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HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT

PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES

(HANSARD)

Monday 1 April 2019

House of Commons

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The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

HOME DEPARTMENT

The Secretary of State was asked—

Leaving the EU: Recruitment

1. **Tonia Antoniazzi** (Gower) (Lab): What recent steps the Government have taken to ensure the effectiveness of the process for recruiting workers from EU and non-EU countries after the UK leaves the EU. [910125]

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Sajid Javid): The Government published our immigration White Paper on 19 December 2018, which set out our principles of the future immigration system. The future system will ensure that the process for recruiting and sponsoring migrant workers is straightforward for businesses and employers. We are committed to reducing the time that it takes to hire skilled migrants and to processing the vast number of visa applications within two to three weeks.

Tonia Antoniazzi: I thank the Secretary of State for his response. Recruitment from abroad is essential to ensure that we can deliver an effective NHS in Wales and across the UK. Following the scenes of far-right thuggery outside this place last Friday, what steps is the Secretary of State taking to reassure both EU and non-EU workers that the United Kingdom is a safe place to be, where their rights will be protected?

Sajid Javid: I very much agree with the words of the hon. Lady, and like her, I believe that our country has benefited hugely from immigration over many, many years. We have benefited in so many ways—our economy and our culture—and it is very important that we maintain that welcome. I believe that the new immigration system does that. She also rightly mentioned harassment and intimidation, and there will be no place for that ever in our society.

James Gray (North Wiltshire) (Con): The national health service depends on nurses of course, and we must welcome the Government's announcement of the removal of the £30,000 pay cap from nurses. That makes a great deal of sense, but does the Secretary of State also agree that the long-term care industry equally depends, to a very significant degree, on people from the European Union? Will he not consider, equally, removing the cap for long-term care workers?

Sajid Javid: I hope that my hon. Friend welcomes a change that we have already made to the tier 2 system for non-European economic area workers, when, last year, we exempted nurses and doctors from that cap. As far as the new system is concerned, he is right to raise this issue, and that is why, as we set out in the White Paper, there is a process of engagement over this year to make sure that we are listening, including to the care industry.

Rachael Maskell (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): York currently carries over 500 vacancies in our NHS and not just for nurses, so will the Home Secretary look at lifting the cap on tier 2 visas for all NHS professional staff?

Sajid Javid: As I just referred to, we have already made a significant change in this area. We also operate a shortage occupation list, which can benefit both the NHS and other sectors where a shortage is identified. I believe that as we set out the new immigration system and through the process of engagement with the White Paper, we can make sure that we get this right.

Huw Merriman (Bexhill and Battle) (Con): You and I are big Arsenal fans, Mr Speaker, and we will be following Arsenal tonight as they thrash Newcastle. We will remember watching a 16-year-old Cesc Fàbregas. Will the Home Secretary ensure that under the rules after we leave the European Union, we can still make sure that we have the youngest talent from Europe playing in our premier league?

Mr Speaker: Marvellous.

Sajid Javid: I very much agree with my hon. Friend on the issue of talent. The heart of the new immigration system, as we set out in the White Paper, is all about making sure that we are open to talent from across the world in all sectors and all industries and doing our best to make sure that it wants to come to Britain.

Stuart C. McDonald (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East) (SNP): An effective system for the UK must mean immigration rules being tailored and differentiated for different parts of the UK. What plans does the Home Secretary have to put in place differentiated rules reflecting the particular needs and circumstances of Northern Ireland?

Sajid Javid: It is important that like the current system, the new immigration system is simple and straightforward for businesses and others to understand, so I want to avoid unnecessary complexity. The hon. Gentleman is right about making sure that it reflects the needs of different parts of the UK. That is why in the current system, we already have, for example, the shortage occupation list specifically for Scotland. I want to make sure that as we go forward, we keep looking at the needs of all the nations of the United Kingdom.

Andrew Bridgen (North West Leicestershire) (Con): Despite the doom-mongering from Opposition Members, is my right hon. Friend aware that since the referendum almost three years ago, the number of EU staff working in our NHS has increased by 4,000?

Sajid Javid: I would add to that—I think there are 5,200 on the latest figures, and I am sure that my hon. Friend would welcome that. What this shows is that the UK continues to attract the talent that we need from across the world, and we want to make sure that that happens with our new immigration system, when it is introduced.

Countering Extremist Views

2. **Mary Robinson** (Cheadle) (Con): What steps he is taking to support community organisations in countering extremist views. [910126]

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Sajid Javid): The Government are committed to supporting community organisations to counter all forms of extremism. Through our £63 million Building a Stronger Britain Together programme, we are supporting over 230 civil society groups to stand up to extremism in all communities.

Mary Robinson: In the light of the recent terrorist atrocity in Christchurch, New Zealand, there is a renewed focus on the worrying increase in far-right-related terror in the UK. What role can community organisations play in identifying and preventing potentially vulnerable individuals from being radicalised into supporting these far-right acts?

Sajid Javid: I am sure the thoughts of the whole House are still with the victims of the terrible terrorist attack in Christchurch. I would like to reassure my hon. Friend that our Prevent programme works with a range of organisations, including many community groups, to safeguard individuals from radicalisation. Last year, almost one quarter of Prevent referrals were related to far-right extremism. I want to reassure her and the whole House that we will continue to do all we can to fight extremism in all its forms.

Hilary Benn (Leeds Central) (Lab): As the Home Secretary will be only too well aware, access to EU databases is vital to protecting our country, yet we could be just 11 days from a no-deal Brexit, which the Commissioner of the Metropolitan police has described as potentially putting people at risk. Is she right?

Sajid Javid: If we leave the EU with no deal, of course there will be a change to the tools we use with our European friends. For over two years now, but especially in the last six months, we have been working with them both bilaterally and using other tools, such as Interpol and the Council of Europe, which together will still keep us safe.

Mr David Davis (Haltemprice and Howden) (Con): Extremist views take root more easily when the communities involved feel beleaguered or at odds with the rest of society—that is one reason I disagree with the Home Secretary on the Shamima Begum case. Has the Home Office researched the attitudes of the various communities in Britain to its own counter-terrorism policy, both legislative and operational?

Sajid Javid: My right hon. Friend raises an important issue. It is very important that the Home Office, in all its counter-extremism and counter-terrorism work, continues

to engage with communities at all times and in various ways—I have met many community leaders; we have had recent roundtables with members of the Jewish community on antisemitism and with members of our Muslim community on anti-Muslim hate crime; and I have attended Prevent boards and panels to see the work they do—but we are always looking at what more we can do, because having the confidence of all these communities is essential.

Kate Green (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab): In the aftermath of the appalling Christchurch attack, I met leaders of five mosques in my constituency yesterday, and they are understandably very worried about the possibility of further radical attacks, particularly during the holy month of Ramadan, when the community will be especially visible. They are very appreciative of the announcement of additional funding for security at places of worship, but they say that, with Ramadan imminent, it is important that that comes forward very quickly. Can the Home Secretary say what the plan is for doing that?

Sajid Javid: Again, that is such an important issue, after the Christchurch massacre. The hon. Lady will know that we have already doubled the funding available under the places of worship programme. I have allocated £5 million for a three-year training programme, and I have also started a consultation. In addition, we are meeting many members of that community and hon. Members to see what more we can do.

Right-wing Extremism

3. **Alex Sobel** (Leeds North West) (Lab/Co-op): What discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the increase in right-wing extremism. [910127]

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Sajid Javid): As Home Secretary, I have been clear that far-right extremism has no place in Britain. The Government take this issue very seriously, and it is routinely discussed by Ministers. Earlier this month, the inter-ministerial group on safe and integrated communities, which I chair along with the Communities Secretary, discussed the threat we faced from extremism, including the far right.

Alex Sobel: On Friday, outside many of our offices, on a specially erected stage, Stephen Yaxley-Lennon addressed crowds, while many parliamentary staff were trying to get home. Staff were told to leave but at times that put them directly into that crowd. At the rally, there were Generation Identity activists and organisations that had received money from the Christchurch killer and a convicted leader of the Ulster Defence Association, and the media were physically attacked. Will the Home Secretary urgently investigate with the Met police how a convicted far-right leader and such groups were allowed to whip up hate right outside Parliament?

Sajid Javid: Sadly, as the hon. Gentleman points to, there have been many instances of abuse and intimidation of Members, especially in recent weeks. All Members should be able to go about their business with complete confidence—[HON. MEMBERS: “Staff.”] Of course, all staff as well—everyone who works in the cradle of our

democracy. It is important that the police, both the Met police and local police forces, and the Home authorities work together, which they are doing. I had a meeting just last week with police, officials and others to see what more we could do.

Michael Fabricant (Lichfield) (Con): Extremism in all its forms is often whipped up by social media. To what extent can the Home Office engage with social media to try to counter that?

Sajid Javid: We are already engaging with social media companies, especially the US giants that dominate the sector. I have met their representatives both here and abroad to discuss, in particular, terrorists and terrorism-related extremist content. However, the Government recognise that more needs to be done, which is why we will shortly publish the online harms White Paper.

Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney North and Stoke Newington) (Lab): The Home Secretary will be aware of recent reports that right-wing extremists are gaining access to ISIS-related terrorist training materials. The House should be aware that just as there is a terrorist threat from supporters of grotesque organisations such as ISIS and al-Qaeda, there is also a growing threat from the far right, which includes the threat of acts of terrorism. It has been reported that senior Home Office officials, Scotland Yard and the security agencies have met senior representatives of both the Muslim and Jewish communities. Will the Home Secretary confirm that those meetings have taken place, and will he tell us what reassurances he was able to provide?

As my hon. Friends have said, there is grave concern in the Muslim community in the light of the Christchurch massacre and the subsequent attacks on mosques in Birmingham. Can the Home Secretary assure us that funds will be available for the security of mosques and other Muslim places of worship, in the same way as they are available through the Community Security Trust for the security of synagogues? Is he aware that there are many Muslim community centres like my own North London Muslim Community Centre, which is next door to the mosque and forms part of the same complex of buildings? The people there feel very threatened. Is the Home Secretary prepared to consider helping them with funds for their necessary security?

Sajid Javid: I share the concerns that the right hon. Lady has expressed. Everyone in the House will understand why there are heightened concerns in our British Muslim communities, and why we need to do more. Soon after the Christchurch massacre, I sent "Dear colleague" messages to all Members about the immediate action that we are taking in increasing the funding for places of worship.

The right hon. Lady rightly raised the issue of Muslim community centres. I want to work with Muslim community leaders and others and to listen to what they say about what needs to be done. I think that all Members are united in their wish to ensure that our Muslim community in Britain, whom we cherish, feel hugely valued and receive the protection that they deserve. No one should feel intimidated in any way whatsoever.

EU Settlement Scheme

4. **Damien Moore** (Southport) (Con): What support he is providing to EU citizens applying to the EU settlement scheme. [910128]

The Minister for Immigration (Caroline Nokes): The Government's approach has been informed by extensive, regular engagement with external stakeholders representing the needs of a broad range of people, to ensure that the EU settlement scheme is accessible to all. The Home Office has introduced a range of support, including £9 million of grant funding for voluntary and community organisations, and support via the EU Settlement Scheme Resolution Centre.

Damien Moore: I welcome the Government's honest and transparent approach, which I know gives EU citizens living in my constituency the reassurance that they need. What steps is the Minister taking to give EU citizens as much reassurance as possible throughout the whole process?

Caroline Nokes: The EU settlement scheme opened fully on Saturday, and we have worked with EU citizens to make it as simple and straightforward as possible. Last week, we launched a £3.75 million programme of communications that provides both information and the underlying message that EU citizens are our friends, our colleagues and our neighbours, and we want them to stay.

Jess Phillips (Birmingham, Yardley) (Lab): I have met the Minister to discuss this, but will she tell the House what assurances she can give those who are not citizens of the European economic area but are married to EEA citizens? Under the current system, they have to obtain the permission of those EEA citizens to secure their settled status, regardless of whether or not they are victims of domestic violence.

Caroline Nokes: I thank the hon. Lady for that question. It is not correct that people have to get the permission of somebody who may well be a perpetrator of domestic violence, but it is important that, through our £9 million of grant funding, we work with groups and support the most vulnerable in the community so that they can help evidence their time in the UK and be granted status through the channels that we have put in place.

Theresa Villiers (Chipping Barnet) (Con): In the light of contact I have had with a constituent who is undergoing cancer treatment, may I urge the Minister to state in the clearest terms that EU nationals living in this country will continue to be entitled to NHS treatment?

Caroline Nokes: That is absolutely correct. There will be no loss of entitlement to NHS services and treatment, and I thank my right hon. Friend for her assistance in conveying the message to her constituents that we want our EU friends and neighbours to be able to stay and access the services and benefits to which they are entitled. That is important.

Joanna Cherry (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): As the Minister says, the EU settled status scheme opened at the weekend, but the Government have not introduced

a right of appeal to a tribunal against a decision under it. So in the event of a dispute about whether a person qualifies, the only means of independent redress is judicial review, which can be expensive and time-consuming. Does the Minister agree that that is not satisfactory? Will she commit to introducing a proper right of appeal?

Caroline Nokes: Of course, the hon. and learned Lady will know that an entire package of citizens' rights for EU citizens is planned as part of the withdrawal agreement. That will provide the route, and her party might consider voting for it.

Joanna Cherry: As always, the Minister does not answer the question. It seems to me that there is no intention of introducing an independent right of appeal. Perhaps she can answer this question: the Costa amendment required the Government to ring-fence what had already been agreed for EU citizens' rights; what progress has been made on securing that ring-fencing? Will the Prime Minister raise the matter at the EU Council on 10 April?

Caroline Nokes: I thought my response was quite clear. I reiterate to the hon. and learned Lady that the best way to ring-fence citizens' rights is to vote for the deal.

Afzal Khan (Manchester, Gorton) (Lab): As of 30 March, the EU settlement scheme is fully open. Efforts to promote the EU settled status scheme are too little, too late. No matter how well the Government advertise, there will be people who fail to apply before the deadline. Even if that is just a small percentage, hundreds of thousands of people will be stripped of their rights and subjected to the hostile environment. Will the Government accept proposals for a declaratory scheme—the only way to avoid a repeat of Windrush for EU citizens?

Caroline Nokes: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his question. He will of course know that the first three phases of the scheme were in testing mode, and it opened publicly for the first time on Saturday. That was designed to coincide with a widespread communications campaign, on which the Government are spending £3.75 million. He well knows that we debated the issues about a declaratory scheme in the Committee stage of the Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill. We are very conscious of the fact that we want people to have status that they can evidence. That is why we put the scheme in place. They will have digital status, which will provide them with the ability to share just the information that is required for landlords and employers. I encourage all hon. Members to ensure that EU citizens living in their constituencies take part in the scheme.

Air Weapons Regulations

5. **Karin Smyth** (Bristol South) (Lab): When his Department plans to publish a response to its review of air weapons regulations. [910129]

The Minister for Policing and the Fire Service (Mr Nick Hurd): The misuse of air weapons has led to too much tragic loss of life. That is why I commissioned the review. We intend to publish our conclusions alongside

a consultation on firearms safety issues, to which we committed during the passage of the Offensive Weapons Bill.

Karin Smyth: I am grateful for that answer, but the review was announced in October 2017 after my Adjournment debate. It closed in February 2018 and last July, the Minister told me that it would be published as soon as possible after the summer recess. We had more assurances in the Public Bill Committee, when I tabled further amendments, but we still have no answers to give the victims of those lethal weapons. What do the Government have to say to the families of those who have been killed and to those who have been injured, such as people in my constituency and in that of my right hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (David Hanson)?

Mr Hurd: I am genuinely sorry that this is taking much longer than I would like, and I am more than happy to meet Mr and Mrs Studley and other victims. However, bearing in mind that we have some of the toughest regulation in the world, we have a range of issues to look at in relation to firearms safety—we have committed to consulting on them in the Offensive Weapons Bill—and we are determined to consider them in the round.

Will Quince (Colchester) (Con): Does the Minister share my concern about the easy availability of air and imitation firearms? Given that there were 1,300 offences relating to imitation firearms last year, does he agree that it puts our police officers in a particularly difficult position if they do not know whether a weapon is real or an imitation?

Mr Hurd: I understand my hon. Friend's point, but the broader point is that it is absolutely right to look again at the regulations on air weapons. They are already tight in terms of ownership and possession, but we have undertaken to look again particularly at what we can do to tighten up the safety regime, and that is exactly what we intend to do.

Siobhain McDonagh (Mitcham and Morden) (Lab): May I ask the Minister for his help in encouraging Cash Exchange on London Road in Morden not to have firearms for sale right in its front window, which is encouraging the purchase of those weapons?

Mr Hurd: I am more than happy to sit down with the hon. Lady and to talk through the specifics of that. Based on what I have heard, I am sure that we will be happy to work together on that.

Violent Crime: Young People

6. **David T. C. Davies** (Monmouth) (Con): What steps he is taking to divert young people away from violent crime. [910130]

7. **Maggie Throup** (Erewash) (Con): What steps he is taking to divert young people away from violent crime. [910131]

16. **Eddie Hughes** (Walsall North) (Con): What steps he is taking to divert young people away from violent crime. [910140]

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Sajid Javid): Diverting young people from crime is at the heart of my approach to tackling serious violence. Factors such as domestic abuse and substance abuse can make an individual vulnerable to becoming a victim or a perpetrator. I understand these communities; I was raised alongside kids like these and I will not leave them behind. That is why we are investing record amounts in early intervention schemes to steer even more children and young people away from serious violence.

David T. C. Davies: I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer. Will he also investigate changing the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 to allow a recent conviction for carrying a knife or gun to be used as grounds by the police for carrying out a stop and search? Does he agree that this could divert larger numbers of people from crime?

Sajid Javid: I thank my hon. Friend for highlighting this issue, which has also been raised by the police. I have asked officials for further advice on the matter. He might also be interested to know that just yesterday we announced changes to stop and search that would make it easier for police to deploy “no suspicion” stop and search powers to combat serious violence.

Maggie Throup: How does my right hon. Friend expect the £100 million of funding, allocated in the spring statement for the purpose of keeping young people safe, to ease police pressures not only in large cities such as London but in towns and villages such as those in my constituency?

Sajid Javid: It will certainly help to ease pressures. The £100 million will help police with their immediate response to the rise in serious knife crime, and it will also help to support the violence reduction units. That £100 million is alongside the almost £1 billion increase in total police funding this year.

Eddie Hughes: Could more money be made available to excellent groups such as Youth of Walsall and its campaign Real Knives, Real Lives? The campaign seeks to educate those at risk of committing knife crime to understand the impact of their actions.

Sajid Javid: My hon. Friend is right to raise this, because the work of Real Knives, Real Lives and of other groups doing similar work is really helping young people to move away from involvement in what could become a life of crime. We have provided significant funding to similar organisations through the early intervention youth fund, and now the new youth endowment fund will also support similar community organisations.

Yvette Cooper (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab): I welcome the public health approach and the knife crime summit, but the evidence presented to the Home Affairs Committee inquiry into serious violence suggests that the Home Secretary’s claim to be putting record amounts of funding into prevention is simply not credible. We were told by West Midlands police that they now have no police officers based in schools working on crime prevention because of the scale of the cuts. There has also been a one third reduction in youth

service funding over the past few years and, crucially, there are now 50,000 fewer people working on community safety and crime prevention. Children’s lives are being lost and it is crucial that investment in prevention should take place.

Sajid Javid: First, the right hon. Lady will be aware that we have had the biggest cash increase in police resources—almost £1 billion—since 2010. That is going to lead to the recruitment of more than 3,000 officers. I absolutely agree with her that early intervention should be a priority, and just last week we confirmed that a record £200 million is going into the youth endowment fund. That will help many community organisations to help young people to turn away from crime.

15. [910139] **Catherine West (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab):** A 15-minute response time to the recent fatality of a teenage boy in my constituency meant that an eight-year-old, a four-year-old and a tiny baby all witnessed a tragic event while barricaded behind a hairdresser’s door, therefore becoming victims of crime themselves. Is there a link between austerity and dreadful police response times?

Sajid Javid: First, I am very sorry to hear about that incident, which must have been shocking for everyone involved. We need to ensure that the police are properly resourced, which is why this record increase in funding since 2010 is hugely welcome. However, when it comes to other types of crime that require more focus, the additional £100 million to tackle serious violence that the Chancellor announced in the spring statement will also help.

Vernon Coaker (Gedling) (Lab): For months, I have been raising the need for the Home Secretary to get a move on and get a grip on this national emergency. We welcome the measures that he has announced to tackle youth and violent crime, but will he commit today to come to this House of Commons every single week to let us know how everything is working, how it is reducing serious violence and whether it is having any impact at all? We will then start to believe him.

Sajid Javid: We absolutely should regularly update the House, whether by coming to the House, through “Dear colleague,” letters or by holding meetings with hon. Members who request them. However, it is important, on many of these measures, that we are united as a House. The public health approach, which seems to have united hon. Members, is an example of what we can do if we work together.

Carolyn Harris (Swansea East) (Lab): Right across the country, vulnerable children are being coerced and threatened into joining gangs that run drug operations. There are instances where vulnerable and isolated children are groomed, exploited and filmed while being sexually abused and subsequently blackmailed into selling drugs. What assurances can the Home Secretary offer the House about the specific action being taken to tackle the county lines operations properly to ensure that children are not caught up in violent gangs?

Sajid Javid: First, the new public health approach, the consultation on which was launched today, will certainly help to safeguard many more young people. Secondly, the work of the National County

Lines Coordination Centre, which began in September, has already seen startling results. For example, just one week of intensification led to 600 arrests and 1,000 young people being safeguarded.

Police Funding: Rural Areas

8. **Scott Mann** (North Cornwall) (Con): What discussions his Department has had with the Treasury on increasing police funding and provision for rural areas in the 2019 spending review. [910132]

The Minister for Policing and the Fire Service (Mr Nick Hurd): Public investment in policing is set to rise by over £1 billion next year, including an additional £22.7 million for Devon and Cornwall police.

Scott Mann: I thank the Minister for that response. I receive a large number of emails and a lot of casework from constituents who are concerned about parity between rural and urban areas. We understand the challenges facing areas such as London, Manchester and Birmingham, but county lines operations mean that those challenges are also present in rural areas. I urge the Minister to speak to the Treasury about looking after rural policing in the spending review.

Mr Hurd: I receive representations from colleagues across the House who represent rural seats pointing out the specific challenges of policing a rural area. They also point out, as the evidence shows, that satisfaction with local police forces is lower in rural areas than in other areas. We are increasing police funding, and the Home Secretary has made it clear that it will be a priority in the spending review. In that context, I have also undertaken to reconsider how resources are allocated across the system to ensure that no one feels left behind.

