorities allow unscrupulous site owners to benefit from a lack of consumer awareness. To fix that, we need to strengthen the rights and protections for holiday home owners, make sure that owners and potential owners know those rights, and make sure that the law is properly enforced.

Mark Garnier (Wyre Forest) (Con): My hon. Friend is making a coherent case on both sides of the argument. Does she agree that in some cases—not many—tenants are gaming the system to the disadvantage of park owners, and that a way forward may be more formal legal requirements, through which people who sign leases receive legal advice and are properly bound by the contracts that they sign?

Helen Whately: I have heard the same thing. It is as if my hon. Friend had seen my speech in advance—although I know he has not—because we have clearly come to some of the same conclusions.

I reiterate that where the law does not work and enforcement does not happen, the industry overall gets a bad name. As a consequence, individuals' dreams of an idyllic retirement in a country or coastal setting turns into a nightmare. One specific reason for that is because the owners of a holiday park home do not own the land that they live on; they are simply leasing the caravan or the mobile home on that land. People think that they are signing up to own the property in the long term, but they are actually signing a short-term lease, which can be for as short a time as 12 years. As they are leaseholders, they are covered only by consumer protection legislation, not wider housing laws.

Under the Mobile Homes Act 2013, local authorities have powers to issue notices to residential site owners when the site is not kept in a good condition. They can be fined up to £5,000 for failure to comply with those notices. The Act also gives councils emergency powers to enter sites at short notice to enforce those notices. Holiday park homes are excluded from the Act, however, so although it has helped to reduce exploitation on residential sites, that exploitation seems to have shifted to holiday home sites. Solving one problem appears to have created another.

Martin Whitfield (East Lothian) (Lab): I congratulate the hon. Lady on securing this timely debate. In Scotland, there is a requirement for licences to have been issued to

owners by May, whether they permanently reside on a holiday or residential site. The purpose is to give them the guarantees that are lacking in the cases she has referred to. The Scottish Confederation of Park Home Residents Associations has come together to help those people, and to give them a voice that can be heard by the council when there are complaints, and, more importantly, by the site owners when they deviate from what we would all expect.

Helen Whately: In general, we should look at what is happening in all parts of the United Kingdom to see what works best, and learn from it. I will refer to Wales in a moment, and no doubt the Minister will do the same.

I have already had conversations with the Minister on the issue. She is sympathetic and concerned, and is very much looking into it, which I appreciate. My first questions are whether she will consider extending the relevant parts of the 2013 Act to holiday home owners; whether she will consider introducing tougher penalties for unscrupulous holiday site owners to discourage them from acting in an exploitative way; and whether she will look at the fit and proper person test, which could be introduced in England for residential homes under the Act, and has already been introduced in Wales. Although the test is not perfect, it would be a step in the right direction, and would make it harder for a known unscrupulous landlord to get a site licence.

As well as introducing stronger rights and protections for the purchasers of holiday homes, we need to make sure that existing legislation is enforced. My understanding is that in England, the responsibility falls on local councils; the local council, for instance, should check that holiday home owners have another primary address, so that their holiday home is not their only and main address, and should also ensure that holiday home owners are not staying in their holiday home all year round.

It appears, at least in Maidstone in the case of Pilgrims Retreat, that my local borough council has not been doing those things, so the situation has been allowed to continue, not just for months but for years. It has built up, so that tens, indeed potentially hundreds, of people who believe they are residents are affected, even though the same local authority has been collecting council tax from these individuals, as if they were permanent residents.

The site licence at Pilgrims Retreat has been extended from 11 months to 12 months, which compounds the confusion of individuals seeking to buy properties there and live in them by giving them the impression that they can stay in these places all year round. I do not believe that my local council is alone in doing that.

Given the situation and the various ways in which individuals at Pilgrims Retreat have been let down, I welcome the fact that my local council is considering an amnesty for them and is trying to find ways to avoid making the residents—as they believe they are—homeless, because these properties are their only residence, and they have spent their savings on them; but in general, the situation should not and must not be allowed to continue.

If borough councils across the country are really struggling and failing to enforce the rules, it would be right to look at other options for licensing and enforcement.

I ask the Minister to consider what could make enforcement work better. What changes to the rules might make enforcement easier? Should there be other organisations involved, or other levels at which enforcement and licensing occur, perhaps at county level? Or should there be an independent regulator with statutory enforcement powers?

To make things easier, perhaps there should also be a change to the rules. When a site has a 12-month licence, people might be told that they cannot stay there all year round, but it is really hard to enforce that rule. It would be easier if a site simply closed for a period of the year, for one or two months. That would not necessarily be popular with the holiday park owners, who are trying to run a business in which people might want to take a holiday at any time of the year, but there is a balance to be struck between making sure that the business model works, and making sure that these properties are holiday homes, because if they become *de facto* housing developments, they are totally failing to achieve their objective for the economy.

We need stronger protections for the individuals who live in these homes, and need to make sure that any new protections are properly enforced. We need to make sure that consumers know their rights. I have spoken to the British Holiday & Home Parks Association and listened to stories from all around the country, and it seems to be clear that many people are not alert to the risk of being mis-sold a holiday home. They hear that residents pay council tax; they know about 12-month leases; and often the site owners are the only source of information and advice for somebody planning a purchase, up to and including the point of sale. Many purchasers genuinely believe that they are buying a residential home.

Dr Dan Poulter (Central Suffolk and North Ipswich) (Con): My hon. Friend is making some good points. On the issue of advice, is there not a potential role for solicitors in providing advice about the transactions involved? We are not talking about inconsiderable sums of money; sometimes we are talking about a lot of money for the individuals who are buying these park homes. What role does she feel that solicitors and the legal process should have in helping people to make wise decisions and understand the risks involved?

Helen Whately: I thank my hon. Friend for making that point, which is similar to one that was made earlier. When individuals are spending these sums of money—£100,000 or £200,000—perhaps they should be required to get some form of legal advice; it would be right to consider that. Clearly, we do not want to make the process more onerous than the process of buying a home, but one cannot buy a bricks-and-mortar house without going through a conveyancing process. Perhaps if there was a requirement for some kind of more formal process, fewer people would fall into the trap of misunderstanding what they are buying.

There is also a role for communication. Perhaps there is an opportunity for a communications campaign targeted at this market—at potential and current holiday park home owners—so that we get the message to people who might well become victims of this situation. We need to address the mismatch between people's perceptions and the reality of buying a holiday park home. People

[Helen Whately]

need to understand that they are not buying the land; they are buying a lease. They need to know the implications of that.