19. [910143] **Tim Farron** (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD): Cumbria saw a 27% increase in crime last year—the third biggest increase in the country. With only eight police officers covering most of my constituency—an area the size of Greater London—that is hardly surprising, but it is dangerous and unacceptable. Will the Minister intervene immediately and provide the police and crime commissioner with the resources needed to keep our police officers and communities safe?

Mr Hurd: More money is going into policing, including in Cumbria, and more police officers are being recruited, including in Cumbria. Cumbria constabulary is rated good for efficiency, effectiveness and legitimacy, and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will join me in congratulating its hard-working officers on achieving that.

Andrew Selous (South West Bedfordshire) (Con): While welcoming the increased officer numbers and police funding that were announced recently, does the Minister share my concern that towns such as Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard have far fewer officers than they had many years ago? This needs to be urgently addressed in the spending review, as it is the first duty of a Government to keep their citizens safe.

Mr Hurd: It is the first duty of a Government to keep the public safe and the Home Secretary and I could not have made it clearer that our priority going into the spending review is police funding. More money has gone into Bedfordshire police and we intend to take police funding as a priority into the next spending review.

David Hanson (Delyn) (Lab): The North Wales police precept has risen by 8% at a time when, over the past few years, the reduction in central Government funding has been £31 million. Will the Minister indicate how much the North Wales police precept would have to rise to compensate for central Government cuts?

Mr Hurd: I hope the right hon. Gentleman would welcome the additional public investment in North Wales police, as seems to be the case. That is part of a trend, which I hope he would welcome, of increased public investment in policing. If we want more to go into policing, we have to pay as taxpayers. Whether it comes from central Government or local government is not the point. He will know that most funding for local policing comes from the taxpayer through the centre. I will take no lectures on precepts from the Labour party, which doubled council tax when it was in power.

Serious Violent Crime: Police Investigation

9. **Helen Hayes** (Dulwich and West Norwood) (Lab): What recent assessment he has made of the capacity of police forces to investigate serious violent crime. [910133]

13. **Sandy Martin** (Ipswich) (Lab): What recent assessment he has made of the capacity of police forces to investigate serious violent crime. [910137]

The Minister for Policing and the Fire Service (Mr Nick Hurd): As the House has heard, the Government attach high priority to bearing down on the cycle of serious violence and have recently committed an additional £100 million to support police services in that effort.

Helen Hayes: Last Wednesday another life was tragically lost to serious violence in my constituency when a young man was shot at close range in West Norwood in the middle of the afternoon, leaving another family devastated and another community traumatised. The Government committed last October to a public health approach to serious violence, but they have taken until today to hold a meeting about it. When will the public health approach be implemented in full, and when will the killings stop?

Mr Hurd: I have a great deal of sympathy for the hon. Lady and the situation in her constituency—I, too, have suffered a recent murder in my constituency—but it is a misrepresentation of the Government's position to say that we have just embarked on a journey of underpinning our strategy through a public health approach. What we have announced today is the launch of a consultation on a statutory duty to co-operate.

Sandy Martin: In addition to our need for police officers, public interface, intelligence gathering, evidence processing and so on depend on police staff. Does the

Minister accept that the 30% cut in Suffolk police staff and the 72% cut in police community support officers since 2010 have reduced the capacity to investigate serious crime?

Mr Hurd: I have candidly recognised in the House that our police system has been under pressure, which is why we have increased public investment. As a result, police and crime commissioners across the country are recruiting, at the last count, around 3,000 officers, plus additional staff. I am mystified as to why the hon. Gentleman voted against it.

Tom Pursglove (Corby) (Con): Collaboration across force boundaries is clearly crucial in helping the police not only to investigate but to tackle serious violent crime head on. What steps are being taken to help to promote that agenda?

Mr Hurd: I thank my hon. Friend for raising a fundamental point that goes to the heart of how crime and the demands on policing are changing and are increasingly not respecting borders. Specifically on county lines, we have supported the police with a multimillion pound investment in a new co-ordination centre that is already resulting in increased arrests and increased numbers of safeguarded children.

Charlie Elphicke (Dover) (Con): Does the Minister agree that what we need is more capacity building in the police to tackle gangs? Whether it is gangs of traffickers at Calais or county lines gangs in Kent, we need a war on crime and a war on gangs to make sure we combat drugs and properly secure our borders.

Mr Hurd: I recently visited Kent police, who are an outstanding example of an excellent force that is using the additional resources from the public to increase its capacity, with an additional 450 officers in recent years, and to take a very tough approach to knife crime, which is bearing fruit. I congratulate Kent officers on their hard work.

Mr Speaker: If the hon. Member for Coventry North East (Colleen Fletcher) were standing, I would call her, but she is not and so I will not—but she now does, so I call Colleen Fletcher.

17. [910141] **Colleen Fletcher (Coventry North East) (Lab):** Thank you, Mr Speaker. A local officer recently told me that the police no longer have the resources available to provide the level of service most people rightfully expect and wanted me to tell the Government that without significant investment in policing this situation is unlikely to change. What does the Minister say to this dedicated officer, whose job is being made impossible due to savage budget cuts, and to the victims of crime, who are being let down so badly by this Government?

Mr Hurd: What I say to that officer is what I say to every officer who makes exactly the same point, which is a valid one: the Government understand that police officers are feeling very stretched and under pressure at the moment, which is exactly why we have increased investment in our police. It is exactly why we are investing more than £1 billion more in our police system. He may wonder why the hon. Lady voted against it.

Louise Haigh (Sheffield, Heeley) (Lab): It is unclear how the long delayed public health duty consultation announced today will make any difference, given that the agencies referenced already have those safeguarding responsibilities under crime and disorder partnerships. If today's summit is to be anything more than another talking shop, we need to see urgent action on school exclusions, long-term police funding, mental health services, and youth services and diversion for young people. These systemic changes require a Government with the capability and the will to act. When can this House be assured that this Government have either?

Mr Hurd: We are already acting, and all the issues the hon. Lady mentioned were part of the discussion that I took part in, alongside the Prime Minister and other Ministers, with a range of experts today, where all were agreeing about the approach the Government are taking, underpinned by a public health approach. The hon. Lady was dismissive of the statutory duty to co-operate, but that has been welcomed by both the Mayor of London and the commissioner of police.

Leaving the EU: NHS and Careworkers

10. **Sir Vince Cable (Twickenham) (LD):** What steps he is taking to facilitate the recruitment of people from (a) EU and (b) non-EU countries to meet demand for NHS and careworkers after the UK leaves the EU.

[910134]

The Minister for Immigration (Caroline Nokes): The White Paper, published in December, proposes a route for skilled workers of any nationality coming to do jobs at RQF—regulated qualifications framework—level 3 and above. It will be uncapped, allowing all those meeting the requirements to come here. The right hon. Gentleman will of course recall that the Home Secretary lifted the tier 2 cap for NHS workers last July.

Sir Vince Cable: Freedom of movement has allowed 20,000 nurses to be recruited to the NHS. Some 5,000 have left since the referendum and there are 41,000 vacancies, with many more in other occupations, such as careworker. While the Government are consulting on the salary cap level, can the Minister guarantee that there will be sufficient flexibility to allow these relatively low-paid but scarce occupations to be fully recruited and filled?

Caroline Nokes: The right hon. Gentleman will have heard earlier that, as at December 2018, we had over 5,200 more EU nationals working in the NHS in England than we did at the time of the referendum in 2016. He makes an important point about careworkers. During the engagement going on as part of the White Paper, this issue has been raised with me and the Government are certainly listening carefully. I am working closely with the Minister for social care and later this week we will be attending a roundtable on exactly this subject.

Mr Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con): Kettering General Hospital recruits doctors and nurses from the European Union and from non-EU countries. Will it be able to continue to do both once we have left the EU?

Caroline Nokes: I thank my hon. Friend for that question. The answer is: absolutely. The proposals we have put forward in the White Paper will ensure that there is absolutely no discrimination in respect of those seeking to come here from EU countries and from non-EU countries.

Emma Little Pengelly (Belfast South) (DUP): In Northern Ireland, social care is fully integrated within the Department of Health. Many of the jobs that supply vital services to older people, both in care homes and across the community, are filled by EU mainland nationals. What conversations has the Department had with the Department of Health in Northern Ireland to ensure this vital flow of employment and workers can continue post Brexit?

Caroline Nokes: I thank the hon. Lady for that question. It is important to note that just last week I held a roundtable with representatives from the Scottish and Welsh Governments, and civil servants from Northern Ireland. It is important that we make sure we have a future immigration system that works for the whole of the UK, and we are determined to do so.

Fire Risk: Commercial and Residential Buildings

11. **Emma Dent Coad** (Kensington) (Lab): What recent assessment he has made of the capacity of fire inspectors to assess the fire risk of commercial and residential buildings. [910135]

The Minister for Policing and the Fire Service (Mr Nick Hurd): As the hon. Lady knows, each fire and rescue authority is required to have an integrated risk-management plan and risk-based inspection programme, and the adequacy and effectiveness of those arrangements are now subject to independent inspection.

Emma Dent Coad: Following the Grenfell Tower fire, the London fire brigade implemented a more rigorous and detailed building inspection programme, which has brought up additional issues that need enforcement action. That inevitably takes up a great deal of time and limits the brigade's ability to assess premises. Will the Minister agree to review funding, to improve the recruitment and retention of the suitably qualified officers we need to ensure that people are safe in their beds?

Mr Hurd: I understand the hon. Lady's point. Core spending for the Greater London Authority has increased by 6.3% in 2019-20. We are reviewing the funding arrangements for the fire service as part of the spending review, and I will note the hon. Lady's intervention in that context.

Karen Lee (Lincoln) (Lab): Not only are the Government failing to deal with dangerous cladding wrapped around buildings, but they are responsible for cutting one in four fire inspectors since 2010. They cannot cut red tape and fire inspectors and expect there to be no ticking time bombs like Grenfell. Cuts have consequences. The fire service must be funded to seek out risk, not just to respond to it. I add my voice to those asking the Minister whether he will undertake a serious review of fire service funding, with a view to implementing a robust national standard framework to set expectations of fire inspector numbers and competency.

Mr Hurd: I can certainly assure the hon. Lady, as I have before, that as it prepares for the spending review the Home Office is extremely serious about assessing the demand on the police and the fire service. In the latest forces reviews by the independent inspectorate, 10 out of the 14 forces were rated "good" for effectiveness. I hope the hon. Lady would join me in welcoming that.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Order. I hope the whole House will want to join me in congratulating the hon. Member for South East Cornwall (Mrs Murray) on her wedding on Saturday. We wish her and her new husband a long, happy and healthy life together.

Counter-terrorism: Resources

12. **Mrs Sheryll Murray** (South East Cornwall) (Con): What steps he is taking to provide security and law enforcement organisations with adequate resources to counter terrorism. [910136]

And thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

The Minister for Security and Economic Crime (Mr Ben Wallace): I add my good wishes to my hon. Friend and wish her all the best for the future.

Our security and intelligence agencies are currently conducting more than 700 live investigations, so it is crucial that they have the resources needed to keep our citizens safe. In 2015, the Government increased counter-terrorism funding by 30%, from £11.7 billion to more than £15 billion, for the spending review period.

Mrs Murray: I thank my right hon. Friend for his reply. How does he respond to the concerns raised by the security and defence chiefs about the danger posed by the withdrawal agreement to our security relationships with the US, NATO and the Five Eyes alliance?

Mr Wallace: I read with interest the article and the letters sent by the former Chief of the Defence Staff and Secret Intelligence Service—in fact, I served with the former Chief of the Defence Staff. I regret to say to my hon. Friend that I think they are completely wrong. Nothing in the withdrawal agreement or the political declaration cuts across NATO, our defence and intelligence relationships with the EU or the US, or the Five Eyes alliance. The withdrawal agreement guarantees that it is the United Kingdom's sovereign choice to co-operate with the EU on foreign policy and intelligence matters, while protecting the UK's national security safeguards.

Mr Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op) *rose*—

Mr Speaker: It would be a very odd and almost irregular parliamentary day if the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr Sheerman) did not leap to his feet to pose an inquiry to the Executive branch, and I am delighted that he has done so. In particular, I am pleased that he has not been unduly dispirited by Huddersfield's relegation.

Mr Sheerman: Thank you for your condolences, Mr Speaker. We live to fight another day.

There are some thoughtful people on the Government Front Bench, but listening to today's questions I get the feeling that they live in a silo, where they are comfortable but do not join up with other Departments. I hear from senior police officers up and down the country, but particularly in West Yorkshire and Huddersfield, that there is inadequate supply of the special skills needed to combat terrorism on the internet.

Mr Wallace: I am afraid that is simply not the case. I speak regularly to all the leaders of the regional counter-terrorism response and the serious organised crime response. The part of policing that currently gets increased funding around that speciality is organised crime and counter-terrorism. I am happy to visit with the hon. Gentleman the counter-terrorist unit in his part of the country, which does a first-class job. The problem is not access to that speciality but making sure that we cut off the future demand and threats. I urge him to come with me to visit his local unit, and we can discuss the Prevent programme together.

Nick Thomas-Symonds (Torfaen) (Lab): May I add the congratulations of Members on the Opposition Benches to the hon. Member for South East Cornwall (Mrs Murray)?

The Minister has spoken about having more money for counter-terrorism, but when an appalling terrorist attack occurs it draws in officers and resources from mainstream policing as well as specialist counter-terror officers. Surely he must accept that cutting more than 21,000 police officers since 2010 has diminished the Government's capacity to keep people safe.

Mr Wallace: The hon. Gentleman will know that when police forces come under pressure—such as when they respond to a terrorist incident, to an incident such as Salisbury or, indeed, as in my constituency, to a process such as fracking—there is an extra grant for those police forces. We have refunded extra money to police forces in Dorset, London and Manchester, and we will continue to do so. That is why we have this pot in the Home Office: to make sure that we can flex as something happens. Police respond, and they then get back the money that they need.

Local Authorities: Children of EU Nationals

14. **Teresa Pearce (Erith and Thamesmead) (Lab):** What steps he is taking to ensure that local authorities settle the status of the children of EU nationals in their care. [910138]

The Minister for Immigration (Caroline Nokes): The Home Office's comprehensive vulnerability strategy ensures that the EU settlement scheme is accessible for all, including children in care. The Home Office is engaged with the Department for Education, the Local Government Association and the Association of Directors of Children's Services to assess the needs of this group and ensure that they are met. I have welcomed their ongoing contribution to the development of the scheme.

Teresa Pearce: The Home Office's testing of the EU settlement scheme has highlighted real challenges for this group of vulnerable children. Across five authorities, only 16 children have secured settled status. Does she

agree that, as corporate parents to these vulnerable children, we should be giving automatic settled status, and that those eligible for citizenship should have their fee waived to avoid any risk of them becoming undocumented and causing a second Windrush scandal?

Caroline Nokes: As the hon. Lady knows, five local authorities took part in the private test phase, making applications on behalf of children for whom they had full parental responsibility. They reported that the process was quick and easy for them to use. As I have said previously, we have a comprehensive vulnerability strategy and are working hard to make sure that the scheme is accessible and handles all those who are marginalised or at risk with the sensitivity that is required.

Topical Questions

T1. [910150] **Sir Edward Leigh (Gainsborough) (Con):** If he will make a statement on his departmental responsibilities.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Sajid Javid): My deepest sympathies go out to all those affected by the terrorist massacre in Christchurch, New Zealand. To help protect our faith institutions, we are increasing next year's places of worship fund for protective security to £1.6 million, investing £5 million in security training and consulting communities in what more can be done. Tragically, we are still seeing an epidemic of knife crime on our streets, so today we have launched a consultation on a new legal duty to support our public health multi-agency approach.

Sir Edward Leigh: The Secretary of State will be aware of the case of the Iranian Christian whose asylum application was turned down by the Home Office because—I quote a Home Office official—"violent passages" in the Bible contradicted his claim that Christianity is a "peaceful" religion. Will my right hon. Friend acknowledge that some of his officials may be so worried about being accused of Islamophobia or antisemitism that they overcompensate by becoming Christian-critical and do not understand that Christianity is the cornerstone of all our freedoms?

Sajid Javid: I have seen the letter to which my right hon. Friend refers. I found it totally unacceptable, and it is not in any way in accordance with policies at the Home Office. I have ordered an urgent investigation and not ruled out any further action.

T2. [910151] **Stephen Doughty (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op):** The Home Secretary talked about the epidemic in knife crime, which has tragically affected my own constituency with young people being killed and injured. We heard from senior police officers in the Home Affairs Committee last week about the £100 million that has been provided; they said that it simply was not enough to tackle the scourge. By comparison, 10 times that amount has been provided for Brexit. There have also been huge cuts in youth services across the country. What will he do to provide the resources that our police and all our services need to keep our young people safe?

Sajid Javid: Of course resources are very important in fighting knife crime. Alongside the £100 million that the Chancellor announced in his spring statement, which all the forces have told us will make a big difference, we should consider the almost £1 billion increase this year in the entire police system because of the financial settlement.

T3. [910152] **Eddie Hughes** (Walsall North) (Con): I am concerned that the Labour police and crime commissioner in the west midlands is maintaining large reserves to be spent in advance of the PCC elections next year. Is there anything the Government can do to stop this?

The Minister for Policing and the Fire Service (Mr Nick Hurd): The west midlands police and crime commissioner is one of many PCCs who were asking for more public money while, at the same time, putting public money aside to increase their reserves. We have increased the funding to west midlands police, and I hope my hon. Friend will welcome that. However, we also require police and crime commissioners to publish transparent strategies of how they intend to use their reserves. It is public money given by the public for investment in policing.

T7. [910156] **Patricia Gibson** (North Ayrshire and Arran) (SNP): Can the Secretary of State guarantee effective steps to encourage EU nationals to come to, and stay in, the UK to meet demand for NHS and care sector workers post Brexit? Does he accept that those sectors are facing a recruitment and retention crisis, with about 104,000 current health and social care workers who now feel unwelcome and undervalued?

The Minister for Immigration (Caroline Nokes): The hon. Lady will have heard me say earlier that we are working very hard with the social care sector and listening to organisations such as the Local Government Association. A couple of weeks ago, I met not just the LGA but the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to talk about the importance of the social care sector and to make sure that our future immigration system is able to recruit people with the skills and the talents that we need to come to the whole of the United Kingdom.

T4. [910153] **Charlie Elphicke** (Dover) (Con): With more arrivals by small boats across the English channel, will the Minister update the House on progress with aerial surveillance and gaining the agreement of France for migrants to be returned, to most effectively deter the people traffickers behind the migrant crisis?

Caroline Nokes: My hon. Friend is right to emphasise that it absolutely is people traffickers and organised crime gangs who are encouraging people to make this extremely perilous crossing. We deploy aerial surveillance, but the House will appreciate that I will not be able to discuss our covert assets in detail. He is right to emphasise that we are working with a number of member states, including France, to facilitate returns. About 20 individuals who have crossed via small boat have been returned to date, and further returns are in progress.

T8. [910157] **Mr Steve Reed** (Croydon North) (Lab/Co-op): Local authorities are formally responsible for applying to the EU settlement scheme on behalf of looked-after children, but it is not clear what support is available for vulnerable adults such as elderly people with dementia.

With potentially just 11 days left until we leave the EU, will the Minister now confirm what support will be made available to help vulnerable adults secure their status before the UK leaves?

Caroline Nokes: The Government have made available £9 million of grant funding to charities and other organisations to support vulnerable people, including vulnerable adults in the care sector, through this process. We have already, through the test phase, been working closely with a number of local authorities, and there has been an extensive engagement process with the LGA and other local government bodies to make sure that we get this right.

T5. [910154] **Fiona Bruce** (Congleton) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that while stop-and-search is a vital tool in the fight to tackle serious violence, to be truly effective, police need to be empowered to use it in an intelligence-led way?

Sajid Javid: Yes, I very much agree with my hon. Friend. The simple truth is that stop-and-search saves lives. Of course it should always be targeted and intelligence-led, with proper engagement with the community, but it saves lives. There are people alive today because of stop-and-search.

T10. [910159] **Laura Smith** (Crewe and Nantwich) (Lab): What does the Minister say to the victims and survivors of historical sexual abuse in my constituency who were horrified by the recent comments of the right hon. Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Boris Johnson) on spending by her Department on investigating such crimes?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Victoria Atkins): I share completely the views of, I think, most Members of this House that the victims of child sexual abuse, whether current or historical, deserve justice, deserve fairness, and deserve our support. Our use of language in this arena is vital, and the priority of this Government will always be to support those victims.

T6. [910155] **Steve Double** (St Austell and Newquay) (Con): I very much welcome the introduction of the pilot scheme for seasonal agricultural workers, but it is vital that it works for all parts of our agricultural sector. Will the Minister therefore look carefully at the scheme to ensure that it works for daffodil growers, whose picking season is different from that for other crops?

Sajid Javid: I am pleased that my hon. Friend welcomes the introduction of the pilot scheme. I listened carefully to what he said. The scheme will be evaluated very carefully—I can give him that assurance. We want to make sure that it works for all parts of our agricultural sector.

Wera Hobhouse (Bath) (LD): Over a third of my constituents do not earn enough to sponsor a visa for a family member from outside the EEA. Will the Minister consider revising the minimum income requirement, to provide a pathway for minimum wage employees to be reunited with family members?

Caroline Nokes: The minimum income threshold was set after consideration of advice from the independent Migration Advisory Committee. The Supreme Court has endorsed the lawfulness of that approach and agrees that the minimum income requirement strikes a fair balance between the interests of UK citizens wishing to sponsor a non-EEA spouse and of the community in general.

T9. [910158] **Chris Green** (Bolton West) (Con): I would like to thank my right hon. Friend on behalf of my constituent, Janine Aldridge, for his work in looking into concerns about the retention of human tissue. On behalf of Ms Aldridge, I wrote to the Mayor of Greater Manchester on 17 July 2017 to raise concerns about the retention of her daughter's tissue samples, which has led to the family holding three separate funerals. I was disappointed recently to receive a letter from the chief constable of Greater Manchester police, indicating that it has not undertaken a formal investigation into her complaint and was unaware that that was expected, despite Ms Aldridge meeting the Mayor and his deputy. Will my right hon. Friend urgently investigate this matter, so that the Aldridge family can have confidence that they have finally laid Leah to rest and to ensure that this never happens again?

Mr Speaker: The hon. Gentleman could not be accused of excluding any consideration that he might think in any way relevant, anywhere at any time.

Mr Hurd: Mr Speaker, my hon. Friend was raising the tragic case of a family who had to organise three separate funerals for a child. I understand that the deputy Mayor of Greater Manchester has written to Ms Aldridge informing her that Greater Manchester police will commence a formal investigation upon receipt of further details of the complaint. As promised, I have written to all chief constables in England and Wales requesting that their human tissue retention policy be submitted to my Department for scrutiny.

Stephen Timms (East Ham) (Lab): When the Home Secretary launched the immigration White Paper, I asked him about the overseas students falsely accused of cheating in the test of English for international communication. He said he was taking the matter very seriously. Can he update the House, and will he meet the officers of the new TOEIC all-party parliamentary group to discuss progress?

Sajid Javid: When I met the right hon. Gentleman, I took this issue very seriously. I have asked my officials to review it. We had a further meeting to make some final decisions just last week, and I will be in touch with him shortly.

Greg Hands (Chelsea and Fulham) (Con): Can we do more to help victims of car theft? My constituent Linford Haggie faced an extraordinary situation where his car was stolen, and the police told him he could retrieve it, but because the car had been kept to gather evidence and forensics, he had to pay a £150 release charge plus £20 a day for storage. Surely we should not be penalising victims of crime in that way.

Mr Hurd: I understand the point that my right hon. Friend makes. We are concerned about the increase in vehicle crime. That is why I have convened a taskforce to bring everyone together to look at it. There are costs that need to be recouped, but he raises a serious point, and we have agreed to look at that again.

Alex Norris (Nottingham North) (Lab/Co-op): The seasonal agricultural workers scheme presents a real risk of inadvertently creating slavery. What extra resources will the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority get to ensure that that does not happen?

Victoria Atkins: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his question. He will know how vital the work of the GLAA is to tackling modern slavery. I am working with my ministerial colleague to ensure that the situation he describes does not occur.

Kevin Foster (Torbay) (Con): For many victims of domestic violence, the mental and psychological abuse they are subject to has the biggest impact on their lives. What steps is the Minister taking to ensure that that aspect of domestic abuse is tackled?

Victoria Atkins: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising that point; often, the emotional and mental effects of domestic abuse can be just as harmful as the physical effects. That is why we are including those forms of abuse in the statutory definition of domestic abuse in the draft Domestic Abuse Bill. In addition, we are ensuring that the coercive and controlling behaviour offence, which we introduced in 2015, is still appropriate in this day and age.

Sir Edward Davey (Kingston and Surbiton) (LD): Members of the British armed forces from foreign and Commonwealth countries are rightly allowed to settle here in the UK with their families after their service. Why must they pay £2,389 per person—nearly £10,000 for a family—to be able to exercise that right? Will the Home Secretary scrap those fees for veterans of the British Army?

Sajid Javid: The right hon. Gentleman raises a reasonable issue, and the Home Office has been working with the Ministry of Defence to see whether we can do more.

Points of Order

3.34 pm

Richard Drax (South Dorset) (Con): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. As I have advised you, I should be grateful if you would allow me to make a personal statement.

I do not feel that I have misled the House, but I do feel that I have not been true to myself. Although doing what I believed to be in the country's best interest at that moment in time, I quickly realised that I should not have voted with the Government on Friday afternoon. We have to weigh up the balance of risk and make an almost impossible choice: it seemed to be either the Prime Minister's deal or a long delay, European elections, a softer Brexit and more political uncertainty. What I should have done, and did not do, was to trust my instincts and those of the British people. I made the wrong call on Friday, and let me very briefly explain why. First—*[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. *[Interruption.]* No. I signalled an acceptance of the hon. Gentleman's wish to raise this matter, and he must be allowed to do so.

Richard Drax: Thank you, Mr Speaker. First, I have consistently voted against the withdrawal agreement because it is flawed. Secondly, I believe I have let down good friends here in the House, and my friends and colleagues in the Democratic Unionist party. I served on three operational tours in Northern Ireland, playing a small part in protecting the innocent and combating terrorism, so I say sorry to DUP Members and the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Kate Hoey) for voting for a deal that could risk the integrity of our country. For that reason, and for that reason alone, the withdrawal agreement, as it stands, must never ever see the light of day again.

Finally, if the Prime Minister cannot commit to taking us out of the EU on 12 April, she must resign immediately. This is no longer about leave or remain—that was decided in 2016—but about the future of our great country, and about faith and trust in our democracy. Spring is here: time for a new start for us all. Let us take our country back in 11 days' time, and fulfil our honourable duty. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. I do not need any advice from the hon. Member for Croydon South (Chris Philp). I have the highest regard for the hon. Gentleman, who is a very keen, committed and assiduous new Member, but I hope he will accept it when I say, on the strength of nearly 22 years in the House and nine and three quarter years as the occupant of the Chair, that I do not feel in immediate need of assistance from someone who entered the House in May 2015. The hon. Gentleman is entitled to his views, but it might be prudent if he had the good courtesy to keep them to himself on this occasion.

I thank the hon. Member for South Dorset (Richard Drax) for his point of order. I did not know what its content was to be, and I had not seen the text. The hon. Gentleman speaks for himself. I know him well enough to know that he speaks not merely from the head, but from the heart. He is a person of integrity and a man of principle. I respect what he said, and I think it stands for others to judge, but I appreciate his saying so candidly what he wanted to say.

Laura Pidcock (North West Durham) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. This is not Brexit-related, but it is important to my constituents. On 31 January, I wrote to the Minister for Employment about an urgent matter involving a severely disabled constituent of mine who, through natural migration on to universal credit, has been made £98 a week worse off than when on working tax credit, after she was mis-advised by officials. I did receive a response—shockingly, eight weeks later—not with a solution, but asking for more information. My constituent has been in severe hardship the whole time. Given that the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions said earlier this month that people in this situation would be fully compensated and given the huge loss to this woman—this is no criticism of the workforce—what can we do in the face of such a dysfunctional Department and a Minister lackadaisical in the face of such distress?

Mr Speaker: I thank the hon. Lady for her point of order. I know that she was courteous enough to give me notice that she wished to raise the matter. I trust that she has also notified the Minister of her intention to do so.

Laura Pidcock *indicated assent.*

Mr Speaker: It is clearly important, colleagues, that Members receive timely responses from Ministers on important constituency matters. This is an observation I have had many times to make from the Chair. It should not be necessary to do so again, but, sadly, it has been. The hon. Lady has made her concern clear. It will have been noted by those on the Treasury Bench, including the Leader of the House, who I am sure, in common with her predecessors, takes very seriously the responsibility to chase Ministers to serve the House efficiently and in a timely fashion. We will leave it there for now.

Are there no further points of order? The right hon. Member for Haltemprice and Howden (Mr Davis) was thirsting a moment ago, but he appears to have lost his appetite.

Mr David Davis (Haltemprice and Howden) (Con) *rose—*

Mr Speaker: He has regained it. I call David Davis.

Mr Davis: Following the comments from my hon. Friend the Member for South Dorset (Richard Drax), my point of order is altogether too mundane to detain the House.

Mr Speaker: I do not think that “mundane” and the right hon. Gentleman ordinarily go together, so it would have been an exceptional state of affairs. Nevertheless, if he wishes to apply a self-denying ordinance on this occasion, who am I to prevent him?

BILL PRESENTED

PRIME MINISTER (CONFIDENCE)

Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)

Tom Brake, supported by Jo Swinson, Sir Edward Davey, Layla Moran, Tim Farron, Wera Hobhouse and Christine Jardine, presented a Bill to require a Prime Minister to tender their resignation to Her Majesty if the House of Commons passes a motion of no confidence in them; and for connected purposes.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 5 April, and to be printed (Bill 370)

Business of the House

Mr Speaker: I inform the House that I have not selected any of the amendments.

Motion made, and Question proposed,

(1) That, at today's sitting –

(a) any proceedings governed by the order of the House of 27 March (Business of the House) or this order may be proceeded with until any hour, though opposed, and shall not be interrupted;

(b) the order of 27 March shall apply as if, at the end of paragraph 2(b), there were inserted “and then to motions in the name of a Minister of the Crown relating to statutory instruments”;

(c) notwithstanding the practice of the House, any motion on matters that have been the subject of a prior decision of the House in the current Session may be the subject of a decision;

(d) the Speaker shall announce his decision on which motions have been selected for decision by recorded vote before calling a Member to move a motion under paragraph 2(f) of the order of 27 March;

(e) the Speaker may not propose the question on any amendment to any motion subject to decision by recorded vote or on the previous question, and may not put any question under Standing Order No. 36 (Closure of debate) or Standing Order No. 163 (Motion to sit in private);

(f) debate on the motions having precedence under paragraph 2(f) of the order of 27 March may continue until 8.00 pm at which time the House shall proceed as if the question had been put on each motion selected by the Speaker for decision by recorded vote and the opinion of the Speaker as to the decision on each such question had been challenged;

(g) in respect of those questions –

(i) Members may record their votes on each question under arrangements made by the Speaker;

(ii) votes may be recorded for half an hour after the Speaker declares the period open and the Speaker shall suspend the House for that period;

(iii) the Speaker shall announce the results in the course of the sitting;

(h) during the period between 8.00 pm and the announcement of the results on the questions subject to recorded vote –

(i) no motion for the adjournment may be made;

(ii) the Speaker may suspend the sitting if any other business, including proceedings provided for in paragraph 1(b) of this order and paragraph 2(g) of the order of 27 March, has been concluded.

(2) That, on Wednesday 3 April –

(a) notwithstanding Standing Order No. 14(1) (which provides that Government business shall have precedence at every sitting save as provided in that order), precedence shall first be given to a motion relating to the Business of the House in connection with the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union

(b) if more than one motion relating to the Business of the House is tabled, the Speaker shall decide which motion shall have such precedence;

(c) the Speaker shall interrupt proceedings on any business having precedence before the Business of the House motion at 2.00 pm and call a Member to move that motion;

(d) debate on that motion may continue until 5.00 pm at which time the Speaker shall put the questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on that motion including the questions on amendments selected by the Speaker which may then be moved;

(e) any proceedings interrupted or superseded by this order may be resumed or (as the case may be) entered upon and proceeded with after the moment of interruption.—(*Sir Oliver Letwin.*)

3.41 pm

Pete Wishart (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): I think we are all very much looking forward to today's proceedings, as they were such an overwhelming success last week. The whole House has to congratulate the right hon. Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin). We have been looking forward to this as much as the general public have been looking forward to the last series of “Game of Thrones”, such is the excitement in this place.

We can see that this is very much a British parliamentary coup, one conducted with points of order and copies of “Erskine May” rather than through military means, so all power to the right hon. Gentleman. He has managed to achieve more in five days than the Government have in the past three years. We have made more progress in that short time than we have in the course of those three years. He has seen a Government defeat and a possible general election. More than anything else, he has demonstrated that when the House takes back control and speaks with authority, it can do something that no Government have done on this issue of Brexit.

I look forward to today's proceedings, as I am sure the rest of the House does.

3.42 pm

The Leader of the House of Commons (Andrea Leadsom): I will keep my remarks brief as today is another opportunity for hon. Members to set out their thoughts on the way forward. However, I wish to reiterate my concerns about this approach that I set out last week.

The Government have consistently said that we do not support the unprecedented removal of Government control of the Order Paper, no matter the circumstances. For many years, the convention has been that it is for the Government, as elected by the people and with the confidence of the House, to set out the business. It is for Parliament to scrutinise, amend and reject or approve. The Government will listen carefully to Parliament today, but, as I have explained, the approach to today's business sets an extremely concerning precedent for our democracy, and we will therefore oppose the business motion.

Hilary Benn (Leeds Central) (Lab): The Leader of the House has just said that the Government will oppose the business motion. The Attorney General said on Friday:

“There is no desire on the part of this Government to interfere with the process that the House is currently undergoing”.—(*Official Report*, 29 March 2019; Vol. 657, c. 697.)

Can she explain how that statement squares with the Government's opposition to the business motion today?

Andrea Leadsom: The right hon. Gentleman quotes selectively from the Attorney General's comments. All I can say is that the Government have concerns about the precedent that this sets, and they are legitimate concerns. Opposition Members may one day be in a position to be concerned about parliamentary conventions and dangerous precedents.

Mr Kenneth Clarke (Rushcliffe) (Con): When the Leader of the House last made this point, I pointed out that the Prime Minister promised that if her deal was

[Mr Kenneth Clarke]

not passed, she would find time and make arrangements for the House to have indicative votes. Had the Government done that, the procedural point that the Leader of the House raises would never have arisen. Having got where we are, and given the situation the country is in, will the Leader of the House reconsider indicating that the Government still intend to resist anything that the House passes that they do not approve of? The whole thing could have been sorted out if the Government's promise to put their own arrangements for indicative votes in place had been honoured.

Andrea Leadsom: My right hon. and learned Friend has a slightly different recollection from my own. Indeed, the Prime Minister did say that she would seek the views of this House, but my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin) came forward with his motion prior to the Government being able to do so. The Government respect that, but are concerned about the precedent.

Last week, the House considered a variety of options as a way forward and will do so again today. What was clearly demonstrated last week is that there is no agreed way forward, but urgent action is needed. I continue to believe that the deal the Government have negotiated is a good compromise that delivers on the referendum, while protecting jobs and our security partnership with our EU friends and neighbours.

Sammy Wilson (East Antrim) (DUP): I disagree with the right hon. Lady on the withdrawal agreement being a good compromise, but does she agree, first, that any vote in this House today is indicative; and, secondly, that it would be totally unreasonable to expect any Government to negotiate an arrangement totally at odds with the programme they set out, the manifesto commitments they made, and the arrangements that the people of the United Kingdom would accept?

Andrea Leadsom: I think the right hon. Gentleman was reading my mind. I was literally just about to say that any alternative solution that the House votes for would need to be deliverable, would need to be negotiable with the European Union, and would need to deliver on the vote of the referendum.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Andrea Leadsom: I do not want to give way any further, because this is a day for Parliament. I do apologise.

Members of Parliament should also be in no doubt that any alternative solution requiring a further extension would mean the UK participating in European Parliament elections. It is now nearly three years since the referendum, and I believe that position would be unacceptable to the people of the United Kingdom. The Government will continue to call for an agreement that delivers on the 2016 referendum, and maintains a deep and special partnership with the European Union. I look forward to hearing the contributions made in today's debate, and to working with the House to agree a negotiable and deliverable way forward that respects the result of the referendum.

3.47 pm

Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey) (Lab): I had not intended to speak, but I think it is important, in the light of the comments the Leader of the House has made, that at least somebody gets up and points out that our debate today has come about simply because Parliament has tried to do something that the Prime Minister ought to have been doing three years ago when the referendum happened: namely, to try to make some sense of what was a completely undefined way of trying to leave the European Union, which had divided our country. What we should have been seeing, and what today's business motion allows us to do—albeit at the very last minute—is to try to reach out and see if we can come together ourselves across Parliament and begin to think about ways that might be able to heal our deeply divided country. It has been divided by a Prime Minister who insisted on dealing solely with her own extreme right-wingers to try to define what Brexit should be, rather than reaching across the aisle in this House to try to bring about a compromise that could have taken more of the country with it.

I understand the points made by the Leader of the House about the constitutional novelty of the situation we are in, but I disagree with her hard-line view of Parliament's role, especially since the 2017 general election deprived her party of a majority in this House, and taking into account this Government's record in riding roughshod over constitutional understandings by ignoring Opposition votes, by refusing to vote on Opposition motions, and by defining the parliamentary Session in two years, thereby taking away the opportunity for Opposition days and halving their number.

Martin Whitfield (East Lothian) (Lab): It was announced over the weekend that none of last week's indicative votes got anywhere near what the Prime Minister's deal got. Given that the Government abstained on last week's votes, is it not correct to say that the numbers were clearly going to be smaller because the payroll was not involved?

Ms Eagle: Yes, and although the payroll is in constant contention against itself, it has grown over time. If the payroll does not vote, by definition anything that this House votes on today will involve lesser numbers. I think we are close to reaching some conclusions, but it is almost as though the Leader of the House does not want the House to reach conclusions so that she can have another go in meaningful vote 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 or, God forgive us, even 10.

Stephen Doughty (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op): My hon. Friend makes very strong points. I, too, am backing the business of the House motion, because I think Parliament made remarkable progress the other day in a few hours, compared with the Government, who have had two years to sort this out. Does she agree that it is important that we vote the motion through to give us not only the opportunity to make further progress tonight, but, if necessary, a small amount of time on Wednesday to get to where we need to be, so that Parliament can take control and we can move forward together as a House?

Ms Eagle: I agree with my hon. Friend. Indeed, listening to those who campaigned to leave in the referendum, I thought it was all about Parliament taking

back control. Right from the beginning, the Prime Minister attempted to exclude Parliament from any part in the decision-making process, and she had to be dragged kicking and screaming by the Supreme Court to give Parliament the role that is its right. It is about time we demonstrated to this dysfunctional Government that there is a way forward. I hope that in our deliberations we will do so.

Finally, I am concerned that the Government are going around saying that they will not listen to the results of indicative votes. That is why it is important, albeit very difficult, for Parliament to take even more time from the Government so that we can begin to legislate if there is a result tonight. Given that the Government have tried to keep power to themselves and to exclude Parliament completely from any say in the decisions made post referendum, we have to keep doing constitutionally novel things to try to save our country from the disaster of a catastrophic no-deal crash-out.

3.52 pm

Sir Edward Leigh (Gainsborough) (Con): In some ways, this business motion might be seen as the most interesting and important part of the day, because procedure is now everything. The fact that, on this historic day, the Government have lost control of the Order Paper is vital to the debate and how we proceed. Although we will have an interesting debate in the coming hours, I doubt whether a single vote will be changed by what anybody says, what blogs are written or what tweets are posted. Most people have made up their minds, and they have a settled view on what they want—whether it is the customs union, no deal or whatever.

My few remarks are almost by way of questions to the Leader of the House and to my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin). Like many people, I want to know what will happen under the current procedure. It seems to me that tonight we will probably whittle matters down to one option that has the most support in the House, and we all know that that is likely to be permanent membership of the customs union. On Wednesday, the alternative Government—not the Labour party, but my right hon. Friend—will take control of the agenda. As I understand it, he will then produce a Bill to implement what is decided, which will probably be permanent membership of the customs union.

I put it to the Government that we Conservative MPs will then have a choice: we will have to have permanent membership of the customs union because the Order Paper will have been taken over by Parliament; or we have a general election; or we prorogue Parliament. I say to my right hon. Friend that I think it would be a dereliction of duty on the part of the House if we were to abdicate our responsibility and have a general election. The people asked us to make this choice and to do this job. If we cannot agree on what we do not want, we should agree on what we do want. Therefore, the Government have to move forward with their meaningful vote, if necessary in a run-off with this customs union, and if necessary in a vote tomorrow.

I do not believe that it is in the interests of the nation to have a general election, which would solve nothing: people do not vote on the issue—they vote on who the

leader of the party is, who they like or who their local MP is. We all know that every single general election gets out of control. We ourselves have to decide this issue. We have to make the choice. We have to decide what we want, not what we do not want.

Helen Goodman (Bishop Auckland) (Lab): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Edward Leigh: No, I am going to finish in a moment. The other thing that we surely cannot do—I say this to my friends who, like me, voted for Brexit—is duck the issue by proroguing Parliament. We cannot act like Charles I. We voted leave because we wanted to give control back to Parliament; it would be like someone throwing the football out of the stadium because they are losing the football match.

There is a simple choice for my colleagues now. The Government are on the cusp of losing control and we are on the cusp of facing permanent membership of the customs union, which runs contrary to our manifesto. We have to get real, dear friends: we have to make that choice. My personal choice is that I would rather vote for the Prime Minister's deal, which at least delivers some sort of Brexit.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr Speaker: Order. I very gently say to colleagues that although there is time scheduled for this debate, some of the points being made could perfectly well be made in the debate itself, rather than in the debate on the business of the House motion. I would have thought that colleagues could speak extremely briefly, as will be brilliantly exemplified now by the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent Central (Gareth Snell).

3.56 pm

Gareth Snell (Stoke-on-Trent Central) (Lab/Co-op): I will do my best, Mr Speaker. I wish to touch on my amendment that was not selected. Of course, I pay ultimate deference to your decision, Mr Speaker, but I wonder whether, at some point before we vote on the motion, the right hon. Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin) could help me. When we discussed the business of the House motion last week, I asked him about the daisy-chaining process that he was involved in—the process of attaching another day to the business of the day we were discussing. We now have a motion that we passed on the 25th to have a debate on the 27th. The motion on the 27th gave us the 1st and the motion on the 1st would give us the 3rd. I have no issue with the House doing what it sees as necessary to find a way through this Brexit impasse, but I wonder whether the right hon. Gentleman, if he has a plan, can tell us what that is going forward.

There is a rumour that on Wednesday we may be asked to legislate for the outcome of this evening. I presume that on Wednesday's business of the House motion, there will be another paragraph (2) to commandeer a day of the week after. If that is the case, I wonder whether a plan—if it exists somewhere—of how many days and what the days are to be used for can be shared with the House. That is not because I wish to impede the House from doing this. However, on Friday I was asked to vote against the withdrawal agreement on the

[Gareth Snell]

basis of a blind Brexit, and I am now being asked to hand over days of parliamentary business with no idea of what will be tabled and discussed on those days. [Interruption.] As much as I thank Government Members for their support, I do not really want it. [Interruption.] I will take it, but I do not want it.

I mean to try to be helpful to the right hon. Member for West Dorset. If he has a plan of how many days and what those days are to be used for, could he share it with us? If we as a House are going to be asked to hand over day after day, we should know what we will be asked to vote on during those days.

3.58 pm

Sir William Cash (Stone) (Con): A few days ago, I brought in the House of Commons (Precedence of Government Business) (European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018) Bill, to which I gave a great deal of thought and that I discussed with many other Members. It is due to be debated on 5 April. The position is this. I did it because of my grave concern about the procedure being employed under this motion in particular, for the following reasons, which I will give briefly.

First, it is well said in our constitutional authorities that justice is to be found in the interstices of procedure. What that means is that through procedure we can ensure that things are done that should be done, based on conventions such as the reason for the rule, which is a fundamental basis of our constitutional arrangements.