Looking around, I believe that there are colleagues who may wish to speak, and I am very keen to make sure that my hon. Friend the Minister has time to answer my questions, so I will conclude by saying that by strengthening legislation to give protections to holiday park home owners, by ensuring proper enforcement, and by improving consumer awareness, we can and must make sure that other people do not fall into the same trap that my constituents at Pilgrims Retreat did.

4.46 pm

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): It is always a pleasure to speak in Westminster Hall at any time, but this issue is one that I have a particular interest in, because I have a leisure and park homes facility in my constituency of Strangford, located in the village of Ballyhalbert. It has been there for many years.

I thank the hon. Member for Faversham and Mid Kent (Helen Whately) for securing this debate. I am mindful that the last time I spoke in Westminster Hall on the issue of leisure and park homes, the right hon. Member for Romsey and Southampton North (Caroline Nokes), was not a Minister, but she is now. She brought this issue forward in that debate, and she and I both spoke then. It is a pity that some years have passed by and we have not seen the conclusion that she and I wanted to see.

I will speak on a very specific point, which relates to some of the problems that we have had in my constituency. They may not be the issues that the hon. Member for Faversham and Mid Kent has referred to, but they are issues that I feel I have to air in Westminster Hall today.

They relate to my time prior to coming to Westminster, when I was in the Northern Ireland Assembly, doing the job I had before this one. During my time in the Assembly, the Caravans Bill, which was a private Member's Bill, was brought before us and I fully supported the rights not simply of those who owned holiday caravans but of those who chose to live permanently on site, of whom there were many. Caravans were a burgeoning business at that time, but from the local council to the Assembly and then obviously to here in Westminster, I have followed the issue. I was supportive of proper rights then and I am supportive of them now. The hon. Lady has put forward a very good and solid case today.

I am very pleased to see the Minister in Westminster Hall again. She seems to be in Westminster Hall almost as often as I am; this is two days running. *[Laughter.]* I jest.

Back in 2015, I questioned the then Minister—now Secretary of State for Work and Pensions—about electricity prices for park home residents, outlining concerns about the lack of energy efficiency schemes for those living in park homes. I was ever mindful of the fact that the age of those living in park homes is from 55 upwards, perhaps up to 80, and I asked the then Minister to see what she could do to help those people, taking into account the fact that park homes cannot have electricity meters. That was just one of the many issues that I

raised at that time. It was clear that there were indiscretions and difficulties, and I want to highlight some of those as well today.

We are considering another issue in this debate. The Mobile Homes Act 1983 gives protection, as do the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 and part 2 of the Consumer Rights Act 2015, which protects consumers from enforceability of unfair terms in contracts—the hon. Member for Faversham and Mid Kent referred to unfair terms in contracts. In addition, there are the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008. There are all of these pieces of legislation, and yet residents are not protected and are unsure of their rights. I want to air those issues today.

For the record, it is important that I say that this matter is a devolved one in Northern Ireland, and so it is not the Minister's responsibility to respond to all of my points. Nevertheless, I want to air these issues, because the problems that the hon. Lady mentioned are happening in England—that is why all the English Members are here today—and they are probably also happening in Scotland and Wales. In Northern Ireland, they would be under the control of the Assembly—if only we had a functioning Assembly.

I have been dealing with an issue related to the park homes in my constituency, in co-operation with the local council, and these matters are certainly not straightforward or simple. As an example of the litigation and the problems that occur as a result of it, the removal of fences was a battle from beginning to end. The owners of the park homes site are required to operate under a licence issued by the council, which is displayed on site. The licence conditions relate to amenity and safety, and are based on model licence conditions issued by the environment Department in 1992.

I had a meeting with local residents. Again, many things happen at those meetings: some local residents come with problems, and others sometimes need some encouragement to follow the rules that are laid down.

Ben Lake (Ceredigion) (PC): Like the hon. Gentleman, I have many holiday parks in my constituency, and it is important to put on record that not all are as unscrupulous as some of the examples that we have heard about. However, the hon. Gentleman makes an important point: often, the constituents who come to us with problems are not fully aware of their rights, or of some of the remedies that are available to them. Does he agree that we should be looking at how to raise awareness of those remedies?

Jim Shannon: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. What he has said is what we are all trying to achieve, including the hon. Member for Faversham and Mid Kent and myself.

All parks are inspected annually for compliance with the model conditions during the annual site licensing visit to the park homes. The licence states:

"Fences must not be erected around or near to individual caravans unless they are of non-combustible material and they do not present a safety hazard."

I felt at the time, and still feel, that many of these people have had these fences in place for 10 or 15 years, and there was never a bit of bother until about three years

ago. People planted their wooden palisades, their trees or small bushes, and some council staff then interpreted those things as dangerous.

The council stated:

“While the Council has a duty to ensure compliance...the responsibility rests with the park owner. In this case...the owner had failed to ensure compliance and to recognise that the presence of such combustible materials can assist the rapid spread of fire, and that”

enclosing individual sites

“does not allow for access for emergency vehicles.”

That was what the whole issue was about.

Mr Jonathan Lord (Woking) (Con): I urge the devolved Administrations, when examining issues with residential park homes, to look at what this Parliament did with the revised legislation and regulations. I had a steady stream of casework prior to those revisions; I have not had a single piece of casework since. In the light of the residential issues that the hon. Gentleman is talking about, I urge the devolved Administrations to look at what this Parliament has introduced.

Jim Shannon: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention; I am just coming to my conclusion, Mr Austin, as you will be glad to hear. The conclusion is that we got to the end of the road and got the problem sorted—hallelujah for that. However, getting it around took a long time. After much deliberation, and by agreement between the park homes and the council, the residents have been permitted to retain the boundary fencing as it does not assist the spread of fire from property to property, which we always said it did not.

That one issue highlights the quagmire that living in a park home can create. We need to have specific, clarified regulation to protect park owners and residents, and to allow a better working relationship with local authorities. Those in park homes are typically retired and sometimes vulnerable people, and I do not feel that the current quagmire of guidance and legal protection offers those people protection. I truly believe that this must change.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Ian Austin (in the Chair): I have to call the Front Benchers at 5.10 pm. There are four people who want to speak, so I would be grateful if Members could restrict their remarks to about four minutes.

4.53 pm

Sir Desmond Swayne (New Forest West) (Con): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham and Mid Kent (Helen Whately) for raising this issue, and endorse much of what she has said. The holiday park homes in my constituency bring in hundreds of thousands of holiday makers, and their revenue, every year. Those homes are extraordinarily well managed; they produce a very high-quality consumer product; and a huge amount of reinvestment takes place every year to keep that product at its high standard. I am always aware of the problems that I have had with park homes in the past, but those were largely—in fact, exclusively—confined to the residential homes in my constituency. I have never had any difficulty with the holiday homes; they are all extremely reputable organisations.

With respect to the residential homes, by and large, I have again had little difficulty, particularly when they are operated by public limited companies in which there is someone who people can deal with. There are, however, a number of homes run by—I am struggling to find the delicate words to use—people who have neither the social nor managerial skills to make a success of it, if I can put it that way. It is sometimes difficult to contact anyone representing those park homes, and that is the area in which we need to come up with a better form of intervention. The question of “fit and proper person” has been raised, and it is an appropriate question to ask.

One of the issues that many residents of residential homes raise with me is that of the 10% selling-on fee. It is extraordinary to me that people enter into contractual arrangements without advice and without realising what they are letting themselves in for. Nevertheless, if that is to be addressed, we have to recognise that realistically, it is part of the economics of running a park home and we would therefore expect that revenue to be paid for elsewhere in these people’s site fees. However, for park home owners of the nature that I have described, there is always an incentive to increase the turnover of sales by making vulnerable people’s lives miserable so that they move on. Removing that incentive is a clear argument for addressing the issue of the 10% fee.

4.56 pm

Gillian Keegan (Chichester) (Con): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham and Mid Kent (Helen Whately) for raising this important issue, which affects a lot of us here. I have visited both residential and leisure park homes in my constituency, and under the correct management, there is no doubt that they can be well-run sites that are great places to live or to go on holiday. However, some of them are in the wrong hands, and bad practice can creep into leisure sites, creating an exploitative way of doing business. The lack of regulation is certainly making that situation worse.

During my visit to a leisure park site in my constituency, I heard accounts from many constituents of maintenance disputes, intimidation and harassment by site management, and rules being changed: one day, those residents could have an outdoor shed, and the next day they could not. One day, they could have plant pots, and then suddenly they could only have three plant pots, with all the rest being smashed. The management was quite threatening, and the residents were definitely frightened.

Even more concerning were reports about mis-selling of leisure homes as permanent accommodation, and unclear contractual arrangements on reselling and pitch fees. There were many stories of people having been sold a dream of selling up and buying a holiday home, with an emphasis on the site being open for most of the year. I was even handed photographic evidence of signage stating that a site was an ideal starter home, and encouraging people to move into those starter homes. In places such as Chichester, where the average house price is over £300,000, that is an attractive offer for many. Of course, all the buyers think is that they have to go on holiday for two weeks, which most of us do. Many of the residents were only given part 1 of their licence agreement during the sales process, with part 2—the terms and conditions—made available only after the sale, or in some cases never supplied. One gentleman I spoke with

[Gillian Keegan]

explained that he had signed his contract despite not seeing all the small print because, after divorcing, he needed to find somewhere to live really quickly.

From those examples, and from others shared by Members today, it is evident that there is a widespread problem of holiday park sites being used residentially, with owners not adequately protected under consumer rights legislation. Of course, local authorities have enforcement powers, but they are concerned about using them: they know that this is going on, but they are concerned about creating a problem that they cannot solve, because if people are made homeless there are not enough homes. If an owner is a member of the National Caravan Council, then they can also use that council to raise concerns. However, not all sites are members. I visited a park home site recently, and it had left the NCC, so there was no means of redress.

Where site owners are guilty of mis-selling, the balance of power is completely in their favour. Residents have no permanent address and possibly no local connection to the area. That can lead to problems registering on the electoral roll, accessing local services or receiving benefits they need. Residents are often too scared to come forward with complaints because they are all too aware of their vulnerable position. They are almost stateless in a way; they do not have any rights. Essentially, they are fearful of being evicted and made homeless. Consumer rights legislation does not offer these grey area residents the same level of statutory protections, such as against harassment or rights over information such as utility charges, as those living on residential sites. I fully support the calls we have heard for the Mobile Homes Act 1983 to be extended to leisure home owners, which would go a long way to evening up the imbalance and protecting the many vulnerable and often elderly residents.

5 pm

Peter Aldous (Waveney) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Austin. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham and Mid Kent (Helen Whately) on securing this important debate, and on highlighting a growing problem in the leisure park sector that is devastating the lives of many people, and turning what was supposed to be a dream into a nightmare.

The issue is of interest to me for two reasons. First, the Mobile Homes Act 2013, which was brought in to stamp out abuses in the park homes sector, started off as a private Member's Bill that I took through the Commons. It appears that the measures introduced by that Act to outlaw rogue site owners have had the unintended consequence that they now focus their attention on holiday parks. Secondly, the holiday parks sector is important in my constituency. Leisure park homes are a vital component part of the tourism industry around Lowestoft and along the Suffolk and Norfolk coast. Generally, those businesses are well run. It is important to bear in mind that the vast majority of site owners are responsible business people.

As I see it, we have to address two issues: the unscrupulous operators who have moved into the sector, and the people who have moved into the parks with the intention of living, rather than holidaying, there. They

can be addressed in two ways. First, there is a whole raft of legislation that prohibits mis-selling and fraud, and it should be enforced. That includes the Consumer Contracts (Information, Cancellation and Additional Charges) Regulations 2013, the Consumer Rights Act 2015, the Misrepresentation Act 1967, the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 and, very importantly, the Fraud Act 2006.

Secondly, responsible site owners should do all they can to ensure that people do not live on parks as their main homes. That means properly checking the purchaser's home address, and asking for a utility bill and a council tax receipt to confirm it. It means watching out for tell-tale signs that the mobile home might be being used as a permanent home, such as cars leaving and returning at what could be described as commuter times, and washing being on the line throughout the year—in particular, school uniforms being hung out to dry.

My concern about additional legislation is that we would need to ensure that it did not have an unintended negative impact on local economies, many of which are in coastal locations and are fragile and heavily reliant on tourism. Moreover, it has to be pointed out that in many instances local authorities do not enforce existing laws and regulations due to financial restrictions and staff shortages. I have to ask: what is the point of passing new laws that will not be enforced?