Standing Order No. 14 is quite clear: it gives precedence to Government business. As a result of this procedure, we are impugning that rule and substituting for it a completely different arrangement—one that I have described as a constitutional revolution. It is not a novelty, as it was described just now, or, as the right hon. Member for Twickenham (Sir Vince Cable) said the other day, a technical innovation. The problem goes back to the reason for the rule and the Standing Order. Government business takes precedence for one simple reason: the Government are the Government of this country and are given that opportunity by virtue of the decisions taken by the public and the wishes of members of the public, as voters in general elections. That is the basis of our democracy. Likewise, decisions in referendums are taken by members of the public as voters.

It is utterly perverse for us to vote by such a significant majority—I will not go into that, because we know it is the case—and then overturn and invert the business of the House rules as we are doing under this business motion and as happened the other day. Government business takes precedence because of democracy. It is a fundamental question. Parliament decided in the European Union Referendum Act 2015 to give the decision to the British people, not to this House. I have said repeatedly—and it is true—that we operate on the basis of parliamentary government, not government by Parliament. If, by a sovereign Act of Parliament, we confer upon the British people the right to make that choice in a referendum, there is not, in terms of that Act, for which the House voted six to one, an opportunity then to take back control in this context.

It is a very simple question, and, to my knowledge, it has happened only once before. You mentioned the other day, Mr Speaker, or somebody raised with you, a precedent going back to 1604. As it happens, there is

another precedent, from the 1650s, when the House became completely anarchic, and different factions started making decisions without reference to any Government policy—and look at the mess we are in now and the anarchy now prevailing, with these indicative votes and everybody making different decisions for no good purpose. Oliver Cromwell came down to this House and said, “You have been here too long for anything useful you may have done. Depart, I say, and in the name of God, go.” He then brought in the Barebone’s Parliament; that collapsed as well, and we ended up with a military dictatorship.

Members of Parliament voted for the referendum Act by six to one, for the European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Act 2017 and then for the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018. As I say quite often, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke) himself voted for the Third Reading of the withdrawal Act. These indicative votes are just a means of trying to unravel the decision taken—that is the bottom line. I believe that it is undemocratic and in defiance of our constitution, our procedures and the reason for the rule. As far as I am concerned, these indicative votes are like a parliamentary bag of liquorice allsorts—or rather humbugs.

4.4 pm

Tom Brake (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD): It is because the Government have lost the confidence of the House that this business motion is before us. After 1,012 days of trying to find a solution, they have completely failed to do so. This is day 2 of Parliament’s attempt to find a cross-party solution to the Brexit dilemma. I hope that we shall be successful on day 2, but if we are not, and if we pass the business motion—as I hope we will—we shall also have day 3 on which to resolve this matter, and I hope that we shall be successful then.

4.5 pm

Sir Bernard Jenkin (Harwich and North Essex) (Con): I agree with the right hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Tom Brake) on one point: the present situation has obviously arisen because the Government have lost the confidence of the House on this issue. I shall return to that question later in my speech, but let me first return to the questions posed to my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin), very courteously and politely, by the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent Central (Gareth Snell). I think that they were perfectly reasonable questions, for which the hon. Gentleman was having some difficulty in holding my right hon. Friend accountable.

I am reminded of the words that we heard from my right hon. Friend on 14 February, when he said:

“The process of which we are now at the start will require the fundamental realignment of the relationship between the civil service, Government and Parliament...for a period, for this purpose, we will have to take on the government of our country.”—[*Official Report*, 14 February 2019; Vol. 654, c. 1110.]

But this “Government”—those sitting on my left, including my right hon. Friend—are not accountable to the hon. Gentleman who was asking the questions. It is not possible to table a question to this “Government”, and it is not possible to ask this “Government” to come and make a business statement, because, of course, they are not a Government; they are merely pretending to take over the role of a Government.

I do not wish to discuss Brexit in my speech. I want to place on record some concerns that I have and that I think many right hon. and hon. Members, on reflection, should have about the consequences of starting to run our country in this fashion. Passing the business motion will confirm that, for the first time in more than 100 years, the Government have lost explicit control over legislative business.

The Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee, which I chair, held an evidence session that underlined what an extraordinary state of affairs this is. Conservative Members of Parliament who only two months ago voted for confidence in Her Majesty's Government do not appear to have confidence in that Government's legitimate authority over the control of the timetable of the House, and that raises profound problems with this new procedure. Some people seem to believe that it is a long overdue modernisation of an antiquated system of parliamentary government. In fact, it is turning our system on its head in a dramatic reversal of roles for Government and Parliament. The procedure may be well intentioned, and I do not doubt for a moment the sincerity of my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset, but it has been invented on the hoof, bypassing every means of reviewing the practices and procedures of the House. The Procedure Committee has not been consulted in any fashion.

Helen Goodman (Bishop Auckland) (Lab): Some of us who are members of the Procedure Committee have sought to have further discussions about how to deal with these problems and have met with some resistance. The hon. Gentleman seems to want to limit the role of Parliament to that of the legislature. I do not understand why he wants to import an American doctrine into our constitution, with a sharp division between the role of Parliament and the role of the Executive. That is just not the way in which the British Parliament is run, or has been run.

Sir Bernard Jenkin: It is a question of who imported whose model. Montesquieu actually thought that he was copying the British system when he created a United States constitution that gives the President a legislative veto and requires a two-thirds majority of Congress to overrule it.

Nick Boles (Grantham and Stamford) (Con): Would my hon. Friend feel the same way if my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin) proposed to use Wednesday to legislate in favour of a no-deal Brexit?

Sir Bernard Jenkin: Very droll. My hon. Friend rather misses the point of my opening remarks that I do not wish to discuss Brexit. I simply point out that he voted for the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018, which legislated for us to leave the EU with or without a withdrawal agreement. He put that on the statute book with me, so in that respect, parliamentary democracy has been served.

Mr Kenneth Clarke: My hon. Friend keeps referring to me, yet I voted for the Prime Minister's withdrawal agreement three times. I accept that the House, by a large majority, is settled on a course, which I deeply regret, to leave the EU, and therefore I am trying to make some progress on what the House can agree about

the form of that leaving. The Government are not prepared to give the House time to express an opinion or reach an agreement on that. As my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham and Stamford (Nick Boles) implied a moment ago, I strongly suspect that my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich and North Essex (Sir Bernard Jenkin) would take a different view if the Government were excluding no deal, which had, by some chance, the support of the majority of the House—though 400 people voted against it the last time it was raised.

Sir Bernard Jenkin: I say to my right hon. and learned Friend that the problem with the process of indicative votes is that MPs are free to pick and choose whatever policies they like, without any responsibility for what happens afterwards. There is an obvious flaw in that process—I look particularly at Opposition Members. Especially in a hung Parliament such as this, it is not unreasonable to suspect that individual Members might have ulterior motives for supporting or opposing particular measures, rather than voting just on their merits. After all, the House of Commons is a theatre, within which different political parties compete for power, either by trying to avoid a general election or trying to get one by collapsing the Government. Amid that chaos, who is to be held accountable for what is decided?

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con): Is that not particularly the case when Parliament is trying to issue instructions to the Government about an international negotiation, but only the Government can negotiate on behalf of the United Kingdom? We cannot have little groups of MPs who fancy their chances turning up in Brussels, purporting to represent the UK. It makes it a difficult exercise when Members are trying to influence a negotiation that only the Government can handle.

Sir Bernard Jenkin: I agree with my right hon. Friend. I have some criticism of the way in which the Government have conducted their European policy, but they cannot be held responsible for decisions for which they did not vote or prove impossible to carry out.

Pete Wishart: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Bernard Jenkin: I will give way to the hon. Gentleman. I noted that he described the procedure as “Game of Thrones”. That underlines how it is open to ridicule. No doubt he will continue his ridicule because he wants a nationalist Scotland.

Pete Wishart: I am intrigued by the hon. Gentleman's last comments. He says that he wants the Government to be in charge of the process and negotiating Brexit, but how did he vote on the Government's motion the last three times?

Sir Bernard Jenkin: I do not think that that is a secret. I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman has not looked it up. The problem is that last week's indicative votes have already discredited Parliament because no single proposal was adopted by a majority. Sustained use of the procedure is already undermining trust, increasing alienation and destroying the credibility of institutions that have historically worked tolerably well. It is apparent that the long-term effects of this constitutional upheaval are not a consideration for those who are forcing it upon us. There is no electoral mandate for such a

[*Sir Bernard Jenkin*]

dramatic constitutional upheaval. In what circumstances would this experiment be repeated in the future, perhaps when a majority Government did not have a majority on a particular issue? It is one thing for a minority of the governing party to help to vote down a Government proposal; it is something else, and quite extraordinary, to combine forces with Her Majesty's official Opposition to impose an entirely Government different policy that the Government were not elected to implement.

Sir Edward Leigh: These constitutional perambulations are very interesting, and I accept everything that my hon. Friend says about the nature of these indicative votes, but if he and his Friends had voted with the Government on the past three occasions, we would have Brexit by now.

Sir Bernard Jenkin: I am deliberately not going to become involved in that argument, but my hon. Friend knows that I do not believe that the withdrawal agreement delivers Brexit.

What policy decisions would be eligible to be made through this procedure in the future? Why not decide taxation policy like this, or social security? I well remember my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe, when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer, giving stinging rebukes to those who voted down his policy on increasing VAT on fuel. It is a bad thing for a Government to lose a vote on a taxation measure in a Budget, but just imagine handing over the entire Budget proposals to the House of Commons to be voted on in this way.

The vote to leave was in part to reverse the democratic deficit of the institutions of the European Union and to restore national democratic accountability. Whatever anyone's view, that should be uncontroversial. The EU's elected Parliament is blighted by low turnouts, and I doubt that anyone other than those who follow these issues most minutely could name with any certainty more than one or two of the candidates to be the next President of the European Commission, which is of course a legislative body. If we are to respond to the mandate expressed in the referendum, it cannot be right that we corrode our own system of parliamentary government by making it less accountable to voters in elections and rendering its process more inaccessible and confusing.

Margaret Beckett (Derby South) (Lab): Being something of a traditionalist in these matters, I have a good deal of sympathy with the points that the hon. Gentleman is making. I very much dislike the necessity, which has been forced on the House, to take control of the business from the Government because they are simply not doing their business. However, I would have much more sympathy for the complaint being made by him and some of his friends if they ever seemed to notice the constitutional innovation that has been practised many times by this Prime Minister when something has been voted on in this House and the result of that vote has simply been ignored.

Sir Bernard Jenkin: "Ignored" is the operative word that the right hon. Lady uses. Obviously, it is and should always be the practice of Governments to respect the will of the House as expressed in a motion. However,

as Mr Speaker himself has confirmed, a motion is merely an expression of opinion, and it is up to the Government to decide how to respond to that opinion. This underlines how, in our system, a Government propose and Parliament disposes. Parliament does not take over the Government's role, which is what is being proposed in this process.

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): But the historical precedent is that when a Government lose their major policy—whether it is a financial policy, or in this case their most significant policy—they resign. They do not hang about for a vote of no confidence; they automatically resign. That is always been the historical precedent, and it is a bit of a surprise that they have not done it in this case.

Sir Bernard Jenkin: That takes me on to my next point, which is that it seems likely, so long as the Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011 endures, that minority Governments will continue to be vulnerable to this usurpation of power—or this paralysis, as the hon. Gentleman sees it—which will bring some in this House more influence while never being held accountable or responsible for what happens as a consequence of any decisions made in that way.

The risk is that this process of disapplying Standing Orders, casting aside the processes of the House of Commons, seizing control from the Government, threatening to pass legislation against the Government's wishes and bending the Executive to the legislature's will is being used to remove a Government from power but not from office. It seems that the House will strike but not kill, and this new kind of instability is already having dire consequences for our voters' rapidly diminishing confidence in our nation's democracy.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Has the hon. Member for Harwich and North Essex (Sir Bernard Jenkin) finished his oration?

Sir Bernard Jenkin *indicated assent*.

Mr Speaker: We are grateful to him. I call Mr Frank Field.

Frank Field (Birkenhead) (Ind): I did want to speak, but I think can weave the 30 seconds into my speech later on, if you are mindful to call me.

Mr Speaker: Well, what impressive self-restraint. That may be a model that others should follow. Who knows? I say that more in hope than expectation. I call Jacob Rees-Mogg.

4.20 pm

Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg (North East Somerset) (Con): I am sorry not to be quite as brief as the right hon. Member for Birkenhead (Frank Field), but I want to speak to the specifics of the motion. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich and North Essex (Sir Bernard Jenkin) that this constitutional innovation is deeply unsatisfactory. The right hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Tom Brake) rightly said that it is an indication that the House no longer has confidence in Her Majesty's Government. The whole point of the Government having control of the timetable is that that is an expression of confidence. I am even

quite sympathetic to the point made by the hon. Member for Rhondda (Chris Bryant). It is the Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011 that has created an element of constitutional muddle, where we have a Government who obviously do not command official confidence but none the less carry on as if they did.

We need to get to a situation where the business of the House and the Government go together once more. This approach is deeply unsatisfactory because there is no means of holding anybody to account for it. The motions can be passed one way or another, and they then go off to Europe to be discussed—if they are to be discussed—by people who do not believe in or support them. Those people may come back having failed, and they may have done things in a way that the House might not have liked, but the people who proposed the motions do not go out to discuss them with Brussels because they are not the Government. Therefore, this approach leads ultimately to chaotic relationships between the legislature and the Executive.

This business of the House motion is itself unsatisfactory. Paragraph (1)(c) states that

“notwithstanding the practice of the House, any motion on matters that have been the subject of a prior decision of the House in the current Session may be the subject of a decision”.

Mr Speaker, as you pointed out to us, that goes against the most ancient practice of the House dating back to 1604, but it is also a considerable discourtesy to you personally. On Thursday, you ruled that the Government could not bring forward a paving motion to allow them to bring forward their motion again—a decision that everybody in the House accepted and thought was reasonable. Therefore, to have slipped through under your nose in this motion something that allows a paving motion for motions that have already been determined is a discourtesy. If I had been as discourteous as that to you, I would not have the gall to move the motion standing in my name. Indeed, I would feel it necessary to make a public apology for such a shaming state of affairs.

Jim McMahon (Oldham West and Royton) (Lab/Co-op): The hon. Gentleman's real objection is not that Parliament is trying to balance control away from the Government, but that his power has been seriously weakened by Parliament asserting its own authority in trying to find a way forward.

Mr Rees-Mogg: The shame is not that Parliament is trying to wrestle power from the Government, but that Parliament is wrestling power from the 17.4 million people who voted to leave. The shame is that people who stood on manifestos saying that they would respect the result of the referendum did so with forked tongues.

Wes Streeting (Ilford North) (Lab): On the subject of shame and public apologies, I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman might seize this opportunity to apologise for quoting, apparently approvingly, the leader of Germany's far-right AfD party this weekend.

Mr Rees-Mogg: I think it is reasonable to quote speeches made in the German Parliament. It is not as great a Parliament as this one or as noble a House as this House of Commons but, none the less, it is the Chamber of a House of an important ally and friend. What was said was extremely interesting. Just referring people to what has been said is not necessarily an

endorsement. As the hon. Gentleman may have noticed, I just quoted from the motion before us, not because I endorse it but because it is interesting and important, so perhaps he should not jump to weird conclusions.

The other problem with this motion is the time it allows for debate. We will have quite a number of motions to consider, as we did yesterday.

Anna Soubry (Broxtowe) (Ind): Last week.

Mr Rees-Mogg: The right hon. Lady, quite correctly, corrects me that it was at the end of last week.

We have motions (A) to (H) to debate, and the format of this business of the House motion leaves between 6 o'clock plus a Division, so 6.15 pm, and 8 o'clock for that debate to take place, which seems a very rushed approach to debating these important issues. When the Government were in control of the Order Paper, they allowed more days for debate than this motion allows hours.

Chris Ruane (Vale of Clwyd) (Lab): If the hon. Gentleman were to conclude his speech, and if others were to resist having a debate at this point, we could get to the meat of the issue.

Mr Rees-Mogg: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman. Had he not decided to intervene, I might have finished my comments, but now he has given me inspiration to carry on against this appalling motion, which is fundamentally against the spirit of our constitution.

I appeal to those who support this type of motion to have the courage of their convictions. If they really have no confidence in Her Majesty's Government, let them vote that way. Let them go to their constituents and see how far they get standing as independents. Let them see, as socialists, how many votes they get. Let them see, as independents, how many votes they get. They lack the courage of their convictions, and therefore they try to undermine the constitution by subterfuge.

Kevin Brennan (Cardiff West) (Lab): On the matter of the courage of our convictions, just a few months ago, the hon. Gentleman voted that he had no confidence in the Prime Minister as leader of his party. He subsequently voted that he has confidence in the Prime Minister, in whom he has no confidence to lead his party, to lead the country. What kind of courage of his convictions is that?

Mr Rees-Mogg: The hon. Gentleman misses the rather obvious point. I have much more confidence in my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, or indeed any Conservative Member, to lead the country than I have in the Leader of the Opposition. It seems to me a very straightforward choice, and of course I back a Tory against a socialist.

Anna Soubry: The hon. Gentleman raises an interesting point in talking about the courage of our convictions. Would he like to tell the House why he voted against the Government's withdrawal agreement a few weeks ago but voted for it on Friday? Why is he entitled to change his mind in a vote but the people of this country are not allowed to change their mind and have a people's vote?

Mr Rees-Mogg: I am deeply grateful to the right hon. Lady for intervening, which is much appreciated because it allows me to point out to her that she is the foremost campaigner for a second referendum and she favours

[Mr Rees-Mogg]

votes at every opportunity except, having stood as a Conservative, she does not reoffer herself to her constituents to decide whether they wish to have somebody who has turned their coat as their Member of Parliament.

Anna Soubry *rose*—

Mr Rees-Mogg: If the right hon. Lady wishes to apply for the Chiltern hundreds, I will of course give way.

Mr Speaker: Order. We are in danger of straying somewhat from the narrow ambit of the business of the House motion, to which I hope we will return.

Anna Soubry: I think it is important to record that, of course, the majority of people in Broxtowe did not vote Conservative and, like all hon. and right hon. Members, I seek to represent all my constituents. As we all should, I put them and our country before narrow, sectarian party interest.

Mr Rees-Mogg: What was it the late Earl of Beaconsfield said of Mr Gladstone, “A prolix rhetorician inebriated by the exuberance of his own verbosity”? I would not dream of saying such a thing about the right hon. Lady.

Let me return to the motion in hand, which is discourteous to you, Mr Speaker, does not allow sufficient time for debate—

John Redwood *rose*—

Mr Rees-Mogg: I will not give way again, because others wish to speak—apologies. The motion is discourteous to you, Mr Speaker, limits time for debate and is fundamentally against the constitution.

Tom Brake: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I wonder whether the hon. Member for North East Somerset (Mr Rees-Mogg) would like to correct the record, because it is clear from the tweet from the AfD that he retweeted that he was endorsing the statement that had been made by that member of a far-right party in the German Parliament.

Mr Speaker: The answer to that is that every Member is responsible for the truth of what he or she says in the Chamber. If a Member feels that he or she has inadvertently erred, it is incumbent on the Member to correct the record. The hon. Gentleman will have heard what the right hon. Gentleman has said and will make his own judgment as to its merit.

4.30 pm

Kate Hoey (Vauxhall) (Lab): I have grave concerns about the way we are dealing now with our business in this motion. I accept that we voted last week to have further discussion and indicative votes today, but the amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent Central (Gareth Snell) would have given the House a chance to decide whether we wanted to continue this process, which the right hon. Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin) continues to undertake. I do not think we can continue to have a business motion that puts another day in and then not have a chance to have that vote.

I am concerned about that, but I also have another concern. I know that all my Labour colleagues, particularly those on the Front Bench, aspire to be in government and they should just remember that this process may well be used when we are in government. Would we like to see that happening?

Sir William Cash: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Kate Hoey: I will give way to the Chair of my Select Committee—

Sir William Cash: Does the hon. Lady agree that one problem with these indicative votes is that when they are attached, as they are intended to be, by all accounts, to a Bill that will then follow and be put through the House of Commons in one day—[*Interruption.*] Perhaps it will have one day in the House of Lords as well, for all I know. The bottom line is: we do not know yet what any such Bill will contain. It is inconceivable, is it not, that we should be presented with Bills that will be rammed through the House of Commons on matters of such incredible importance without even seeing them?

Kate Hoey: That just further adds to my view that we should be able to vote on whether we want another day or not after today’s business. We have to remember here, as do people watching, that Parliament abrogated its responsibility to take this decision—we have to say that over and over again—and asked the people. It said, “We will listen to whatever you say.” I do not care what anyone says, the dictionary definition of what “leave” means is very simple. All these motions today, with the exception of the one tabled by the hon. Member for Basildon and Billericay (Mr Baron), are designed, in some way or another, to not allow us to leave in the way that people thought they were voting for when they voted on 23 June 2016. It was made very clear—I do not want to go into the details—and we all knew that leave meant leaving all the institutions of the European Union. So I would never question it, but I am disappointed that we will not have a vote on the amendment, as that would have been sensible. I hope that today people remember that the biggest majority in this House for anything to do with the European Union was when 498 votes said we would leave, with or without a deal.

4.33 pm

Greg Hands (Chelsea and Fulham) (Con): I need only 30 seconds, to make two points, Mr Speaker. First, it is extraordinary that we are going to have less than three and a half hours to debate incredibly important matters: whether we are going to enter into a customs union, be in the single market, have a second referendum or opt for revocation. I find this extremely unsatisfactory, but I will not eat further into the time that is left.

Secondly, I think people will be puzzled when they look at the Order Paper—notwithstanding the selection that you make, Mr Speaker—because, for example, motion (C) on a customs union, which is before us today, is precisely the same, word for word, as the previous motion (J), which was rejected by this House only three sitting days ago. Members of the public will be baffled as to how a 585-page Government agreement is unable to come back for a further vote, yet a word-for-word motion that was rejected only three days ago might be deemed suitable for debate today.

4.35 pm

Tommy Sheppard (Edinburgh East) (SNP): I had not intended to speak in this debate, but I wish to do so briefly because I am astonished and not a little outraged at what is happening. Members of the public who are watching our proceedings will be incredibly exasperated, not only at the fact that a hard-right faction in Parliament is using lengthy speeches about procedure to try to prevent us from getting on to the debate, but because the Government are acting with extreme bad faith towards Parliament.