We need to get the councils a better local government funding settlement at the forthcoming comprehensive spending review, so that they can properly regulate the sector, applying the rules so as to drive out the rogues who are making many peoples' lives a misery. My hon. Friend has highlighted a growing problem that must be stamped out, and I will work with her to do that.

5.4 pm

James Heappey (Wells) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Austin. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham and Mid Kent (Helen Whately) on securing this debate. The issue has arisen on a number of occasions in my constituency, and I have carried out casework on behalf of people on both sides of the equation. Before I get into that, may I use this opportunity to pay tribute to the emergency services in Somerset, who responded so well to the ceiling that collapsed at Pontins in Bream the other night? A number of people were injured. I hear that the emergency services responded with their usual professionalism and expertise, and ensured that injury and inconvenience were absolutely minimised.

Bream is a wonderful place to go for a holiday. Tens of thousands of people do so every week, all season long, and there are many more caravans and mobile homes in the wider Burnham-on-Sea area. I understand that it is second only to Skegness in the European rankings for concentrations of caravans. We are very proud of that.

Matt Warman (Boston and Skegness) (Con): I feel that I should mention that my hon. Friend is completely correct: Skegness is the proud owner of the highest concentration in Europe. While I envy my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham and Mid Kent (Helen Whately) for securing this debate, it is important to set it in context. The overall benefit to the economy of the industry is enormous, and the rogues are small in number, even if their effects are genuinely profound.

James Heappey: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. He knows, as I do, that what Brean lacks in quantity as against Skegness, we make up for in quality. I know he agrees with that.

There are effectively four groups affected by the issue. The local community beyond the park are frustrated that there is additional pressure on local services and infrastructure without any due planning process having been followed. Sedgemoor District Council has had to retrospectively allow planning permission to protect the value of the asset that the residents of park homes have spent money on, but there is a lack of consultation and transparency in the planning process when that emergency measure is taken. There is also a loss of tourism revenue, because permanent residents tend not to eat out and use local attractions as much as those visiting for just a week.

The local community is disadvantaged, too. Reputable, law-abiding caravan and leisure parks in the area miss out. There is the reputational risk to the industry of all operators being tarred with the same brush, which is unfair. When this issue arose two or three years ago, Sedgemoor employed a company called Capacitygrid. I am sure it did nothing other than what it was invited to do, but its method of checking that all the tens of thousands of caravans in the Brean area were legit was to be quite harassing in how it did its business, and how it got proof of another address. The park owners had to put up with their residents being affected by that company, which had been instructed by Sedgemoor to go in and check on the scale of the problem.

The local council has to pay for enforcement out of our council taxes. It has the grumpiness that comes with the difficult planning decisions that it needs to take if it is to retrospectively approve the caravans as permanent places of residence. As the caravans are already there, there is none of the community infrastructure levy or section 106 money that would come with a more routine planning decision, so there is none of the development that comes with having secured that money during the planning process.

Most importantly, the residents are so often taken for a ride. They are overly trusting, but they see an opportunity to have a permanent home in a place where they have enjoyed holidaying their entire working life. They take that opportunity and put their life savings into it, only to find that what they have bought is effectively worthless, because there is no planning permission for that residence to be used year round. I have had it reported to me that residents struggle to access local services. They are at the mercy of unscrupulous park owners.

I agree with so much of the expertise that has been shared with us about what could be done. There is plenty of legislation that protects consumer rights, and our first instinct should be to use what is on the statute book, rather than to develop new laws. However, it is important that we address this issue. From my experience in nearly four years as the MP for Wells, I have seen enough of this problem on the coast to know that it is something that the Government should address. I very much look forward to hearing what the Minister has to say.

5.9 pm

Patricia Gibson (North Ayrshire and Arran) (SNP): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Austin. I thank the hon. Member for Faversham and Mid Kent (Helen Whately) for introducing the debate.

For anybody watching, I begin by making clear the distinction between leisure park homes and residential homes, because that is extremely important. The terms are not interchangeable. I completely agree with the concerns about leisure park homes raised by the hon. Lady and others. Leisure park homes can be bought by unsuspecting people in the mistaken belief that they can live in them all year round, when that would be a clear breach of licensing conditions for holiday homes. Those who have purchased a leisure park home must have a permanent residential address elsewhere, as such homes cannot be used as a main residence. That can affect council tax, planning permission requirements and so on, as the hon. Member for Chichester (Gillian Keegan) said.

Permanent residential park homes, of which I have a couple in my constituency, are not the same; owners can live in those houses full time, all year round. The regulation of those sites is a matter for the Scottish Government. However, clearly the terms and conditions attached to the different kinds of parks—leisure park and permanent residential park homes—need to be made absolutely clear to prospective buyers. As we have heard, that is not always the case.

The situation is complex. With regard to permanent residential homes, I have heard of situations in Scotland where parks are not properly maintained, despite significant charges being levied on residents for that very purpose. In response, the Scottish Government have introduced a new licensing system that gives local authorities enforcement powers that they had not enjoyed before. That means that the local authority can serve improvement notices if the site owner commits a criminal offence in breaching a licence condition.

In addition, the local authority can take the steps set out in an improvement notice if the site owner defaults. Penalty notices can be served, and the local authority can apply to the sheriff for the appointment of an interim manager. Furthermore, emergency action can be taken if there is imminent risk of serious harm to the health and safety of a person. That represents a significant beefing up of local authority powers, and is a response to site managers or owners simply collecting money while not fulfilling their obligations to keep sites maintained to the standard that those with park homes are entitled to expect. Where there are gaps in the law regarding leisure park homes, they should be addressed, as the hon. Member for Chichester pointed out.

Another issue relating to permanent sites that owners are simply not aware of in every case, until they reach the point of resale, is that permanent residential park home owners have to pay sales commissions of up to 10% on the resale of their park home, as the right hon. Member for New Forest West (Sir Desmond Swayne) pointed out. The question that we must ask is: if residents do not know about the charge, why do they not? Clearly the system is not working as we would wish it to. As the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) pointed out, the power supply to these homes is also an area of concern.

Martin Whitfield: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Patricia Gibson: We are really short of time; I think the Chair would like me to proceed. I do apologise.

[*Patricia Gibson*]

In Scotland, we hope to counter some of those difficulties. All prospective mobile home buyers will now have 28 days' notice to consider the terms of the agreement before the sale can be concluded. It is important that this group of consumers have the proper protection that they need when choosing to live year-round on licensed permanent mobile home sites, because it is a very expensive undertaking. It is important that the system be transparent, open and fair, both to permanent residential site owners, and to those who choose to live on such sites.

I say to the Minister, as other Members have said, that protections are required to make the system of purchasing leisure or residential homes, and the rights and responsibilities of each party, fair for all concerned and transparent. Those measures need to be in place. As I always say in such debates on devolved matters, it is really important that England looks at what Scotland has done to see what can be learned, and vice versa. We should all pursue best practice, no matter where in the UK we live.

5.14 pm

Sarah Jones (Croydon Central) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Austin, and to speak in this debate. The hon. Member for Faversham and Mid Kent (Helen Whately) made a convincing case for the need for protection of leisure park homes. She also painted a lovely picture of her constituency. Is it any wonder that people want to go to the rolling hills of the north downs and retire there? What a terrible thing it is when they find that it is not quite what they expected.

We heard tales of pitch fees increasing, and about the culture of fear and mis-selling. The right hon. Member for New Forest West (Sir Desmond Swayne) rightly asked who some of the people running these homes are, and what can be done about the problems. The hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) asked why nothing had been done, when he has been raising these issues for some years. The hon. Member for Chichester (Gillian Keegan) talked about people feeling almost "stateless", which is a strong and apt word.

The hon. Member for Waveney (Peter Aldous) talked about his role with regard to previous legislation, and made a really important point about the need to protect the tourism industry. Anything that we do must not damage that. The hon. Member for Wells (James Heappey) told us that his area is second only to Skegness in its concentration of caravans, and we must listen to what he has to say.

Sir Henry Bellingham (North West Norfolk) (Con): I am very sorry that I was not here earlier; there were distractions in the House. Does the hon. Lady agree that it is incredibly important to draw a distinction between sites that are badly run and badly managed, where bad practices are endemic, and really well-run sites that have had zero complaints over many years? For example, there is Pinewoods in my constituency, near Wells-next-the-Sea, Searles park in Hunstanton, and McDonnell caravans park. We have a number of really well-run sites with no history of complaints whatever. We need to find a way of ensuring that we drill down and protect those people who need protection, while not damaging those well-run sites.

Sarah Jones: I agree with that completely. The poor form tarnishes the whole industry, and people who are doing things well do not, on the whole, object to changes to regulation or legislation because they are already doing what they should be. The hon. Gentleman makes a good point.

As we have heard, there are lots of problems that we need to try to fix. Residents in leisure park homes are not afforded the limited protections of mobile home owners on sites with residential planning permission. They do not have the special protections under the Mobile Homes Act 2013, as we discussed. In the Opposition's view, it is right to call for protections to be extended to residents living permanently in leisure park homes. We should also ask why residents are being sold permanent homes in leisure parks that do not have residential planning permission. It is unclear how widespread that practice is. Perhaps the Minister can tell us her sense of the scale of the problem, and what the Government consider the issues to be.

The hon. Member for Faversham and Mid Kent talked about the protections afforded to residents of park homes through the 2013 Act, but it is worth emphasising that abuses are still happening across all park homes despite those changes in law. There is a need for wider reform. Organisations such as the Park Home Owners Justice Campaign and the Park Homes Policy Forum have worked for years to expose the exploitation of park home residents, which is still ongoing. Park homes have been described to me as

"like leasehold bullying, but with criminal thuggery thrown in."

We know that 62% of leasehold home owners feel as if they were mis-sold them; I would not be surprised if a similar, or higher, number of park homes residents felt the same way. Just as there are leaseholds with onerous ground rents, park home owners can be charged extortionate pitch fees that can increase rapidly each year. As with leaseholds, hidden clauses in park homes contracts can cause significant hardship down the line; residents have limited routes of redress when things go wrong, and any enforcement is often affected by a lack of transparency and opaque structures.

However, unlike the situation with most leaseholds, park home owners also report, as we have heard, experiencing or being threatened with violence and other illegal activity. We saw that most prominently in the disgraceful treatment of Sonia McColl, a leading campaigner for park homes reform. After campaigning for action on rogue park owners, Sonia had to sell her park home and move due to death threats. She then, astonishingly, had her entire home stolen while waiting for it to be delivered to her new site. She was made an OBE for services to society, but I think society has let her down. I asked her what issues she would like to raise with the Minister; she wants to know, first, when the consumer prices index instead of the retail prices index will be used to calculate the increase in pitch fee, and secondly when independent research will be done on the 10% commission payable to site owners on the sale of residence properties. She will be happy to share the Minister's response with the 30,000 residents on her database.

I want to give the Minister time to respond, so I will say only a little more. The Government have recognised the systemic problems with park homes, and have promised to legislate on areas such as pitch fee reviews, but they

have not done so yet. They have been promising for some time to get a grip on the wider leasehold scandal, but there has been no primary legislation on it. Stronger laws are worthless if they are not enforced; I am sure that the Minister will talk about the duties of local authorities, but in their own recent analysis the Government admitted that the 2013 licensing and inspection powers are not being applied because of a lack of dedicated resource in councils. That is not really a surprise, given the billions of pounds of cuts made to local authorities under this Government.

I hope that the Minister will outline when her Department will introduce the legislation that was promised back in October, and will say how she will support councils that are too strapped for funds to enforce it. The Conservative party claims to be the party of home ownership, but here we are again, talking about homeowners being exploited, mis-selling, exploitative contract terms and excessive fees and commissions charged to residents who were told that they were buying a home, with all the rights and freedoms that that affords. This is the third time today that the Government have been challenged by a member of their own party about the treatment of homeowners on their watch. I look forward to hearing when they will act on their promises.

5.21 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (Mrs Heather Wheeler): It is an absolute pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Austin. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham and Mid Kent (Helen Whately) on securing this important debate and on her tireless work on rights and protections for holiday caravan owners. Fifteen other Members have made estimable contributions, and I commend them all; they really know their stuff, and it has been a great debate.

Last year, my hon. Friend brought to my attention her concerns about some terrible issues facing holiday caravan owners on a mixed-use caravan site in her constituency. Since then, she and I have had fruitful discussions to better understand the issues. Some of those issues fall within the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy; I extend my thanks to the Minister for small business, consumers and corporate responsibility—the Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Rochester and Strood (Kelly Tolhurst)—for her interest in the matter. We have already had discussions and agreed several actions for both our Departments, and we hope to update my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham and Mid Kent on them over the coming weeks.