Let us remind ourselves why we took control of the Standing Orders that give the Government the right to set the agenda: because the Government are incapable of using that right to move this process forward. They have done one of two things: they have either brought a proposition that has manifestly failed to get a majority back to the House completely unchanged, in the vain hope that the passage of time will allow them to browbeat their opponents into submission; or, even worse, they have filled our agenda with stuff that we do not need to discuss as a matter of urgency, leading to the embarrassing situation in which, in a moment of national crisis, this House has finished its business early and we have been sent home with nothing to discuss. That is an outrage and that is why Parliament is taking control of the agenda so that we can move the process forward. I believe we will do that if we get the chance to get at the matter today. I therefore hope we can take the vote, agree to take control into our own hands and then make better use of it than the Government are able to.

Question put.

The House divided: Ayes 322, Noes 277.

Division No. 396]

[4.37 pm

AYES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
Abrahams, Debbie
Ali, Rushanara
Allen, Heidi
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
Amesbury, Mike
Antoniazzi, Tonia
Ashworth, Jonathan
Bailey, Mr Adrian
Bardell, Hannah
Bebb, Guto
Beckett, rh Margaret
Benn, rh Hilary
Benyon, rh Richard
Berger, Luciana (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Leslie*)
Betts, Mr Clive
Black, Mhairi
Blackford, rh Ian
Blackman, Kirsty
Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta
Blomfield, Paul
Boles, Nick
Brabin, Tracy
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
Brake, rh Tom
Brennan, Kevin
Brine, Steve
Brock, Deidre
Brown, Alan
Brown, Lyn
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas

Bryant, Chris
Buck, Ms Karen
Burden, Richard
Burgon, Richard
Burt, rh Alistair
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
Collins, Damian
Cooper, Julie
Cooper, Rosie
Cooper, rh Yvette
Corbyn, rh Jeremy
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
Dakin, Nic
Davey, rh Sir Edward
David, Wayne
Davies, Geraint
Day, Martyn
De Cordova, Marsha
De Piero, Gloria
Dent Coad, Emma
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
Docherty-Hughes, Martin
Dodds, Anneliese
Doughty, Stephen
Dowd, Peter
Drew, Dr David
Dromey, Jack
Duffield, Rosie
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eagle, Maria
Edwards, Jonathan
Efford, Clive
Elliott, Julie
Ellman, Dame Louise
Elmore, Chris
Esterson, Bill
Evans, Chris
Farrelly, Paul
Farron, Tim
Fellows, Marion
Fitzpatrick, Jim
Fletcher, Colleen
Flint, rh Caroline
Fovargue, Yvonne
Foxcroft, Vicky
Freeman, George
Frith, James
Furniss, Gill
Gaffney, Hugh
Gapes, Mike
Gardiner, Barry
George, Ruth
Gethins, Stephen
Gibson, Patricia
Gill, Preet Kaur
Glendon, Mary
Godsiff, Mr Roger
Goodman, Helen
Grady, Patrick
Grant, Peter
Gray, Neil
Green, 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
Hamilton, Fabian
Hanson, rh David
Hardy, Emma

Harman, rh Ms Harriet
Harrington, Richard
Harris, Carolyn
Hayes, Helen
Hayman, Sue
Healey, rh John
Hendrick, Sir Mark
Hendry, Drew
Hepburn, Mr Stephen
Hill, Mike
Hillier, Meg
Hobhouse, Wera
Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Hollern, Kate
Howarth, rh Mr George
Huq, Dr Rupa
Hussain, Imran
Jardine, Christine
Jarvis, Dan
Johnson, Diana
Johnson, Joseph
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
Kinnoch, Stephen
Kyle, Peter
Laird, Lesley
Lake, Ben
Lamb, rh Norman
Lavery, Ian
Law, Chris
Lee, Karen
Lee, Dr Phillip
Lefroy, Jeremy
Leslie, Mr Chris
Letwin, rh Sir Oliver
Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
Lewis, Clive
Linden, David
Lloyd, Tony
Long Bailey, Rebecca
Lucas, Caroline
Lucas, Ian C.
Lynch, Holly
Madders, Justin
Mahmood, Mr Khalid
Mahmood, Shabana
Malhotra, Seema
Marsden, Gordon
Martin, Sandy
Maskell, Rachael
Masterton, Paul
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
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Moran, Layla
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, rh Nicky
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, Grahame
 Murray, Ian
 Nandy, Lisa
 Neill, Robert
 Newlands, Gavin
 Newton, Sarah
 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
 Sandbach, Antoinette
 Saville Roberts, rh 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
 Slaughtar, Andy
 Smeeth, Ruth
 Smith, Cat
 Smith, Eleanor
 Smith, Laura
 Smith, Nick
 Smith, Owen
 Smyth, Karin
 Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
 Sobel, Alex
 Soubry, rh Anna
 Spellar, rh John
 Spelman, rh Dame Caroline
 Starmer, rh Keir
 Stephens, Chris
 Stevens, Jo
 Stevenson, John
 Stone, Jamie
 Streeting, Wes
 Sweeney, Mr Paul
 Swinson, Jo
 Tami, rh Mark
 Thewliss, Alison
 Thomas, Gareth
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick
 Thornberry, rh Emily
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Trickett, Jon
 Turley, Anna
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Derek
 Twigg, Stephen
 Twist, Liz
 Umunna, Chuka
 Vaizey, rh Mr Edward
 Vaz, rh Keith
 Vaz, Valerie
 Walker, Thelma
 Watson, Tom
 West, Catherine
 Western, Matt
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whitfield, Martin
 Williams, Hywel
 Williams, Dr Paul
 Williamson, Chris
 Wilson, Phil
 Wishart, Pete
 Wollaston, Dr Sarah
 Woodcock, John
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:
Thangam Debbonaire and
Jeff Smith

NOES

Adams, Nigel
 Afolami, Bim
 Afriyie, Adam
 Aldous, Peter
 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
 Beresford, Sir Paul
 Berry, Jake
 Blackman, Bob

Blunt, Crispin
 Bone, Mr Peter
 Bowie, Andrew
 Bradley, Ben
 Bradley, rh Karen
 Brady, Sir Graham
 Braverman, Suella
 Brereton, Jack
 Bridgen, Andrew
 Brokenshire, rh James
 Bruce, Fiona
 Buckland, Robert
 Burghart, Alex
 Burns, Conor
 Cairns, rh Alun
 Campbell, Mr Ronnie
 Cartledge, James
 Cash, Sir William
 Caulfield, Maria
 Chalk, Alex
 Chishti, Rehman
 Chope, Sir Christopher
 Clark, Colin
 Clark, rh Greg
 Clarke, Mr Simon
 Cleverly, James
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
 Coffey, Dr Thérèse
 Costa, Alberto
 Courts, Robert
 Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey
 Crouch, Tracey
 Davies, Chris
 Davies, David T. C.
 Davies, Glyn
 Davies, Mims
 Davies, Philip
 Davis, rh Mr David
 Dinéage, Caroline
 Docherty, Leo
 Dodds, rh Nigel
 Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
 Double, Steve
 Dowden, Oliver
 Doyle-Price, Jackie
 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
 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
 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

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
 Hair, Kirstene
 Halfon, rh Robert
 Hall, Luke
 Hammond, rh Mr Philip
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, rh Matt
 Hands, rh Greg
 Harper, rh Mr Mark
 Harris, Rebecca
 Hart, Simon
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver
 Heapey, James
 Heaton-Harris, Chris
 Heaton-Jones, Peter
 Henderson, Gordon
 Herbert, rh Nick
 Hinds, rh Damian
 Hoare, Simon
 Hoey, Kate
 Hollingbery, George
 Hollinrake, Kevin
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Howell, John
 Huddleston, Nigel
 Hughes, Eddie
 Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
 Hurd, rh Mr Nick
 Jack, Mr Alister
 James, Margot
 Javid, rh Sajid
 Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard
 Jenkyns, Andrea
 Jenrick, Robert
 Johnson, rh Boris
 Johnson, Dr Caroline
 Johnson, Gareth
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Jones, Mr Marcus
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Keegan, Gillian
 Kennedy, Seema
 Kerr, Stephen
 Knight, rh Sir Greg
 Knight, Julian
 Kwarteng, Kwasi
 Lamont, John
 Lancaster, rh Mark
 Latham, Mrs Pauline
 Leadsom, rh Andrea
 Leigh, rh Sir Edward
 Lewer, Andrew
 Lewis, rh Brandon
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Lidington, rh Mr David
 Little Pengelly, Emma
 Lopez, Julia
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lord, Mr Jonathan

Loughton, Tim
 Mackinlay, Craig
 Maclean, Rachel
 Main, Mrs Anne
 Mak, Alan
 Malthouse, Kit
 Mann, John
 Mann, Scott
 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
 Milton, rh Anne
 Moore, Damien
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Morton, Wendy
 Mundell, rh David
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll
 Murrison, Dr Andrew
 Nokes, rh Caroline
 Norman, Jesse
 O'Brien, Neil
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Opperman, Guy
 Parish, Neil
 Patel, rh Priti
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Penning, rh Sir Mike
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Perry, rh Claire
 Philp, Chris
 Pincher, rh Christopher
 Pow, Rebecca
 Prentis, Victoria
 Prisk, Mr 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
 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
 Snell, Gareth
 Spencer, Mark
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stewart, Bob
 Stewart, Iain
 Stewart, Rory
 Stride, rh Mel
 Stuart, Graham
 Sunak, Rishi
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Swire, rh Sir Hugo
 Syms, Sir Robert
 Thomas, Derek
 Thomson, Ross
 Throup, Maggie
 Tolhurst, Kelly
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Tredinnick, David
 Trevelyan, Anne-Marie
 Truss, rh Elizabeth
 Tugendhat, Tom
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Walker, Mr Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben
 Warburton, David
 Warman, Matt
 Watling, Giles
 Whately, Helen
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather
 Whittaker, Craig
 Wiggin, Bill
 Williamson, rh Gavin
 Wilson, rh Sammy
 Wood, Mike
 Wragg, Mr William
 Wright, rh Jeremy
 Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Noes:
Michelle Donelan and
Jo Churchill

(1) That, at today's sitting –

(a) any proceedings governed by the order of the House of 27 March (Business of the House) or this order may be proceeded with until any hour, though opposed, and shall not be interrupted;

(b) the order of 27 March shall apply as if, at the end of paragraph 2(b), there were inserted “and then to motions in the name of a Minister of the Crown relating to statutory instruments”;

(c) notwithstanding the practice of the House, any motion on matters that have been the subject of a prior decision of the House in the current Session may be the subject of a decision;

(d) the Speaker shall announce his decision on which motions have been selected for decision by recorded vote before calling a Member to move a motion under paragraph 2(f) of the order of 27 March;

(e) the Speaker may not propose the question on any amendment to any motion subject to decision by recorded vote or on the previous question, and may not put any question under Standing Order No. 36 (Closure of debate) or Standing Order No. 163 (Motion to sit in private);

(f) debate on the motions having precedence under paragraph 2(f) of the order of 27 March may continue until 8.00 pm at which time the House shall proceed as if the question had been put on each motion selected by the Speaker for decision by recorded vote and the opinion of the Speaker as to the decision on each such question had been challenged;

(g) in respect of those questions –

(i) Members may record their votes on each question under arrangements made by the Speaker;

(ii) votes may be recorded for half an hour after the Speaker declares the period open and the Speaker shall suspend the House for that period;

(iii) the Speaker shall announce the results in the course of the sitting;

(h) during the period between 8.00 pm and the announcement of the results on the questions subject to recorded vote –

(i) no motion for the adjournment may be made;

(ii) the Speaker may suspend the sitting if any other business, including proceedings provided for in paragraph 1(b) of this order and paragraph 2(g) of the order of 27 March, has been concluded.

(2) That, on Wednesday 3 April –

(a) notwithstanding Standing Order No. 14(1) (which provides that Government business shall have precedence at every sitting save as provided in that order), precedence shall first be given to a motion relating to the Business of the House in connection with the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union

(b) if more than one motion relating to the Business of the House is tabled, the Speaker shall decide which motion shall have such precedence;

(c) the Speaker shall interrupt proceedings on any business having precedence before the Business of the House motion at 2.00 pm and call a Member to move that motion;

(d) debate on that motion may continue until 5.00 pm at which time the Speaker shall put the questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on that motion including the questions on amendments selected by the Speaker which may then be moved;

(e) any proceedings interrupted or superseded by this order may be resumed or (as the case may be) entered upon and proceeded with after the moment of interruption.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

EU: Withdrawal and Future Relationship (Motions)

4.55 pm

Mr Speaker: We now come to the motions relating to the United Kingdom's withdrawal from and future relationship with the European Union. I inform the House that I have selected the following motions for decision by recorded vote: motion (C), in the name of Mr Kenneth Clarke; motion (D), in the name of Mr Nick Boles; motion (E), in the name of Mr Peter Kyle; and motion (G) in the name of Joanna Cherry.

Greg Hands (Chelsea and Fulham) (Con): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Could you perhaps clarify why you have selected for debate motion (C), in the name of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke), when exactly the same motion with exactly the same words was debated and rejected by this House only three sitting days ago? For the benefit of those watching, could you perhaps explain why this can be brought back three days later, but the 585-page withdrawal agreement cannot?

Mr Speaker: The short answer to the right hon. Gentleman is that the House has agreed to the process that has unfolded, and therefore it is entirely procedurally proper for the judgment I have made to be made, and that is the judgment that I have made. The right hon. Gentleman will have noted the view expressed in the debates last week, and let me say in terms that are very clear—he may not approve of them, but they are clear—that the purpose of this discrete exercise, as I think is understood by colleagues across the House, is to try to identify whether there is potential consensus among Members for an approach to the departure from and the future relationship with the European Union. It is in that spirit and in the knowledge that it is wholly impossible, colleagues, to satisfy everybody, that I have sought conscientiously to discharge my obligations to the House by making a judicious selection. That is what I have done, that I readily defend to the House and that I will continue to proclaim to be the right and prudent course in circumstances that were not of my choosing, but with which, as Chair, I am confronted.

Mr John Baron (Basildon and Billericay) (Con): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. You know me not to be one to play games in this place. With respect, may I ask you to reconsider when it comes to motions (A) and (B)? The reason why I ask—we live in unusual times, so I do not apologise for making this request—is that motion (A) is new, in the sense that it reflects the withdrawal agreement as amended by the backstop. I suggest to you that it is the one vote we have had in this place, on the back of the Brady amendment, that actually achieved a majority. It is a new motion that has previously achieved a majority, and with respect—and I mean that—I think it worthy for consideration. May I also suggest, if only for future reference, that motion (B) is actually the legal default position from our triggering article 50? I do think it is incumbent on us to consider that in this particular debate, when we are trying to find some sort of consensus.

Mr Speaker: I am extremely grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his point of order and for the very reasonable tones in which, as usual, he expresses it. He

and I have known each other for a long time, and I have the highest regard for the integrity of the hon. Gentleman. I am happy, although not obliged, to provide an answer to each of his two points. I say I am not obliged not in my interests, but because the House has long understood and asserted the obligation of the Chair to make these judgments and expected that the Chair would not provide an explanation, but that the House—having vested in the Chair the responsibility—would accept the judgment. However, I am happy in this case to respond to his two points.

First, in relation to the hon. Gentleman's motion appertaining to the backstop, he makes his own point in his own way. I have to make a judgment about what I think is reasonable going forward. In this debate, colleagues, we are not acting alone; we are acting in a negotiation with the European Union. The point that the hon. Gentleman feels strongly about is expressed in this motion for the first time, but it has been aired repeatedly—I do not say that critically, but as a matter of fact—since the publication in November of the withdrawal agreement. Repeated commitments have been made to seek a re-examination of that point by the Union, and it has become clear over a period of months that that re-examination is not offered by the Union. It may or may not feature in the future, but in terms of trying to broker progress now I did not think it would be the most sensible motion to choose at this time. I put it no more strongly than that.

Secondly, in relation to the so-called no-deal motion, if the hon. Gentleman will forgive me—and, frankly, even if he will not—I am going to replay to him his own point in my support rather than his. Somewhat exasperated—well, quizzical—that I had not selected his motion, he said, “But Mr Speaker, leaving without a deal on 12 April is the legal default.” He is right: it is precisely because it is the default position in law that having it on the Order Paper is, in my view, a rhetorical assertion. It is a statement of fact, and it does not in my judgment require debate. The second point on that motion is that in looking at it—[*Interruption.*] The hon. Member for Torbay (Kevin Foster) can chunter from a sedentary position in evident disapproval of the thrust of the argument that I am developing if he so wishes, but it does not detract from the fact that I am making the point I am making. He does not like it: I do, and we will have to leave it there.

The simple fact of the matter is that that motion, voted on last week, as the beady eye of the hon. Member for Basildon and Billericay (Mr Baron) testifies he realises, was rejected by 400 votes to 160. A significant number of Members did not vote, but even if every Member who did not vote on that motion last week were to vote in favour of it this week, it still would not pass. I see my duty as being to try to advance matters. Whatever people think about this issue and whatever side of the argument they sit, they all think, “Can we not make some progress?” It is in pursuit of progress that I have made the disinterested—I use that old-fashioned but valid term—judgment that I have made to try to serve the House.

I totally understand that it will not please everyone, but it happens to be my view, it is an honest one, and it is my best judgment.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: I will happily take points of order indefinitely: I have good knee muscles and plenty of energy.

I am not sure that it will greatly advance matters, but if hon. Members wish to raise points of order they are most welcome to do so.

Charlie Elphicke (Dover) (Con): Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. I have always found you very patient in hearing the concerns of any colleague in the House, and always passionate about the rulings that you make.

If I may remind you, the other day you made a ruling on meaningful vote 3, and you said that you wanted to make it clear that you expected the test of change to be met and that the Government

“should not seek to circumvent my ruling by means of tabling either a ‘notwithstanding’ motion or a paving motion. The Table Office has been instructed that no such motions will be accepted.”—
[*Official Report*, 27 March 2019; Vol. 657, c. 370.]

What, then, is motion (C), which seems to be exactly that?

Mr Speaker: Forgive me if I was not sufficiently clear. I thought I had been. My apologies to the hon. Gentleman if my reply was too opaque. I thought I had indicated in an earlier reply that the House, in the motion that it had supported, had endorsed the approach to indicative votes that we are now taking. It is a discrete process separate from and different to the processes that have been adopted thus far.

All sorts of arguments and explanations have been given as to why we are in this process, with the House taking control of the process, and I do not need to revisit those, but I have answered that point already. I do not wish to be unkind to the hon. Gentleman, whom I like and respect very much as he knows, but I fear I have to say to him that it is not that I have not answered his point. I have answered his point already in response to an earlier point of order, but the simple fact is that the hon. Gentleman does not like my answer, and I am afraid I cannot do anything about that.

Mrs Anne Main (St Albans) (Con): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Tonight, we will be debating motion (E) on a confirmatory public vote, but this House voted on a confirmatory public vote, and I believe it gathered only 85 votes at the time. I am just wondering, Mr Speaker, why that motion, which was so roundly rejected by this House—it was not even supported by those on the Labour Benches—is worthy of another debate. Perhaps it should be kicked out.

Mr Speaker: I hope the hon. Lady will forgive me. I may have misheard her, but I thought she said something about 85 votes. From memory—I do not have it in front of me, although I can easily find it; it would not be very difficult—I think I am right in saying that the vote for the confirmatory public vote, for a confirmatory referendum, received 268 votes and was defeated—

Mrs Main *indicated dissent.*

Mr Speaker: The hon. Lady is shaking her head, but I am trying to answer the point. I think it received 268 votes and was opposed by 295, so it was defeated. But again, if the hon. Lady will forgive me, and even if she won't, I repeat the point that this is part of a process for which the House voted. Colleagues did so in the knowledge that a result might not be achieved on day one or even necessarily on day two, but the House wanted that

process to take place. It may be—I have not looked at the Division list and it is absolutely her right—that the hon. Lady voted against this process altogether, and I completely respect her autonomy in making that judgment, but the House chose to adopt the process. What I have done and am doing is entirely in keeping with the spirit of that process.

Mrs Main *rose—*

Mr Speaker: Is it further to that point of order? I am not sure there is a further to.

Mrs Main: Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. The 85 votes I am referring to relate to the motion brought before the House by the hon. Member for Totnes (Dr Wollaston).

Mr Speaker: I am sorry. I did not realise that was what the hon. Lady was saying. Okay, but my point about the discrete process we are undertaking and the level of support for that particular motion stands. What I have tried to do—I say this not least so that our proceedings are intelligible to those who are not Members of the House but are watching—is identify those propositions that appear to command substantial support, preferably of a cross-party nature. That is what I have done. It does seem to me, if I may say so, that although it cannot please everybody it is quite a reasonable approach, as opposed to, for example, identifying a series of propositions that have minimal support and thinking that it would be a frightfully good sport instead to submit them to a verdict of the House again. That would not seem to me a particularly constructive way in which to proceed. I am for a constructive approach and I hope most of the House will agree with me that that is how we should operate.

Can we now move to the main debate? I call the Father of the House, the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke), he who owns motion (C) on the customs union, to address the House.

5.8 pm

Mr Kenneth Clarke (Rushcliffe) (Con): I beg to move motion (C),

That this House instructs the Government to:

(1) ensure that any Withdrawal Agreement and Political Declaration negotiated with the EU must include, as a minimum, a commitment to negotiate a permanent and comprehensive UK-wide customs union with the EU;

(2) enshrine this objective in primary legislation.

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

Motion (D)—*Common Market 2.0*—

That this House –

(1) directs Her Majesty's Government to –

(i) renegotiate the framework for the future relationship laid before the House on Monday 11 March 2019 with the title ‘Political Declaration setting out the framework for the future relationship between the European Union and the United Kingdom’ to provide that, on the conclusion of the Implementation Period and no later than 31 December 2020, the United Kingdom shall –

(a) accede to the European Free Trade Association (Efta) having negotiated a derogation from Article 56(3) of the Efta Agreement to allow UK participation in a comprehensive customs arrangement with the European Union,

- (b) enter the Efta Pillar of the European Economic Area (EEA) and thereby render operational the United Kingdom's continuing status as a party to the EEA Agreement and continuing participation in the Single Market,
 - (c) agree relevant protocols relating to frictionless agri-food trade across the UK/EU border,
 - (d) enter a comprehensive customs arrangement including a common external tariff, alignment with the Union Customs Code and an agreement on commercial policy, and which includes a UK say on future EU trade deals, at least until alternative arrangements that maintain frictionless trade with the European Union and no hard border on the island of Ireland have been agreed with the European Union,
- (ii) negotiate with the EU a legally binding Joint Instrument that confirms that, in accordance with Article 2 of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland of the Withdrawal Agreement, the implementation of all the provisions of paragraph 1 (i) of this motion would cause the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland to be superseded in full;

(2) resolves to make support for the forthcoming European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Bill conditional upon the inclusion of provisions for a Political Declaration revised in accordance with the provisions of this motion to be the legally binding negotiating mandate for Her Majesty's Government in the forthcoming negotiation of the future relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union.