Several important issues have been raised today about the rights of holiday caravan owners and the challenges that they face. The Government have already introduced significant protections for holiday caravan owners. Planning permission may be granted for part of a site to be used for holiday purposes and other parts for residential purposes; I understand that my hon. Friend's concerns relate to such mixed-use sites. Sadly, our discussion will not include the information that Sonia McColl was after, because we are talking about holiday sites.

Those who live permanently on the residential part of a mixed-use site are protected under the Mobile Homes Act 1983, but as we have heard, that protection does not extend to holiday caravan owners on the site. The local

authority will also issue a site licence once planning permission has been granted, but before I talk about site licensing, let me address my hon. Friend's queries about the rights of holiday caravan owners.

As my hon. Friend highlighted, some holiday caravan owners end up living permanently on their holiday sites, for complex reasons. Some consumers see holiday caravans as a cheaper option—my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Gillian Keegan) mentioned the disgraceful situation facing first-time buyers—and may buy them without seeking legal advice, which obviously should not happen. Some holiday caravan owners can end up living permanently on the holiday site because they have been mis-sold their holiday caravan by a rogue site owner who has presented it as being suitable for residential use. That can put them under huge financial pressure, so I understand the suggestion to tackle the problem by extending the protections of the 1983 Act.

The mobile homes legislation, which sets out the contractual relationship between a site owner and a resident, applies only to those on sites with planning permission for residential use. Applying it to all holiday caravan owners would mean such accommodation no longer being available in the tourism sector. As we have heard from my hon. Friends the Members for Boston and Skegness (Matt Warman) and for Wells (James Heapey), and from my right hon. Friend the Member for New Forest West (Sir Desmond Swayne), it is important that we protect the holiday sector and the many benefits that it provides.

The Government have already introduced significant protections for holiday caravan owners under consumer legislation. What is required is to ensure that prospective purchasers of holiday caravans are aware of the rights and responsibilities available to them under consumer law. The rules, which are designed to protect individual buyers from unfair commercial practices, are set out in the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008. Breaches of those rules are a criminal offence. In 2014, they were supplemented to provide a private right of redress for consumers who have fallen victim to misleading commercial practices such as presenting a holiday caravan as a permanent residence, hiding information, or providing information in an unclear, ambiguous or untimely way.

Jim Shannon: Will the Minister give way?

Mrs Wheeler: Very briefly, dear boy.

Jim Shannon: Sometimes purchasers do not know that their property will depreciate massively within a year or two. They need to be told that at an early stage.

Mrs Wheeler: As ever, the hon. Gentleman brings luminosity to the problem.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham and Mid Kent knows, enforcement of the legislation is the responsibility of the local authority trading standards service. There are already strong penalties for mis-selling by providing misleading advice or omitting material information: it is a criminal offence punishable by a fine on summary conviction, up to the statutory maximum, or up to two years' imprisonment, as my hon. Friends the Members for Waveney (Peter Aldous) and for Wells mentioned.

Helen Whately: I am very aware of the mis-selling legislation, but I am sure that the Minister is aware that some residents are truly fearful of going down that route, because they think that they are so vulnerable that they may lose their homes.

Mrs Wheeler: My hon. Friend makes a very good point. Towards the end of my brief speech, I will answer her as best I can.

Another measure that I know is of interest to hon. Members is the fit and proper person test. We have also heard of cases of harassment and intimidation of holiday caravan owners; harassment is a criminal and civil offence, so I advise anyone being harassed to immediately contact the police.

Let me expand on the caravan site licensing requirements that I mentioned earlier in relation to the fit and proper person test. Under the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960, all caravan sites in England, except those exempted, are required to have a site licence in addition to planning permission. The purpose of licensing is to ensure that sites are safe for residents and other users.

The Mobile Homes Act 2013 amended the 1960 Act to introduce a new local authority site licensing regime, which applies to all “relevant protected sites”, including sites with planning permission for residential use only, as well as mixed-use sites with planning permission for both holiday and residential use. Local authorities’ powers include the ability to issue compliance notices if a site owner breaches their site licence conditions. If an owner fails to comply with a notice, the local authority can prosecute them; if convicted, they face an unlimited fine. The 2013 Act also made provision to introduce a fit and proper person test for site owners and managers of all relevant protected sites, including mixed sites. I

know that Members will be pleased to learn that we will publish a technical consultation in the summer and legislate to introduce the scheme when parliamentary time allows.

The issues that we have discussed today are very complex, but I reassure hon. Members that the Government are committed to improving the sector. We have already introduced important legislation to strengthen the rights of consumers, but we know that there is more work to be done. I will continue to work with the Under-Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, my hon. Friend the Member for Rochester and Strood, to consider what other measures can be taken on consumer protection, to raise consumers’ awareness of their rights when purchasing holiday caravans and traders’ awareness of their legal obligations.

I will arrange a further meeting with my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham and Mid Kent to update her on the actions that I have set out to undertake. Once again, I congratulate her on securing this debate on such a hugely important matter. It is a pleasure to be in Westminster Hall again.

5.29 pm

Helen Whately: I thank all hon. Members who have contributed to the debate. I feel that it has been a very balanced conversation: it has made it clear that the vast majority of those who operate holiday home sites do so in an appropriate and thoughtful way and look after the users of their park homes, but that we need to crack down on the unscrupulous owners.

5.30 pm

Motion lapsed, and sitting adjourned without Question put (Standing Order No. 10(14)).

Written Statements

Wednesday 27 February 2019

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Jordan: Growth and Opportunity—The London Initiative 2019

The Secretary of State for International Development (Penny Mordaunt): I wish to update on the London initiative, a major international conference that the UK and Jordan will co-host here in London on Thursday 28 February 2019. The event will convene senior leaders from international Governments and the private sector, and will champion Jordan's ambitious plans for economic transformation as set out within King Abdullah's Vision 2025.

Jordan's stability is inextricable from the UK's global interests. The UK sees Jordan as a key ally, an island of stability at the heart of a turbulent middle east, and a partner with whom we have enjoyed a mutually supportive relationship for over a century. Jordan's stability matters to the region; it has been a long-time host to the victims of its neighbours' conflicts—some 670,000 refugees of the Syria crisis have made their home in Jordan. And it matters to the UK. Jordan has similarly played host to approximately 6,000 UK troops annually for essential training. Jordan matters as a stable buffer against encroaching threats posed by malign influences within the region. It was through the vital use of Jordan's airspace that 5,000 UK aircraft flew in the fight against Daesh.