Motion (E)—Confirmatory public vote—

That this House will not allow in this Parliament the implementation and ratification of any withdrawal agreement and any framework for the future relationship unless and until they have been approved by the people of the United Kingdom in a confirmatory public vote.

Motion (G)—Parliamentary Supremacy—

That—

(1) If, at midday on the second last Day before exit day, the condition specified in section 13(1)(d) of the Act (the passing of legislation approving a withdrawal agreement) is not satisfied, Her Majesty's Government must immediately seek the agreement of the European Council under Article 50(3) of the Treaty to extend the date upon which the Treaties shall cease to apply to the United Kingdom;

(2) If, at midday on the last Day before exit day, no agreement has been reached (pursuant to (1) above) to extend the date upon which the Treaties shall cease to apply to the United Kingdom, Her Majesty's Government must immediately put a motion to the House of Commons asking it to approve 'No Deal';

(3) If the House does not approve the motion at (2) above, Her Majesty's Government must immediately ensure that the notice given to the European Council under Article 50 of the United Kingdom's intention to withdraw from the European Union is revoked in accordance with United Kingdom and European law;

(4) If the United Kingdom's notice under Article 50 is revoked pursuant to (3) above a Minister of Her Majesty's Government shall cause an inquiry to be held under the Inquiries Act 2005 into the question whether a model of a future relationship with the European Union likely to be acceptable to the European Union is likely to have majority support in the United Kingdom;

(5) If there is a referendum it shall be held on the question whether to trigger Article 50 and renegotiate that model;

(6) The Inquiry under paragraph (4) shall start within three months of the revocation; and

(7) References in this Motion to "Days" are to House of Commons sitting days; references to "exit day" are references to exit day as defined in the Act; references to the Act are to The European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018; and references to the Treaty are to the Treaty on European Union.

Mr Clarke: May I first of all say that I hope, for the reputation of this House and the reputation of the political institutions of this country, that we will achieve a majority for at least a couple of these motions this afternoon in order to reassure the public that we do know what we are doing, or we are beginning to know what we are doing, and that we are capable of delivering responsible government and looking after the national interest in the present crisis? I think most right hon. and hon. Members must have appreciated at the weekend how little respect the public as a whole have for their political institutions at the moment, and how very low is the regard in which they hold what is going on in this House.

The House has blocked the Government's policy. It will not vote for the withdrawal agreement, and last week in a rather curious mixture of votes it voted against the propositions before it. If we are to avoid ludicrous deadlock, today is the day when the House has to indicate that there is a majority and a consensus in favour of something positive that will give some guidance on where we are going.

Mr Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley) (Con): Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr Clarke: I might do so when I have got going, but the filibustering on the business motion means that we have very little time for debate, so I am going to make an effort to keep my speech short. With respect to my hon. Friend, who is an old friend, I will not give way.

What happened last week was understandable. People plumped for what they wanted, and we spread so widely over eight motions that nothing actually got a majority. Today, I trust that people will vote for more than one motion if they can live with more than one, because if we just keep plumping for our one and only solution, we will find that we are broken up. That is what my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin) had in mind when he introduced this process.

I voted for, I think, five of the motions last week, and, as I shall argue, I do not think that they are incompatible with each other. Some are larger than others, and they swallow one within the other. Some are on separate subsets of the problem. What we are all asking ourselves, in this deadlock, is, what compromise would each and every Member be prepared to accept in the national interest?

Sir Oliver Letwin (West Dorset) (Con): Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr Clarke: With apologies to my hon. Friend the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr Evans), I will give way to my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset once, because this is his process.

Sir Oliver Letwin: I am enormously grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend, and I agree with every word he has spoken. Does he agree that the reason why we are holding this debate and following this unusual process is not that we are interested in some zany constitutional theory, but that our country faces the prospect, on Thursday week, of leaving without a deal if this House does not come together and find some way forward?

Mr Clarke: My right hon. Friend and I are in complete agreement. As he quite rightly says, we must avoid no deal occurring by default in a fortnight's time simply because the House of Commons could not agree on anything. In fact, 400 Members of the House of Commons have voted against no deal, and it would be calamitous just to collapse into it because we cannot reach any compromise among ourselves about what we actually wish to put forward.

I am trying to illustrate that my motion, which is for a permanent customs union, is perfectly compatible with a wider look at the subject but sets a basic agenda. I think it will help to minimise what I regard as the damaging consequences of leaving the European Union, and enable us to reassure the business and other interests in this country—some of them are absolutely panic-stricken—who view the great unknown and the end of the common market with great concern. I hope that the public, who are as polarised as this House in their opinions, will begin to be reassured. I hope that people will be reconciled to a compromise of leaving the political European Union but staying in the common market, to use the language of Eurosceptics over the years.

Greg Hands: Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr Clarke: No, I will not give way. As I have said, we have just had two hours of filibustering, and I do not want my speech to be spun out.

Let me illustrate why I think motion (C) does not conflict with the body of opinion in most of the political parties in this House, starting with the Conservative party. My motion does not conflict with the Prime Minister's withdrawal agreement. Indeed, it slightly complements it, and it deals with a different subject. Motion (C) deals with the political arrangements—the non-binding political declaration and the nature of the later negotiations that will have to take place to determine our long-term future.

As I said last week, the motion answers the concerns of the Labour party, which has supported it. The Labour party says that it will not vote for the withdrawal agreement, not because of its contents, but because it represents a blind Brexit in which we have absolutely no idea what the Government are going to do. To approve the withdrawal agreement would be to give the Government a blank sheet of paper and allow them to carry on arguing inside the Cabinet about what objectives to seek in the negotiations that would follow. What this motion suggests is that the House mandates the Government—whatever shape they take and whatever the Government—to make a permanent customs union one of their foundations in the negotiations. I will come back to the only reason that they have ever given for being against the customs union, which is the only basis for voting against it.

Greg Hands: Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr Clarke: No, I am not going to give way. It would be unfair to other Members who have had this whole debate crammed into three hours. In 1972, we used to have all-night sittings on much smaller issues than this. I do not recommend going back to that, but I object to listening to my colleagues having to speak on three-minute time limits because chaps want to get to dinner and will

not sit after 7 o'clock in the evening in the middle of the week, which is where this rather pathetic Parliament has got itself recently. That is my last digression from my theme. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Mr Clarke: As I have said, the motion does not conflict with the Government's withdrawal agreement. If the motion is passed or if it is subsumed by common market 2.0, which I will also vote for—that motion would subsume this one if it is carried—the easiest way of proceeding is for the Government to proceed with their withdrawal agreement tomorrow and for the Labour party to abstain because it is no longer such a blind Brexit, and then we can get on to the serious negotiations, which this country has not even started yet, with its 27 partner nations.

Motion (C) does not conflict with the case that is being made by many Members for a further referendum—either a confirmatory referendum or a people's vote. It is not on the same subject. The referendum is about whether the public have changed their mind and whether we are firmly committed to the EU now that we know what is happening. That is a process—a very important one—that we are arguing about. I have been abstaining on that; I am not very fond of referendums, but there we are.

Motion (C) is concerned with a quite different subject: the substance of the negotiations if we get beyond 12 April. It begins to set out what the Government have a majority for and what they are being given a mandate for when they start those negotiations. The separate issue of whether, at any relevant stage, a referendum is called for can be debated and voted on quite separately. Advocates of a people's vote are not serving any particular interest if they vote for a people's vote and somehow vote against this motion to make sure that that somehow gets a bigger majority. Both can be accommodated.

Mr Dominic Grieve (Beaconsfield) (Con): Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr Clarke: I shall be accused of bias if I give way to my right hon. and learned Friend.

I urge the Liberals to proceed on that basis, and similarly, the Scottish nationalists. I agree with them—I would much prefer to stay in the European Union—but I am afraid that in trying to give this country good and stable governance by giving steers to the House of Commons, I have compromised on that, because a huge majority seems to me to have condemned us to leaving the European Union. I have tabled motions with the Scottish nationalists and have voted with them to revoke article 50 if the dread problem of no deal seems to be looming towards us by accident, and I will again. I cannot understand why the Scottish nationalists will not at least contemplate, if they cannot get their way and stay in the European Union, voting for a permanent customs union, which will benefit business and the economy in Scotland just as much as here and is not remotely incompatible with pursuing their wider aims.

Joanna Cherry (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr Clarke: As I have mentioned the Scottish nationalists, I will of course give the hon. and learned Lady the right to reply.

Joanna Cherry: I am very grateful to the right hon. and learned Gentleman for giving way. The reason that the Scottish National party cannot support his motion today is that freedom of movement is vital for the Scottish economy and we do not get freedom of movement without the single market—that is the reason we cannot support his motion.

Mr Clarke: I will vote for the single market, if it is presented in a proper way, and I would have voted for the motion in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr Fysh) last week, had he not at the end added a gratuitous sentence ruling out a customs union. If we can get a majority for the single market, I will vote for it again.

I accept that if we pass a motion for the single market, or the motion for common market 2.0, which no doubt my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham and Stamford (Nick Boles) will move later, my motion will be subsumed, but I am not confident we will pass a motion for the single market, because although the Scots are attracted by freedom of movement, many of my right hon. and hon. Friends are provoked into voting against it for that very reason. Similarly, common market 2.0, which I would settle for, is probably too ambitious. Mine, then, is the fall-back position.

I hope that my hon. Friend votes for my motion, but I cannot understand the Scottish nationalists. Voting for my motion is no threat to their position; indeed, it is an insurance policy—this goes back to how I started—to make sure that we move forward and that the House of Commons gives the Government a mandate that we can then ensure they have to follow in mapping out this nation's future. In the long negotiations over the next two or three years, questions of regulatory alignment and freedom of movement will start coming into the negotiations again; that we have committed ourselves to a permanent customs union will not compromise any of those discussions.

I have not the faintest idea why Members of the Democratic Unionist party are not supporting motion (C). If we pass motion (C), it will mean we have no tariffs or certificates of origin and that the Irish border question is pretty well solved—we will be 90-odd% of the way to maintaining the Belfast/Good Friday agreement. It would be of huge benefit to the Irish economy and Irish security and mean that the DUP's objection to the Irish backstop—that Northern Ireland is being treated differently from the rest of the UK—vanished Pass motion (C) and it applies to the entire United Kingdom.

Sammy Wilson (East Antrim) (DUP) *rose*—

Mr Clarke: As I am referring to the DUP, I will give way to the right hon. Gentleman, but I am a Unionist. He thinks the Irish backstop is not a Unionist proposition. Motion (C) is a Unionist proposition and does no harm to the DUP's position.

Sammy Wilson: I am glad to hear that the right hon. and learned Gentleman is a Unionist, though in supporting the withdrawal agreement three times he has shown that he does not respect the views of the people of Northern Ireland who believe it puts the Union in jeopardy.

The customs union alone does not resolve the issue of the border between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic in the terms in which the EU has expressed it. The single market rules are equally important in its argument that there would need to be regulatory checks—though of course we know, from its no-deal preparations, that it does not matter whether we are in a customs union or a single market, or neither, because it does not intend to put checks on the border anyway.

Mr Clarke: I agree that to have an open border—unless we invent these magic X-ray cameras whose discovery some of my hon. Friends think is imminent—we will need to be in a customs union and have some degree of regulatory alignment. In the case of the Irish border—and, I think, of Dover—a customs union gets us 90% of the way. As I say, it is not the customs union that is inconsistent with the right hon. Gentleman's aim and mine, which is a totally free-moving, frictionless—to use the Prime Minister's phrase—border at the channel in England and in Ireland, with the same arrangements applying to both. He cites the fact that unfortunately the withdrawal agreement has the Irish backstop in it. Motion (C) makes the Irish backstop irrelevant and superfluous. It will never feature if we pass my motion (C).

Mr Bob Seely (Isle of Wight) (Con) *rose*—

Mr Clarke: No, I am sorry; I will go back to being strict, though when I refer to parties or people, I feel it is courteous to let them respond.

Let me now deal, finally and very briefly, with the only substantial argument that has been raised in the House against the customs union from the beginning to the end of our debates. That argument is that it will stop us having our own customs arrangements with third party countries, and it is repeated by Ministers over and over again.

Greg Hands: Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr Clarke: No, I will not, in the interests of other Members who wish to speak.

First, that argument is not actually accurate. It is true that trade agreements with other countries would mean that we would not be able to make changes in external tariffs. Of course, we would have the benefit of no tariffs at all: totally tariff-free entry into the rest of the EU. What we would be able to have trade agreements on is the service economy, service industries, which constitute the vast majority of this country's GDP.

I have been involved in trade negotiations quite a lot over the years. It is not vanity, but simply my longevity, which leads me to say that I have probably had more experience of trade arrangements and dealings than any other Member. In every Department that I have occupied, I have led trade delegations to somewhere or other. During my spell at the Department of Trade and Industry and my spell at the Treasury, I became heavily involved in trade deals, particularly with the Americans, China, and large parts of Latin America. I led for the last Government—the coalition Government—on the EU-US TTIP negotiations. Although the Commission conducts the negotiations on a mandate that it has been given by the 28 member states, certain of the bigger ones—such as Britain—remain a constant presence, and go backwards and forwards to try to ensure that the

process is going smoothly. So I have been involved in many attempts to secure trade deals, some successful and some not. Opening up the Chinese market is a very slow business: I could have told President Trump that.

Some of my right hon. and hon. Friends ascribe great weight to an American deal. TTIP failed. It was given that strange title—the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership—because Obama’s officials said that it would not be possible to get anything called a free trade agreement past America, which is quite a protectionist country. Certainly Congress is protectionist, and that was under Obama. The problem with the Americans was, first of all, that we wanted to open up access to services. Tariffs do not matter much in European-American trade. They are vestigial. All the Europeans, including the British, are quite content to abandon tariffs in both directions, because they are fairly small. The auto industry, on both sides of the Atlantic, did not really want tariffs. It is regulatory differences, and getting regulatory equivalence, or convergence, that stand in the way.

We wanted the Americans to open up public procurement, which they would not do—and, anyway, it is a state-by-state process, which makes it more difficult—and to open up the service sector, particularly financial services. The lobbies in Congress are too strong for that to make much progress. The present President has given no indication that he would open up any market to us. The approach that he has taken to trade negotiations, when he talks about a trade agreement and takes on the Mexicans, the Canadians and the Chinese, is that he wants America to export more to them and wants them to export less to America. We have a large trade surplus with America, and that is what he has in mind. It is perfectly plain. His obsession is with food and agricultural products, and that means giving up our standards of animal welfare and food quality—which, owing to British lobbying, are very high in Europe—and accepting America’s lower standards involving hormone-treated beef and chicken.

If any Members think we can influence that—if they think that with such a trade agreement we can somehow start tightening up American food standards and animal welfare—I can only tell them that the agriculture lobby in Congress is extremely powerful, and would not take the slightest notice of British interests in such matters. The Australians would probably agree to a deal, but we would have to face the problem of hormone-treated beef, because that is what they want to export to us. The New Zealanders would want a deal as long as the quotas were lifted from their tariff-free exports of lamb. I am sure that they would be happy if we could think of anything that we wished to sell to New Zealand that we do not sell at the moment. But those negotiations will not compensate for the loss of our European markets if we stay outside the customs union and the single market and erect great barriers in our way.

I have made a modest case—it is modest compared with my own views; nobody in this House is a greater supporter of the European project than I am and nobody in this House wants Britain to remain in the EU more than I do, if that were in the realm of the possible. To reject motion (C) again would run the risk of the adverse reaction outside that we got when—as I think we all anticipated—there were minorities for every motion last week. Now is the time for hon. Members to get behind motion (C). If they wish to get behind common

market 2.0, they should feel free to do so, and those who want to reinforce the revocation argument if otherwise we would crash out with no deal should vote for that.

So far, the process has been a shambles. The public hold their political parties and politicians and the institutions of Government almost in contempt. Today, we must start to bring that to an end. All I propose is a modest step compared with most others on the Order Paper. It is perfectly compatible with the wider ambitions of a large majority of this House. It is fitting that I should open the debate because my motion is the basic, obvious beginning. If the House wishes to add more, I shall probably vote with it.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Order. I am keen to accommodate all those whose motions have been selected before calling others. I am not imposing a formal time limit at this stage, but there is a premium on parliamentary time and therefore on brevity.

5.31 pm

Peter Kyle (Hove) (Lab): Motion (E) is an attempt to bring us all together and to restore the kind of politics that will allow us to overcome the greatest challenges. We need to recognise that the House is in peril—not just of a disastrous Brexit outcome, but of falling so far in the popular esteem that we may never recover public trust.

We have lost the art of politics because we have become gridlocked in the politics of position. We have taken up positions, usually in groups, and effectively gone to war against all the other groups. There has been a heavy price to pay, even beyond the battering and the bruising of opposing views. It has been paid outside the Chamber in an ever more divided and fractious country.

The country is also bemused and demands that we chart a new course. After three years of assault and counter-attack, no position has emerged victorious. Instead, the politics of this House has been even more diminished and entrenched. Nothing will change if we are not prepared to move. A solution will emerge only if we make it so.

Chris Philp (Croydon South) (Con): I thank the hon. Gentleman for his thoughtful tone. I would like to ask for some clarification. What will be the question in the referendum that he proposes? Given that we have already voted to leave in 2016, I assume that the question in his referendum would be to leave with the Government’s deal or to leave with no deal.

Peter Kyle: The hon. Gentleman anticipates where I will get to in my speech. I will answer the question once I have addressed it, but I think I can predict that we will get there soon.

I believe that the solution is to work with what we have before us: to accept the world as it is, not the world as we would like it to be. After the referendum, I travelled to Norway and met negotiators and Ministers. I visited the European economic area headquarters in Brussels and I worked alongside colleagues to champion a soft Brexit, which I then voted for. So those who say that I and others like me have simply tried to scupper Brexit from the start are wrong.

[Peter Kyle]

I have also voted for every proposition from the Labour Front Bench and I encourage others to do the same as another way of achieving compromise and consensus. I congratulate the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow Brexit Secretary on their excellent work in crafting a set of Brexit policies that puts the future of our economy and workers first and foremost. I believe that if they had done this from a position within Government, we would have been able to present a deal to Parliament that would have been accepted. That is why our motion relates to a deal, rather than specifically to the Government's deal.

I know that many people on these Benches still long for a better proposition than the one on offer. We must be honest with each other, however. When the Prime Minister triggered the article 50 process, we all knew, whether we voted for it or against it, that it bestowed on the Government the right to negotiate a deal on behalf of the British people. That deal is now before us, and it defines Brexit.

Mrs Main: I want to make a serious point about what the hon. Gentleman would put before the British public. How long does he think it would take to craft a whole new deal? Does he anticipate fighting the European elections, because it would take a long time?

Peter Kyle: I am grateful to the hon. Lady—[*Interruption.*] I encourage everyone to look in this direction rather than in any other direction. I am not suggesting that we propose another deal. I am proposing that we accept the landscape that we are standing in, exactly in the manner that I have just suggested. The deal before us is one that defines Brexit, and as it stands, this sovereign Parliament has rejected it again and again. In fact, MPs have cast a staggering 1,167 votes against the deal—[*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. I ask colleagues to show some respect for the Member who has the Floor. The hon. Gentleman has had his motion selected, and he is entitled—[*Interruption.*] Order. He is entitled to be heard.

Stephen Doughty (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. This debate is obviously of extreme importance and it is vital that Members are able to hear the speeches, particularly those made by the proponents of the different motions. There is obviously a disturbance in the Gallery, and whatever the rights and wrongs of that protest, I am sure you would agree that we need to ensure that people can be heard in the debate and that the situation in the Gallery is appropriately handled so that we can proceed with our debate today.

Mr Speaker: Thank you. I suggest that we proceed.

Peter Kyle: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

As it stands, this sovereign Parliament has rejected the deal again and again and again. In fact, MPs have cast a staggering 1,167 votes against it. That is 50% more than the number of MPs who sit in this Chamber. However, although the majority here do not like it, the fact remains that it has been signed off by every EU country, by the EU itself and by the British Government. It is

the only deal on the table. We have to accept that there is no majority for the Government's deal, but neither is there a majority right now for an alternative. So we have a stark choice. Do we continue the war of positions in the hope that one side will capitulate, knowing the damage that it will do to our politics and to our country? Do we persist with the deadlock? Or do we choose to progress? If there is no outright majority for any of the motions, we must do what the country is desperate for: we must compromise by bringing together two minority positions to create a majority in order to move forward.

Anna Soubry (Broxtowe) (Ind): I should like to intervene on the hon. Gentleman to enable him to collect his thoughts. I congratulate him on speaking in the way that he is, notwithstanding some of the other stuff that might be going on. In any event, does he agree that it is really important that everyone believes in and votes for a people's vote and does not get distracted by anything else?

Peter Kyle: I am very grateful to the right hon. Lady for her intervention. What a great sight she is for me to focus on, rather than what was going on in my peripheral vision and tempting my eyes elsewhere. The bottom line is—[*Laughter.*]

Huw Merriman (Bexhill and Battle) (Con) *rose*—

Peter Kyle: I give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Huw Merriman: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way and for the constructive manner in which he has worked with those on the other side of the divide—albeit those who have come to the same conclusion as him. We can either keep going on and on, with Parliament being seen as an absolute failure that delivers nothing, or put the matter back to the people and get legal certainty. His is the only option that would give that certainty.

Peter Kyle: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. He has been a fantastic person to work with. Listening to him and learning from his experiences and from how he has approached his voting has informed how we can move forward based on compromise. The naked truth is that 202 Members have loyally voted for the Prime Minister's deal three times now, and that is a principled stance. However, simply repeating the same exercise will not see loyalty rewarded.

Steve Brine (Winchester) (Con): I have long said that if this House cannot find a solution to the Venn diagram that is Brexit, all options, including a confirmatory vote, must remain on the table. However, does the hon. Gentleman acknowledge that any route from here is not consequence-free? Does he further acknowledge that a second referendum could be much more divisive than decisive?

Peter Kyle: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his cheeky intervention. He makes a good point. I accept that the 2016 referendum was challenging for our country, but the next public vote need not be, and we have a role to play in that. If we choose to lead the country in a different way, we can hope not to repeat the 2016 experience and instead have a vote that reconciles more than it divides. That is our hope as we move forward. We are not slaves to the past. Let us be masters of the future.

Justine Greening (Putney) (Con): The hon. Gentleman is fleshing out his arguments well. We cannot keep going around in circles. This Parliament has spent nearly three years debating the topic without finding a consensus, so we need to understand that we must break that deadlock, and he is right that the only way of doing so is through a public vote. Surely it makes more sense to have a public vote on the matter at hand, which is the route forward on Brexit, than a general election that may result in different MPs, but still a hung Parliament and no direction.

Peter Kyle: I am grateful to the right hon. Lady for her intervention. As she will see, I will reframe the way that she puts it, but I agree with the general direction.

Mr Nigel Evans: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr Edward Vaizey (Wantage) (Con): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Peter Kyle: I am going to make some progress. I promised Mr Speaker that I would take about six minutes, and I am trying hard to honour that promise.

Last week, 268 Members voted for the principle of a confirmatory ballot—the largest number of votes for any alternative Brexit proposition up to that point. The principle has effectively been used twice in the past 20 years to solve complex, divisive issues.

The first occasion was on the Belfast or Good Friday agreement. Many people, institutions and organisations were asked to give a lot to cement the deal, but they gained a lot together despite sections of Northern Irish society strongly rejecting it. The Good Friday agreement was put to a confirmatory ballot that confirmed the deal and led to a decisive end to the arduous process and a peace that has endured to this day. I do not want to risk undoing those gains, which is another reason why we need to unlock our politics.

Mr Evans: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Peter Kyle: I am going to make some progress, but I will allow the hon. Gentleman to intervene a bit later.

The second occasion was the alternative vote referendum in 2011. Electoral reform had been hotly contested and was a regular feature of public debate, and it was a divisive matter within the coalition Government. However, both Tory and Lib Dem parliamentarians were able to work together to legislate for it, because the matter would be subjected to a confirmatory public ballot. The innovation of a confirmatory ballot is important, because it is binding on Government. Once confirmed or rejected, the subject does not even need to return to Parliament. In the case of the Good Friday agreement, the matter was agreed. In the case of the AV referendum, it was rejected. However, the debate was settled instantly in both cases, as it would be in this case. There would be no return to Parliament, no more squabbling, no best of three, no “neverendum”, just a definitive end to the Brexit impasse—talking of which, I give way to the hon. Member for Ribbles Valley (Mr Evans).

Mr Evans: The hon. Gentleman has kept his word, for which I am extremely grateful. His idea would have some merit were it not for the fact that we had a general election in 2017, which our parties both fought on manifestos saying that we would deliver Brexit. Some

80% of the people voted either Labour or Conservative. Does he not therefore believe that, as I have heard from constituents over the past few weeks, we should just get on with it?

Peter Kyle: The Labour manifesto was published two and a half weeks after I agreed to stand as a Labour candidate, and the deal we are now debating was reached a year and a half after the general election. We did not see the Chequers agreement, the Government’s negotiating stance or the deal until months after that general election. By standing on either manifesto, we did not give the Government a blank cheque to deliver any deal.

Mr Vaizey: The simple answer to the manifesto point is that the coalition Government worked out a completely different set of policies, literally behind closed doors, after the 2010 election, and the Conservative party lost the 2017 election. The reason why the Brexiteers cite the manifestos is that they are trying to stop Parliament having a say on Brexit.

Is the hon. Gentleman aware, as I read in *The Times* this morning, of a secret letter that was sent to the Prime Minister by 170 Conservative MPs, and which they refuse to publish, apparently advocating no deal, in direct contravention of a resolution passed in this House? That shows a complete lack of respect.

Peter Kyle: I am not aware of that letter, but it is something we have seen time and again. We have to ask ourselves a fundamental question: people going to Chequers to discuss stitch-up deals behind closed doors, and people writing letters to the Prime Minister that are not in the public domain—is that an elitist stitch-up? Alternatively, is getting Brexit out of Parliament, out of Westminster and into every community up and down our country an elitist stitch-up? One of those two is an elitist stitch-up, and I believe in my heart that I am on the right side of the argument so far.

Motion (E) offers two benefits that Members cannot afford to ignore. It breaks the deadlock in Parliament; I reassure Opposition Members that the motion makes it explicit that Parliament is withholding consent for the deal until it is confirmed by the public. It cannot be said that, by supporting the motion, Members are supporting the deal.

Secondly, the motion allows us to offer a definitive end to this nightmare. It is a sign of failure that we could not resolve Brexit alone, but it is at least honest to admit our failure. We owe the public an apology for the need to return to them one more time, but at least it will be only one more time.

Mike Gapes (Ilford South) (Ind): Is not the essence of the problem that the original referendum was not defined in terms of whether it was binding or, as the Government said at the time, advisory? As a result, it has led to lots of complications. The referendum proposed by motion (E) would clearly be a final say, and therefore there would be no ambiguity, which is what the people deserve.

Peter Kyle: I could not agree more. This time, voters would be making a decision based on facts not promises. They could compare the deal on offer with the deal we already have. The consent they give would be an informed consent. It is time to get Brexit out of Westminster, and we can do that only by backing a

[Peter Kyle]

compromise. If we do not back this compromise, we could be stuck here in Parliament debating this for weeks and months to come.

Brexit has to be returned to the people of the United Kingdom for them to issue their final instruction, and then together we can begin the reconciliation our country so desperately needs but which today seems so far away. Motion (E) makes that possible, and possibility is the very art of politics.

5.49 pm

Nick Boles (Grantham and Stamford) (Con): I congratulate the hon. Member for Hove (Peter Kyle) on managing to deliver a powerful speech despite a certain amount of distraction. He was responsible for my defeat in his constituency in 2005—not as the candidate but as the campaign manager—and I have always been slightly frightened of him since.

I find myself wondering whether it is a coincidence entirely that the people who normally sit around me on these Benches are not here, given that we all know that among them are counted noted naturalists. It has long been a thoroughly British trait to be able to ignore pointless nakedness, and I trust that the House will now be able to return to the issue we are discussing.

In last Monday's debate, my great friend and mentor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Mid Sussex (Sir Nicholas Soames), urged the House to take to heart the words that are recited every day during Prayers by the Speaker's Chaplain:

"never lead the nation wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideals but laying aside all private interests and prejudices keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all mankind".

In the nine years since I arrived in this House, there has never been a day, or a debate, in which this injunction is more relevant. If by doing this a clear majority of right hon. and hon. Members are able to support one of the Brexit compromises on the Order Paper today, the vast majority of the people we represent will breathe a deep sigh of relief. We are sent here to make the most difficult decisions on behalf of our constituents. If we vote for a compromise version of Brexit this evening, they will see that we are up to the job.

Anna Soubry: As my hon. Friend knows—and he is my friend—I have made the case and voted for the single market and the customs union for almost the past two years. My difficulty with his motion is that paragraph 1(i) says that it seeks to

"renegotiate the framework for the future relationship".

I think that he would have won more support if, like motion (C), on the customs union, he had sought to change the withdrawal agreement as well as the future framework. The problem with his motion is that it is about only the future relationship, which any Government and any Prime Minister who succeeds the current one can change. In other words, it is non-binding.

Nick Boles: I thank my right hon. Friend for her point, but I do not agree with it. My motion specifically includes a provision that the political declaration, as renegotiated, should then be cemented into the withdrawal Act, as will come if this House votes for this, and

therefore this will require a majority of this House to vote to amend statute if there is to be a change. So it will not simply be a matter of a future leader of the Conservative party being able to rip this up and renegotiate it. They will have to amend an Act of Parliament in this House, and currently there is no majority for amending it in the direction that she fears.

Mr Nigel Evans: I agree that the public would be relieved if we ever did come to a conclusion, but they would be angry if we came to the wrong conclusion. Does my hon. Friend accept that his common market 2.0 proposal would allow free movement of people, that it would cost us billions to access the single market, that we would be justiciable by the Court and so we would be law-takers, and that we would not be able to do free trade deals—and was that not the basic tenet of what we voted for in 2016?

Nick Boles: Unfortunately, my hon. Friend is right about only some of those things. It is true that in normal days we would be subject to free movement, because that is the price of single market membership, and that we would have to pay over some financial contributions, although they would be probably of the order of half of what we currently have to pay. He is not correct to say that we would be justiciable by the European Court of Justice. If we were within the European economic area, which is what common market 2.0 proposes, we would be subject to the European Free Trade Association court, and the key thing about the EFTA court is that there is no direct effect in its judgments; they all have to be implemented by sovereign Parliaments before they take hold. So this is a substantially different relationship, one in which we would have a great deal more control. Of course we would be outside all the areas other than the single market—all the political areas of the EU—and we would truly have taken back control.

Several hon. Members rose—

Nick Boles: I will not give way again.

Some commentators have criticised those of us who support common market 2.0 for adapting our proposal in response to suggestions from other colleagues or to statements by leading figures in the EU and the EFTA states. I make no apology for that; from the start we have wanted to bring forward a realistic and deliverable plan, and give as many people as possible reasons to support it. So since last Wednesday's debate, in response to comments from Labour Members, we have added further detail to the definition of the comprehensive customs arrangement that would prevail at least until alternative arrangements underpinning frictionless trade have been agreed with the EU. We have also added a commitment to seek a protocol on agri-foods trade across the UK-EU border. I want to thank the right hon. Member for East Antrim (Sammy Wilson) and the hon. Member for Belfast East (Gavin Robinson) for educating me about this matter, and for the tireless work of Diane Dodds MEP on behalf of Northern Ireland's farmers. I am delighted that the hon. Member for Dundee East (Stewart Hosie) felt able to sign the motion. I understand that the Scottish National party plans to vote for common market 2.0 tonight, which shows that it is the Brexit compromise that would be best for all parts of the UK.

Tom Brake (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD): I hope the hon. Gentleman will be able to clarify one important point: if his proposal were to go through, would it require a long extension to article 50 or would we Brexit on 22 May?

Nick Boles: That is a good question and I am pleased the right hon. Gentleman has asked it. I truly believe that if this proposal were to achieve a majority tonight and if the Government were to accept it as Government policy tomorrow, which they should if this House has resolved on something by a majority, it would not be necessary to extend beyond 22 May. Last week, the EU said that it was ready to renegotiate the terms of the political declaration within hours, not weeks.

Robert Halfon (Harlow) (Con): I thank my hon. Friend for all the work he has done on common market 2.0. Does he agree that it is not just a strong Brexit, but a unity Brexit, because many Eurosceptics in the past have supported the idea of Britain joining EFTA and current Eurosceptics such as my hon. Friend the Member for Camborne and Redruth (George Eustice) are supporting common market 2.0 membership of EFTA. Does my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham and Stamford (Nick Boles) not also agree that it provides important brakes on freedom of movement?

Nick Boles: I thank my right hon. Friend for that. He has been an important ally in this cause.

Caroline Flint (Don Valley) (Lab): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Nick Boles: I am replying to another intervention, if the right hon. Lady would just give me one moment. My right hon. Friend is right; common market 2.0 has attracted the support of my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Goole (Andrew Percy), and no remainder is he. He has been one of the most long-standing and principled Brexiters, but he nevertheless sees the merits in a proposal that offers something to the 48% who voted remain as well as to the 52% who voted leave. My right hon. Friend is also right to say that, although free movement would apply in normal times, by joining the common market 2.0, we would secure a new legal right in exceptional circumstances—I stress the exceptional—to pull an emergency brake on free movement if there were major societal or economic impacts being felt by this country. That is significant. We do not have it as a member of the EU; it is a significant measure of additional control that we do not currently have.

Neil Gray (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP): This is important, because we are all, or should be, compromising across this House. Does the hon. Gentleman acknowledge, on freedom of movement and immigration, that Scotland has a unique demographic situation and that we cannot compromise on freedom of movement because of its importance to the Scottish National party and to Scotland? Will he elaborate further on that point?

Nick Boles: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. In truth, I have been educated not only by the right hon. Member for East Antrim but by the hon. Member for Dundee East and the hon. Member for North East Fife (Stephen Gethins), and I now understand better the importance of immigration not only to the Scottish economy but to Scottish society. There is an

important detail about the emergency brake in articles 112 and 113 of the EEA agreement, which is that it talks about regional impacts and the potential for a regional application of the emergency brake that might suspend free movement. Therefore, were there significant societal or economic problems in, say, the south-east or east of England but not in Scotland, a Government could bring forward a brake that applied only to the affected areas and not to Scotland. That is entirely within the scope of the emergency brake framework.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Nick Boles: Mr Speaker is glaring at me, so I am not going to take any more interventions until I am much closer to the end of my speech.

We all in this House would much prefer to avoid the activation of the Irish backstop. One of the great advantages of common market 2.0 is that it keeps all parts of the UK in the single market and in a customs arrangement, with a common external tariff, until alternative arrangements have been agreed with the EU. It should be possible to agree with the EU a legally binding joint interpretative statement, enshrining the commitment that the backstop protocol will be superseded in full once the UK is safely inside the EEA and a customs arrangement. Common market 2.0 is the only Brexit compromise that can make the Irish backstop fall away altogether.

Dr Andrew Murrison (South West Wiltshire) (Con): My hon. Friend is making a compelling case, and I am almost convinced—almost, but not quite. Will he confirm that he would replace the Northern Ireland backstop, with its potential “forever” arrangements and handcuffs on the United Kingdom, with something that we could at least depart from upon having served sufficient notice?

Nick Boles: I simply say that we have to have an agreement with the EU about alternative arrangements. Thanks to the hard work of the right hon. Member for Loughborough (Nicky Morgan) and many others from across the House, we have secured in the agreement with the EU a commitment to develop those alternative arrangements. Although they may not exist now and may not exist in three years, I am absolutely confident that, with good will, we can secure arrangements. I do not believe that the EU wants any more than we do to keep us in a prehistoric situation when new technologies make the more sophisticated management of the border possible.

As we heard from the hon. Member for Hove, many in the House believe that there should be a referendum to secure the voters’ consent to any Brexit deal. I do not agree with them, but I have the greatest possible respect for the sincerity of their arguments, and I admire the passionate commitment of the supporters of their cause. I hope that, like the right hon. Member for North Norfolk (Norman Lamb), they will support common market 2.0. We have learned that were a referendum to happen, its result would be unpredictable; surely it would be better for the leave option to be one that retains membership of the single market and a customs arrangement that guarantees frictionless trade.

Tim Farron (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD): The hon. Gentleman is to be commended because, unlike Government Front Benchers, we are now looking at

[Tim Farron]

compromises and working together in the interests of the people. Let me push him a little more on the idea of a referendum. We have already discussed no deal and the Prime Minister's deal, and now potentially common market 2.0, and all of them are mutually exclusive and they cannot all represent all of the 52%. Does the hon. Gentleman not feel that in the interests of democracy and legitimacy, the only way to end this situation is to put his proposal, with all the benefits it brings with it, to the British people and allow them to choose either it or to remain?

Nick Boles: I thank the hon. Gentleman for taking the time to talk to me about the proposal and to understand it. We discovered much common ground. I am not persuaded of his argument, and in a sense I apologise that I am not able to be. I am sure the hon. Gentleman will be aware that if the House votes for common market 2.0 tonight, it will then need to come forward in a withdrawal implementation Bill. There will be opportunities for people from all parties to seek to amend that Bill to add the confirmatory referendum that they seek. This is not the last stage in this conversation; if anything, it is just the beginning. I hope that the hon. Gentleman can support the leave option that would do the least damage to the British economy, while he continues to make his argument for a referendum.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Nick Boles: I am going to make some progress.

Some of my hon. Friends supported the motion tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Camborne and Redruth (George Eustice), which also supported British membership of the EEA and EFTA. Although the journey proposed by the common market 2.0 motion might take a little longer, I hope that those colleagues will recognise that the destination is, to all intents and purposes, the same and that they will therefore join my hon. Friend the Member for Camborne and Redruth in supporting our motion today.

The construction of a compromise is not easy—nor is the realisation that we may not get everything that we want, that other people's views and interests matter and that it is better to get half a loaf than to get nothing at all. Our constituents do not send us here for an easy ride or to duck difficult choices. This evening, let us live up to the words of the parliamentary prayer and, setting aside our private interests and prejudices, lead our country out of the Brexit morass.

Mr Nigel Evans: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Briefly, may I thank you, Sir, and the House authorities for the way in which the disruption was handled? It was a distraction, but there was no disruption to our proceedings. May we, through you, thank everybody involved?

Mr Speaker: We want to thank those who look after us and protect us. I very much appreciate what the hon. Gentleman has said. We just press on with the debate. That is what we are here to do.

6.6 pm

Joanna Cherry (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke), the hon. Member for Hove

(Peter Kyle), who has become a good friend during the course of this debacle, and the hon. Member for Grantham and Stamford (Nick Boles).

Given the mess that the Government have got the United Kingdom into, each of us who has spoken so far today is, in our own way, trying to ensure that the Prime Minister does not go naked into the conference chamber—if I can use that phrase—when she goes to the EU Council on 10 April, which is a week on Wednesday. As the Father of the House said, we must not allow no deal to happen by accident on 12 April simply because this House has failed to find a deal that a majority can get behind. As the Government Chief Whip has himself admitted, the Prime Minister's failure, from the beginning when she lost that general election two years ago, to try to build a consensus across the House and with the devolved Governments, means that we are highly unlikely to find a deal that the House can get behind before Friday 12 April. We therefore need some sort of backstop—some sort of insurance policy against a no deal.

We also need a way to make sure that the Prime Minister honours the promise that she gave this House at the beginning of last week: that unless this House agrees to it, no deal will not happen. That is what the Prime Minister said. As we know, and as has been said already this afternoon, one thing that definitely did happen in the indicative votes last week was that 400 Members rejected the idea of a no-deal Brexit. We know there is a majority against a no-deal Brexit.

Neil Gray: I commend my hon. and learned Friend for her efforts in respect of her motion. She will remember, as I do, that the Prime Minister pledged that, if Parliament voted to support no deal, that would become the Government's policy. Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that, if Parliament votes for her motion tonight, that should be the Government's policy and there should be a backstop to make sure that no deal cannot happen?

Joanna Cherry: Yes, I do. That is the purpose of the motion. It is not an SNP motion, although I am absolutely delighted that all my right hon. and hon. Friends are backing it; it is a cross-party motion. It has support from members of every single party in this House, apart from the DUP. If we cannot agree a deal by 10 April, which is the date of the EU Council—everyone must see as a matter of common sense that that is highly unlikely—my motion, if it is passed tonight, will mandate the Government to ask, first, for an extension of the article 50 period. If the EU did not agree to that, the UK Government would be required immediately to table a motion asking this House to approve no deal. My motion goes on to say that, assuming the House did not approve no deal—I think that we can assume that given the many votes that there have been on the matter already—the United Kingdom Government would then be mandated to revoke article 50, before we exit the EU with no deal late on the night of 12 April.

Kevin Brennan (Cardiff West) (Lab): I am very sympathetic to the idea that we need a backstop in extremis to prevent no deal from happening, but can the hon. and learned Lady explain why, later in her motion, she goes on to introduce a level of complexity and a prescriptive route? Is she really wedded to that process, or is she more flexible about how that might work?

Joanna Cherry: I am keen to get this motion passed today. I was very disappointed that some hon. Members, particularly those in the official Opposition, did not feel able to support it last week but, in the spirit of cross-party working, I am trying to be respectful of the reasons why they did not feel able to support it. Coming from the city of Edinburgh, which voted 75% to remain, and the country of Scotland, which voted 62% to remain, and representing a constituency which voted 72% to remain, I understand that it is easy for me to cross this bridge, but it is more difficult for Members in English and Welsh constituencies with different mandates.

Equally, unlike the British Government, who have failed to recognise the fact that Scotland and Northern Ireland voted remain, I am trying to recognise that other parts of these islands voted leave and that, for some people to support this motion, the door cannot be closed on the Brexit process by a revocation to prevent no deal. That is why, with the assistance of lawyers—including Jo Maugham QC who was my fellow petitioner when we took the case to the Court of Justice in Luxembourg to establish that article 50 can be unilaterally revoked—we have crafted the motion in this way. In that connection, I declare my interest in relation to the support of the Good Law Project.

Mr Ben Bradshaw (Exeter) (Lab) *rose*—

Joanna Cherry: I will give way to my fellow sponsor.

Mr Bradshaw: Does the hon. and learned Lady agree that nobody in this House except those who positively want a crash-out, no-deal Brexit should have any problems voting for her motion?

Joanna Cherry: I do agree. I appeal to Members across this House. I know that 10 Conservative Members, including two junior Ministers, voted for this last week. I appeal to anyone who cares about the people who live on these islands and the economy of these islands to prevent a no deal from happening. It is no secret that I came to this House to secure an independent Scotland. That is still my primary aim, but it is not in the interests of Scotland for the Scottish economy to go down the tube with a no-deal Brexit. It is not in the interests of the English, Welsh and Northern Irish economies to go that way, and it is not in Scotland's interests for the English, Welsh and Northern Irish economies to go that way. Make no mistake about it: if we crash out with no deal, it will be the jobs of ordinary, decent working people that go first. They are the sort of people who vote for the SNP. They are the sort of people who vote for the Labour party and we must protect them.

Tom Brake: Does the hon. and learned Lady agree that what she is doing today is supported by the 6 million people who signed the revoke petition—a matter that is being debated in Westminster Hall at this very moment?

Joanna Cherry: It is indeed, but the difference is that many people who signed that petition would like to see us just revoke article 50 now—straightaway—and that would be an end of the matter. I would quite like to see that myself, but that is not what this motion seeks to do. The motion is about using revocation as an insurance policy. In respectful recognition of the fact that the issue of Brexit will not go away if we simply revoke to avoid no deal, the motion seeks to mandate the Government to set up a public inquiry, under the Inquiries Act 2005, within three months of revocation to establish whether

a model of a future relationship with the European Union could be found that would command majority support in the United Kingdom. It also says that, if that could be done, another referendum would be held on the question of whether to retrigger article 50 and renegotiate that model.

Richard Benyon (Newbury) (Con) *rose*—

Joanna Cherry: I will give way in a moment, but I just want to knock on the head at this stage a myth that has been peddled by some people that, if this motion were passed, the EU would object to our revoking article 50. That is not the case. It is a misunderstanding of the judgment of the Court of Justice in Luxembourg in the Scottish case, which did not say that, once we revoke article 50, we can never issue an article 50 notice ever again. It categorically did not say that. If Members cannot take that from me, then please read the judgment of the court, which I put on my Twitter feed this afternoon.

Richard Benyon *rose*—

Mrs Main *rose*—

Joanna Cherry: I will give way to the right hon. Gentleman.