But Jordan's resilience is being tested—not just by the influx of refugees from Syria that it has sheltered with characteristic generosity, but also by long-standing economic challenges which the global financial crisis only exacerbated: a surge in the cost of energy following the Arab spring; the loss of access to key export markets in Syria and Iraq as conflict brought a halt to trade flows; declining remittances and investment following the economic slowdown in the region; and rising interest rates that are pushing up the cost of borrowing and debt repayments.

Jordan's efforts against these factors have been valiant. Successive Governments have implemented vigorous fiscal adjustments to rein in the size of the public deficit, at times testing the boundaries of the social contract which has held Jordan together since its independence in 1946. And yet, despite apparent political costs, Jordan has persevered, demonstrating a resounding commitment to economic transformation. And not without success—exports increased in 2018, supported by the re-opening of the border with Iraq, while tourism has grown strongly, and credit to the private sector has grown at solid rates for the third consecutive year. However, as Jordan confronts these challenges, the success of its new fiscal policies and macroeconomic reforms still relies on the backing of the international donor community and an upsurge in interest from international businesses.

In November 2017, the Prime Minister announced in Amman that the UK would be entering into a new long-term partnership to support and strengthen Jordan's

resilience in line with HM King Abdullah II's Vision 2025 for economic transformation. The partnership is framed as a 10-year long relationship between the UK and Jordan recognising Jordan's importance to the UK today and offering a "whole of government" effort to support the country's resilience. This is why we are holding the London initiative, an international conference that will rally the international development and finance communities around a new approach to supporting Jordan; an approach that pivots the UK's support for Jordan away from humanitarian-focused grants and towards developing sustainable economic growth, led by private sector investment and helping Jordan to continue to provide for its population, including its young people, women and refugees. That is not to say that the UK's humanitarian support for Jordan ends here. The UK remains committed to its humanitarian support for Jordan, including to Syrian refugees, recognising the increased pressure a rising population puts on community services. However, the conference will rally the donor community around a new model for engagement in Jordan—one in which Jordan's advances in reforms will unlock greater international financial support.

The London initiative will offer an opportunity for the Government of Jordan to demonstrate its commitment to economic transformation on an international platform, and will present Jordan credibly to international businesses as an opportunity for investment. In return, we will deploy an integrated UK "whole of government approach" providing technical expertise and establishing peer to peer partnerships from a range of UK Government departments. For example, HMRC is already working with the Government of Jordan's Income Sales and Tax Department to design new methods of limiting tax avoidance, exposing tax havens, and improving data collection to better identify leakages in the Jordanian system; and the Department for Education, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, and the Bank of England have additionally offered partnerships of their own. But the London initiative will also be a global approach. In keeping with global Britain, we, the UK, will use the full extent of our convening power to leverage global financial and policy backing behind Jordan's reform vision.

Jordan is ambitiously transforming its economic model, reforming its labour, and taking the right steps to encourage vigorous private sector growth. At the core of its objectives, the London initiative sets out to champion the progress already made in all of these areas.

First, the initiative will be the driving force for the Government of Jordan to present a robust and realistic strategy for unlocking economic growth, underpinned by practical demonstration of its commitment to a package of necessary macroeconomic reforms, including those aimed at attracting private sector investment and increasing women's participation in the workplace. Secondly, the initiative will invite partners, including the G7 and GCC countries, to promise collective political backing for this vision, following the UK's lead on an initiative linking aid to reform implementation and unlocking larger volumes of concessional and private finance. Finally, the initiative will also be a showcase for some of Jordan's most exciting, investment-ready sectors—particularly tourism, infrastructure, ICT and professional services—of which British businesses are already benefitting.

Britain, as a trading nation, relies on strong markets to thrive and through this conference, we are helping support an important ally's stability whilst building a market of the future. The event will initiate new public-private dialogues championing the Government of Jordan's pipeline of infrastructure projects ready for investment, new funding vehicles to assist their financing, and their commitment to investment climate and ease of doing business reforms.

As well as bringing together CEOs, international investors and Heads of State from around the world, the conference needs to have an impact that reaches the ordinary people on the streets of Jordan. In particular, it must provide opportunities for women and young people. Jordan's young, educated and aspirational population has helped position the country as a pioneer in ICT, start-ups and creative industries. All of these, alongside the Government's commitment to reforms, are reasons to invest in Jordan.

The London initiative on 28 February will be a staging post within the UK-Jordan partnership and the starting point of a long-term growth trajectory that will increase foreign investment and create high-quality jobs for all Jordanians. It should also provide a tangible demonstration of the UK's leadership on the international stage and will be one of the clearest examples of the potential of global Britain.

Jordan matters to the UK and is a natural partner for a global Britain, a steadfast ally on the frontline of conflict and instability. The conference will be a demonstration of our strong relationship and will pioneer a new model for development in a vulnerable middle-income country, anchored squarely in UK national interest.

[HCWS1363]

TRANSPORT

Banning Old Tyres: Consultation

The Minister of State, Department for Transport (Jesse Norman): Colleagues across the House will be aware of the potential dangers posed by ageing tyres. In that context I would like to update the House further about potential changes to legislation that the Government are proposing to improve the safety of buses, coaches, heavy goods vehicles and minibuses.

This country has one of the best road safety records in the world. But over 1,700 people were killed last year on UK roads, and we are determined to improve the UK's road safety record still further. In my written statement to the House on the 13 June 2018 I reported on the progress made toward the ambitious goals listed in the Government's 2015 road safety statement.

Penalties for using mobile phones while driving have been increased and commitments for police funding to tackle drug driving have been exceeded. Learner drivers can now gain valuable experience of motorway driving when accompanied by an instructor in a car with dual controls.

We are pioneering new mobile breathalyser technologies, supporting the use of photographic and video evidence in police enforcement, and going further than ever before in investigating the causes of road collisions.

However, in recent years the safety of older tyres on heavy vehicles has become a matter of serious concern to my Department, and to this House. This followed a

tragic coach crash in 2012 in which three people from the wider Liverpool area lost their lives. Mrs Frances Molloy, whose son Michael was one of those killed, has campaigned unceasingly for a ban on the use of older tyres on buses and coaches.

She has been vigorously supported by the hon Member for Garston and Halewood (Maria Eagle), who has highlighted this issue in a number of parliamentary questions, and tabled a Private Members' Bill on this subject on several occasions.

Responding to public concerns, in 2013 my Department provided guidance to all bus and coach operators on how to establish the age of the tyres on their vehicles, and against the use of tyres more than 10 years old on the steering axles of those vehicles. This was updated and extended in 2016.

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency has also been monitoring compliance with the guidance on age: since June 2017 they have inspected 136,263 buses and coaches and found 82 to be non-compliant. I am pleased to say that this represents a non-compliance rate of 0.06% —that is, less than one tenth of 1% of over a 100,000 vehicles inspected.

But I, with the full support of the Secretary of State, have been determined to go further. In May 2018, in response to evidence that emerged from a collision investigation, the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency introduced a change to roadworthiness requirements for tyres. In my written statement to this House on 23 November 2018 I announced further measures to address non-compliance with the tyre age guidance, and provide the basis for the Traffic Commissioner to intervene in cases of non-compliance.

Importantly, this guidance also covered the misuse of older tyres not only on buses and coaches, but on all heavy motor vehicles and heavy trailers.

A key constraint on this work has been the absence of robust and objective evidence as to the effect of age on tyre integrity. But we have addressed this issue too. In March 2018 I reported to the House that I had commissioned specialist research to investigate changes in the characteristics of tyres based on their age. I am pleased to tell the House that the investigative element of this pioneering work is complete, and we expect to report on the overall findings later in the spring.

Yesterday in the Coroner's court there was another awful case involving an old burst tyre which cost the lives of several people. Independent experts came together to testify that here too age was a factor. Their analysis fits with the Department's own emerging body of evidence.

The Government now intend to consult on options to ban older tyres on heavy vehicles, including legislation that could make it illegal for buses, coaches, heavy goods vehicles, and minibuses to have tyres more than 10 years old. We also intend to extend this consultation to taxis and private hire vehicles. Subject to consultation, we would expect antique and heritage vehicles to be exempt.

I would like to pay tribute to Mrs Molloy, to the hon. Member for Garston and Halewood, and to all involved in the Tyred campaign. Road safety affects us all, often in the most direct and personal and distressing way. As this legislation underlines, this Government are committed to ensuring that the UK continues to have some of the safest roads in the world.

[HCWS1362]

Ministerial Corrections

Wednesday 27 February 2019

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Trade Remedy Measures: UK Interests

The following is an extract from a statement to the House on 25 February 2019.

Dr Fox: Of 109 existing EU measures, we will maintain 43 where they are directly applicable to the UK and have met the criteria to be maintained. Those measures cover a wide range of goods, from ironing boards to aluminium foil, to ensure continued protection from known unfair trading practices for important industries such as steel and ceramics.

[Official Report, 25 February 2019, Vol. 655, c. 50.]

Letter of correction from the Secretary of State for International Trade and President of the Board of Trade (Dr Liam Fox):

An error has been identified in the statement I made to the House.

The correct wording should have been:

Dr Fox: Of 109 existing EU measures, **we will maintain 43 of these measures where they are directly applicable to the EU** and have met the criteria to be maintained. Those measures cover a wide range of goods, from ironing boards to aluminium foil, to ensure continued protection from known unfair trading practices for important industries such as steel and ceramics.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

Topical Questions

The following is an extract from Foreign and Commonwealth Questions on 26 February 2019.

Sir Hugo Swire (East Devon) (Con): The stability of Lebanon is vital to the wider security situation in the middle east. It has taken Prime Minister Hariri nine months to put together a Government that reflects all the different complex denominations and sects in Lebanon, including several Ministers from Hezbollah. What discussions have the British Government had with Prime Minister Hariri or the Lebanese Government about the proscription of the political wing of that organisation?

Alistair Burt: By good fortune, the Prime Minister and I met the Prime Minister of Lebanon on Sunday at the summit in Sharm el-Sheikh. We were able to discuss not only the issue relating to Hezbollah, but our own efforts to support the stability of the Government of Lebanon. Prime Minister Hariri recognised the support that the United Kingdom gave. We want to see Lebanon's Government formation completed and also for the

Government to go forward economically, a process in which our own investment conference in December was a landmark event.

[Official Report, 26 February 2019, Vol. 655, c. 164.]

Letter of correction from the Minister for the Middle East (Alistair Burt):

An error has been identified in the response I gave to my right hon. Friend the Member for East Devon (Sir Hugo Swire).

The correct response should have been:

Alistair Burt: By good fortune, the Prime Minister and I met the Prime Minister of Lebanon on Sunday at the summit in Sharm el-Sheikh. We were able to discuss not only the issue relating to Hezbollah, but our own efforts to support the stability of the Government of Lebanon. Prime Minister Hariri recognised the support that the United Kingdom gave. **We are pleased** to see Lebanon's Government formation completed and also for the Government to go forward economically, a process in which our own investment conference in December was a landmark event.

UK Soft Power

The following is an extract from Foreign and Commonwealth Office questions on Tuesday 26 February 2019.

Stephen Gethins (North East Fife) (SNP): The Minister is right to point out outside organisations. Will he, like me, pay due credit to the brave non-governmental organisations that do fantastic work and enhance our soft power in some of the most difficult conflict environments in the world, not least Yemen? Today, the United Nations is appealing for £3.2 billion to help organisations such as Saferworld and International Rescue Committee. Should that not be our focus, rather than the £4.6 billion we spent on arms?

Mark Field: We have announced only today, in the aftermath of the Sharm el-Sheikh negotiations, that we will be putting a further £200 million into Yemen. It is important to recognise the tremendous contribution made by so many British citizens and British NGOs across the globe. That is one aspect of soft power that will enhance our standing in the years to come. It is in this sort of area where I hope we will continue.

[Official Report, 26 February 2019, Vol. 655, c. 146-47.]

Letter from the Minister for Asia and the Pacific, the right hon. Member for Cities of London and Westminster (Mark Field).

An error has been identified in the response I gave to the hon. Member for North East Fife (Stephen Gethins).

The correct response should have been:

Mark Field: **We announced on Sunday**, in the aftermath of the Sharm el-Sheikh negotiations, that we will be putting a further £200 million into Yemen. It is important to recognise the tremendous contribution made by so many British citizens and British NGOs across the globe. That is one aspect of soft power that will enhance our standing in the years to come. It is in this sort of area where I hope we will continue.

ORAL ANSWERS

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Wednesday 27 February 2019

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Topical Questions	1MC	Trade Remedy Measures: UK Interests	1MC
UK Soft Power	2MC		

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**not later than
Wednesday 6 March 2019**

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