Richard Benyon: I am very grateful to the hon. and learned Lady. Does she agree that one of the failures of this debate, in this House and beyond, is that we do not talk about exactly what no deal is all about—what it actually means for our constituents? We talk about it in too much of a conceptual way, and we let those who are in favour of leaving with no deal get away with not going into the real details—whether on agriculture, or the 83 trade deals of which we would no longer be part.

Joanna Cherry: I absolutely agree. That has been one of the many failures of this process—that this House has not been afforded sufficient time to knock on the head the sort of misinformation peddled about the consequences of no deal. Fortunately, we have much independent research on the consequences of no deal and Members will find that that independent research wholly tells us that no deal would be bad for the economies of these islands, for jobs and for the living standards of people who live here. It would be to shoot ourselves in the foot and to cut off our nose to spite our face.

Anna Soubry: I am proud to have signed the hon. and learned Lady's motion and I shall be voting for it tonight. My only concern is not about the motion but, if it is passed, about the consequences. Many of us, right across this House, are concerned that, whatever votes we come to and whatever majority we find, the Government will simply ignore them.

Joanna Cherry: We have every reason to be concerned about that. As the right hon. Lady knows, the Government have repeatedly ignored votes in this House. However, if an instruction is clear and unequivocal, as this motion is, and it is ignored by the Government, there will be political consequences—we have seen that previously with a contempt motion in this House—and there could also be legal consequences. In any normal times, this Government would be long gone because of their incompetence and the multiple fiascos that we have had recently but, really, if this Government were to ignore

[Joanna Cherry]

an instruction as clear as this and plunge the nations of these islands into the economic disaster of no deal, not only would they not survive it, but the Conservative and Unionist party would not survive it.

Mrs Main: I am looking closely at the hon. and learned Lady's motion. Can she confirm that, with the timelines that it outlines, voting for her motion tonight will absolutely mean voting again for European elections and having to have MEPs?

Joanna Cherry: We all know that, if there is any sort of a lengthy extension, there will have to be European elections. I know that there is some learned opinion to the contrary, but the weight of opinion is that there will have to be European elections. I know that that will be difficult for some people to deal with, but if that is the consequence of preventing no deal and protecting our constituents' livelihoods—the businesses of our constituents and the jobs of our constituents—then so be it and no responsible MP could fail to support this motion tonight. There are four motions before us. I will vote for two of the other ones as well but supporting this motion does not preclude hon. Members from supporting other motions. It is not a motion about the eventual outcome; it is a motion about process and about protecting us. [Interruption.] I can see that Mr Speaker is keen to bring in other speakers. I will not take up much more time, so I will wind up to a conclusion.

For Conservative Members of Parliament, this is an opportunity to make good on the promise that the Prime Minister has already made to this House that, unless the House agrees to it, no deal will not happen. For Labour MPs, it is the opportunity to make good on the promise in their 2017 manifesto, which of course I have read, as I always do Labour manifestos, and which says:

“Labour recognises that leaving the EU with ‘no deal’ is the worst possible deal for Britain and that it would do damage to our economy and trade. We will reject ‘no deal’ as a viable option”.

This is pretty much the last chance saloon. If Labour wants to reject no deal as a viable option and put in place the insurance policy of revocation, then it really needs to do that today.

Most of all, this motion should appeal to all of us as democrats, because this decision of such importance for the United Kingdom, between revocation and no deal, ought to be one for the representatives of the people in this Parliament and not for the Prime Minister in a minority Government. That is why I have called it the parliamentary supremacy motion. Of course, in Scotland, it is the people who are sovereign and supreme, not the Parliament, but I recognise that, for all intents and purposes, this Parliament is supreme. This motion is all about taking back control and making sure that we have an insurance policy against the danger that this rather confused Government could crash us into no deal without really meaning to do so.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Order. Approximately 40 right hon. and hon. Members wish to speak, the large majority of whom, I am sorry to say, seem set to be disappointed, and three Front Benchers are due to speak, although I hope mercifully briefly. So in the interests of trying to

accommodate colleagues, we will start with a time limit of six minutes, but it is not obligatory to absorb the full six. I call Mr Dominic Grieve.

6.21 pm

Mr Dominic Grieve (Beaconsfield) (Con): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I will try to be brief.

Of the four motions before us, two relate to substance and two relate to process, and they cannot be easily disaggregated. I have signed motion (E) and motion (G), motion (E) being that of the hon. Member for Hove (Peter Kyle). As I have said on many occasions, in view of the circumstances that have arisen, the idea that we can legitimately take the people of this country out of the European Union without consulting them as to whether the deal that we are offering them is one they want seems to me very odd indeed. The reality is that everything we have been talking about this evening, on the two substantive motions in particular, bears almost no relation to what was advanced by those advocating leave in the 2016 referendum campaign.

Equally, this House has said repeatedly that it does not believe in a no-deal Brexit. That is why I support the motion of the hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh South West (Joanna Cherry)—because we have to do everything to stop it, given that the evidence is overwhelming that leaving without a deal would be catastrophic. I realise that this is sometimes a very difficult issue. On Friday night, I found myself giving an audience the Government's own figures on the administrative burden on business of leaving without a deal, which is £13 billion per annum. That may be too high or it might be too low, but it is a reasoned estimate. That group of people, some of whom say they support my party and therefore the Government, were shouting “Liar” at me. This, I am afraid, is the point where reasoned debate has wholly evaporated. The House is very clear that what we have here is a real risk to this country's integrity in future, and that is why no deal must be prevented.

Let me now turn to the two substantive motions. Looked at straightforwardly, I think that both offer a better destination for this country than what the Prime Minister negotiated. That is first because they address the Northern Ireland issue, and do it a way that covers the integrity of the whole United Kingdom and does not separate Northern Ireland out from it, which seems to me to be an advantage; and secondly, because the concessions they make to our participation or deeper integration with our EU partners even after we have left do not come at a cost that people will notice when we are out. I agree entirely with my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke) that, in reality, the trade deals that we were told we would have, and which were celebrated, are going to be absolutely marginal compared with the effect on our wellbeing now and what we are going to lose.

For those reasons, I look with favour on both motions. They are both, as I said, very far removed from what was being trumpeted in 2016, which unfortunately was an utterly misleading vision that the United Kingdom could have its cake and eat it—could have the benefits of membership and all the freedoms that go with not being a member. That is the basic problem that this House is going to have to grapple with. I will not vote against the two motions of substance, which seem to me to be moving us probably in the right direction.

I am anxious about the risks of our concluding a political declaration and having a very limited timeframe—to 22 May, with probably no extension—to resolve fully the issues within it to the satisfaction of this House. I have a serious concern, first, that that can be done; and secondly, that it can be done to the satisfaction of the public. That is why there is a need for a linkage between the preferred option and consulting the public. I do not want to say any more about that now—I want to sit down and allow others to speak.

However, I do want to emphasise my willingness to work with Members of this House who have promoted both these motions, in my determination to try to bring this sorry saga to an end. But in saying that, I want to emphasise that the House has to be very careful about simply jumping on something that it thinks we can all agree on without thinking through the consequences of the process and making sure that the process ends up satisfying the House itself and the electorate, and leading to the right outcome.

6.26 pm

Margaret Beckett (Derby South) (Lab): I shall seek to be extremely brief, Mr Speaker, because I have been fortunate enough to catch your eye before on these matters.

One of the merits of last week's indicative vote process was that the arguments for each option, and also the prime concerns, have become much clearer. Discussions on the proposal for a confirmatory ballot devised by my hon. Friends the Member for Hove (Peter Kyle) and for Sedgefield (Phil Wilson) revealed considerable reluctance to contemplate the longer extension, and hence the delay, that would be needed. I completely understand that reluctance, especially if, as may be, it would lead into the holding of Euro elections. But to me, that would be a price well worth paying for the sake of achieving the settlement that a confirmatory vote could produce, as it did with the Good Friday agreement. It may also be the price that we need to pay to allow enough scrutiny of the different options before us to provide the basis for a stable majority, not just a fleeting majority, in this House.

As it happens, I very seriously doubt that such a longer extension can be avoided in any event. The Government can only deliver either the Prime Minister's deal or any other deal when the necessary legislation passes both Houses of this Parliament. That legislation is said to be ready, but, as the hon. Member for Stafford (Jeremy Lefroy) pointed out last week, the House has seen neither hide nor hair of it. I have heard that it is long, perhaps even 100 clauses, and that it is also complex—and it is obviously an extremely significant part of this process. But whenever it is mentioned, Ministers speak briefly and dismissively as if its passage is just a given thing that will be both brief and uncontroversial. Frankly, I rather doubt that. So as we are likely to need a long extension anyway, for a whole variety of other reasons, why not take advantage of that reality to hold a confirmatory vote on the likely outcome of Brexit, whatever option ultimately emerges from these deliberations?

Lucy Powell (Manchester Central) (Lab/Co-op): I agree with what my right hon. Friend is saying. Does she agree with me, though, that in order to get that long extension, the EU would need to be satisfied that this

House has actually taken forward a view through a substantive, positive vote, and that otherwise—if we do not take that difficult step—we could just crash out with no deal?

Margaret Beckett: I agree that that would make it infinitely easier. The EU might be convinced of that on the basis of our wanting to hold such a vote, but I totally accept my hon. Friend's point. This is all based on us trying, if humanly possible, to get such a deal.

Dr Murrison: Will the right hon. Lady give way?

Margaret Beckett: I am trying to be brief, but all right.

Dr Murrison: I am grateful to the right hon. Lady. This country has had half a dozen or so referendums in recent years, and we have honoured the outcome of those referendums on each occasion. She is suggesting that we do not honour the outcome of the June 2016 referendum. If we do not honour the outcome of that referendum, are the public not entitled to ask why we should honour the outcome of the referendum that she is advocating or any other?

Margaret Beckett: I am sorry, but I utterly reject the notion that what I am proposing does not honour the outcome of the 2016 referendum, and I will come to the reason why I do not accept that for one second. We should take the step of a confirmatory vote whatever the deal or option that is finally agreed, or even if none is agreed, because whatever the hon. Gentleman may say, not one of the options before the House tonight or over the last few weeks was on the ballot paper in 2016—not one of them, including the Prime Minister's deal.

Stephen Kinnock (Aberavon) (Lab): My right hon. Friend is making an excellent speech, and I agree with her, but for a confirmatory referendum to take place, there needs to be a viable leave option on the ballot paper versus remain. Does she agree that those campaigning for a second referendum should support the other motions on the Order Paper that present a viable leave option—namely, a customs union and common market 2.0?

Margaret Beckett: I am happy to agree with my hon. Friend about that, but I hope it cuts both ways. I heard the hon. Member for Grantham and Stamford (Nick Boles) say, "Of course, those who want a second referendum can come back to this some other time in legislation when all of this is done," but it must be a two-way street.

Nick Boles: Will the right hon. Lady give way?

Margaret Beckett: I am sorry, but I really must go on.

Nick Boles: She has referred to me.

Margaret Beckett: I did; all right.

Nick Boles: I will be brief. I just want to reassure the right hon. Lady of one thing. Last Wednesday I abstained on her motion, and I will abstain on it again tonight, as a gesture of good will towards it.

Margaret Beckett: I am duly grateful to the hon. Gentleman.

What is most often heard in these discussions is the argument that to hold a confirmatory vote would be not only wrong but undemocratic, which is the point

[Margaret Beckett]

that the hon. Member for South West Wiltshire (Dr Murrison) was trying to address. That argument is advanced both by those who believe that the view of the people has not changed and that they will still vote to leave—and, according to Mr Farage, by a bigger margin—and by those who fear that their view might have changed and who resist holding such a vote for that very reason. It seems to me that there is something mutually contradictory in those arguments.

We have heard a great deal about the resentment that would be felt by those who voted to leave, but I again ask Members to carefully consider the position in which this House would place itself if it is the case—I do not know one way or the other—that the British people do not now wish to leave the European Union. We are being invited to vote to take the UK out of the European Union even if it is now against the wishes of the British people, and to do so while refusing to give them the opportunity even to express such wishes. I fear we may find such a refusal difficult to defend, especially if the basis of our decision ends up being the Prime Minister's deal, which will itself have been presented to this Parliament for decision more than once.

There is another dangerous argument being advanced: that we should leave, and if we do not like it, we can always rejoin. This House knows that if we leave, we lose the special opt-outs on the euro and Schengen that successive Governments have negotiated. Rejoining would put us in a very different place from remaining with the concessions that we have now.

I accept that, in a variety of ways, the alternatives proposed on today's Order Paper by the Father of the House and others offer advantages over the Prime Minister's proposal. I could live with any of them apart from the option of no deal, but I repeat: none of them was before the British people three years ago, and for that reason, if for no other, they should be asked for their view on the reality that is before them, rather than the fantasies they were spun in 2016.

6.34 pm

Huw Merriman (Bexhill and Battle) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Derby South (Margaret Beckett). Like her, I will be voting for motion (E), but I will be doing so for very different reasons, and I wish to explain those reasons in the time I have.

I have been on the wrong side of all the EU votes when it comes to the arithmetic, with the exception of the vote for the Prime Minister to trigger article 50, when I was one of almost 500 MPs who voted for that to occur. Since then, I have voted for the Prime Minister's deal three times, I have voted for no deal as the fall-back twice and I have voted not to allow an extension of article 50—on each occasion, I have lost. That has brought me to this place.

Motion (E) provides the opportunity to get the Prime Minister's deal through, as much as it provides the opportunity for those who did not vote for article 50 to be triggered to revoke article 50. I am willing to take my chances and put the matter to the people, because I have given up on Parliament delivering a majority for the deal that I want. I am left with two choices. One is to find myself in meaningful vote 3,029, and the other—I say

this as a former transactional lawyer working on a trading floor—is to look ahead and try to find a solution that will deliver what I want, which is to honour the vote in 2016. That is incredibly important to me. I worry about the democratic deficit of that not being delivered.

Of course, people could ask us why we are going back to the people. I say this with a great degree of self-loathing, but I am supporting this purely because Parliament is unable to reach a majority and a decision—we are stuck. Every Member of this House needs to face up to the reality and ask themselves, “How long can this go on? How much uncertainty will we allow business and our constituents to bear before we finally reach the conclusion that we need to find another option?”

James Morris (Halesowen and Rowley Regis) (Con): My hon. Friend talks about uncertainty, but surely a second referendum, whatever way it is formulated, will just add to uncertainty ad infinitum. Why would people accept the result of a second referendum? It is an absurd position.

Huw Merriman: I do not believe it is absurd. With respect, it is more absurd us having debate after debate and vote after vote and achieving absolutely nothing. Alternatively, we can be realistic and say that Parliament is not delivering. I mean no disrespect to us, but that is the reality.

This motion gives certainty because unlike, for example, a customs union, which would then have to be negotiated, there are two options—one is revoke, which can be done but I hope will not be, and the other is the Prime Minister's deal, which has been agreed with the EU—and they both automatically deliver certainty. The other options do not deliver certainty, and Parliament is not delivering anything at all right now.

Mr Marcus Fysh (Yeovil) (Con): Will my hon. Friend confirm what he appeared to just say, which is that he would support there being two options on the ballot paper in a second referendum, one of which would be to revoke article 50? Is he representing the Chancellor when he says that?

Huw Merriman: I resent that point. No, I am not representing the Chancellor, otherwise I would be sat behind him on the Treasury Bench. I am representing my constituents and what I feel is right. I take umbrage at that.

Let us be reasonable. Let us look at compromise and at two differing views. It has been put to me that the options on the ballot paper should be no deal or deal. Of course that is what I would want, because those are the options I have voted for, but on the other side of the divide, if the options were customs union and single market membership or revoke, that would be no good for the 17.4 million. Let us choose options that might deliver something for both sides of the argument and then put it to the people and give certainty.

I do not say this because I have ever wanted a second referendum. As far as I was concerned, when we had the first vote, that was it. I said to my constituents that I would first support the deal, and if that did not work, no deal. My voting record shows that I have done just that, but it also shows that I have lost. Being a serial

loser, I can either carry on in that negative vein or face reality and tell my constituents that we have to find a way through this—they want that more than anyone I speak to—and look for another solution. That solution, to me, is a confirmatory vote.

Christine Jardine (Edinburgh West) (LD): Further to what the hon. Gentleman is saying, does he agree that a confirmatory vote is also the best way of healing the divisions, as it would give both sides the chance to have a view on the final deal, put it to bed once and for all, and move us forward?

Huw Merriman: It may well do so, although it would of course be fractious. I would certainly be embarrassed at the very fact that we had got there, but I support doing so on the basis of the reality in this place.

It has also been asked, would we not be better off having a general election? Again, however, I want certainty, and a general election would not deliver certainty. With all due respect to us all, it might deliver us back here again, and then we could carry on in the same vein as we have so far. I do not believe that that would be better, whereas the options I have laid before the House would provide legal certainty and that would be it. So far as I am concerned, I say with great reluctance that I will absolutely support a confirmatory vote because, to me, that is the only way we are going to deliver certainty. This place, I am afraid to say, has not done so.

6.40 pm

Norman Lamb (North Norfolk) (LD): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Bexhill and Battle (Huw Merriman), and I agree with the points that he made.

This is the first time I have contributed to any of these debates—I have managed to avoid doing so until now—but I have worked with right hon. and hon. Members across this House. Incidentally, I pay particular tribute to the right hon. Members for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin), for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn) and for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) and the hon. Member for Grantham and Stamford (Nick Boles). It has been a pleasure to work with people who have been united in a desire to find a way forward, and united also in recognising that there is an absolute need to avoid leaving the EU with no deal.

I believe it is essential now that we seek to build consensus, and I feel that for two reasons. First, we are in a perilous state: there is a real danger to this country. There is a high risk that, unintentionally, we could end up in just a few days' time crashing out of the EU with no deal. The damage to the economy would be profound. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Jack Dromey), with the right hon. Member for Meriden (Dame Caroline Spelman), has made very well the points about the absolute importance of protecting manufacturing industry, and the auto industry in particular. As Chair of the Science and Technology Committee, I should also say that the damage to our science community from crashing out with no deal would be profound, and it seems to me that we have to avoid that at all costs.

The second reason why I think it is important to build consensus is that we live now in a horribly divided country, with entrenched positions and intransigence on both sides. This is deeply damaging to our country, and we risk damaging the social contract. I think we play with fire if we do not recognise the danger, and I do

not think enough people have been seeking to find ways of bringing this country together again, rather than maintaining the divisions.

I approach this as someone who campaigned for and voted for remain. It may be odd to say this, but I respect the alternative point of view. I have my own criticisms of the EU, and I always have done. It is massively over-centralised, and I think it needs substantial reform—it needs to be more dynamic and more flexible—yet I was clear in my mind that I should support and campaign for remain. However, I lost, and we now need to find a way forward out of this mess. No route is perfect and no route is risk-free; danger is everywhere.

It is vital that Parliament today actually supports a way forward, rather than rejecting everything yet again. Another day of everything being defeated risks inflicting further enormous damage on this institution and of leaving the country feeling that it is without leadership. The country is crying out for leadership. I want this Parliament to agree on a Brexit deal that, as far as possible, protects jobs, the economy and the funding of public services, and maintains the closest possible relationship with the European Union—and then I want that settlement to be put to the people of this country in a confirmatory referendum.

The Prime Minister opposes the single market and a customs union, and her red lines have stayed rigidly in place all the way through. She says she cannot support those because they were not in the manifesto, but in 2017 she failed to get a majority. Just as in the coalition the parties coming together had to make compromises—a party cannot get everything in its manifesto if it does not have a majority in Parliament—this necessitates compromise. The Government Chief Whip was absolutely right to say that the election changed everything, yet the Prime Minister has failed to recognise that. She has failed to reach out and has stuck rigidly to red lines that are inappropriate in a balanced Parliament.

I will vote to support a customs union, the argument for which was put very succinctly and effectively by the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke). Manufacturing industry in our country demands that we remain part of the customs union, and that is why I will support it. It is not sufficient on its own, but it is a building block. I will also support common market 2.0. It is not perfect, but it seeks to ensure the closest possible economic relationship, protecting the economy and jobs.

I would say to the people who support a confirmatory referendum that motion (E) says that nothing in this House should be approved without a confirmatory referendum, but we have to agree what this House decides. They should please engage in that process, come together and support a deal that protects jobs and the economy—and then put it to the British people.

6.46 pm

Dame Caroline Spelman (Meriden) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for North Norfolk (Norman Lamb), who was a very good Minister in the coalition Government.

I am very keen that the voice of the world of work should be heard in this debate today. Last week, with the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Jack Dromey), I co-chaired an industrial coalition. A huge range of industries and trade organisations evaluated

[*Dame Caroline Spelman*]

the options before us, and they are going to inform how I will vote this evening. The British brand has been badly damaged, they said. Brexit has changed international perceptions of our country.

The CBI and the TUC were very clear that they want Parliament to compromise to find a way forward. No deal or a Canada-style relationship with Europe would not, in their view, be workable. They warned us that the trade we do with our near neighbours is very different from how we trade with more distant partners. Trading with Canada, for example, could necessitate the completion of up to 12 pages of customs forms. They estimate that that could cost British business an extra £2.5 billion annually, and that would of course hit small and medium-sized enterprises hardest of all.

There are big problems, businesses said, with mini extensions of article 50, because they cannot properly function on such a short-term planning cycle. Car factories in our constituencies are shut down this month in anticipation of the disruption of Brexit, and the workers have been urged to take their annual leave this month. They cannot suddenly open the factories and shunt the annual leave three weeks later. The Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders would prefer an 18-month to two-year delay to article 50 just to give business a chance to adjust. It said that we cannot keep marching up to the top of the cliff.

The TUC and the CBI again made clear the threats of a no-deal brisket that would—[*Laughter.*] I had a go at cooking that yesterday, Mr Speaker. A no-deal Brexit would put thousands of jobs at risk. This is not just about jobs; I remind the House that it is about the thousands of Brits abroad who will not be able to fund their own healthcare in the event of a no deal and are receiving notice of that now. I appeal to the Government for contingency funding to help those vulnerable individuals, but again mini extensions do not help them much either.

I have consistently supported the Prime Minister's deal. Business says that it is workable and would give clarity. I will continue to support that deal if it comes back for another vote, but without enough support in Parliament we have to consider the other options. I will vote in favour of two options. I will support the proposal for “a” customs union. There is a big difference between “a” and “the”. The withdrawal agreement already provides elements of a customs union and that is something that both main parties supported in different forms at the last election. While the Conservative manifesto stated we would

“no longer be members of the single market or customs union”

we did commit to seeking a

“deep and special partnership including a comprehensive free trade and customs agreement”.

I will also vote for the proposals setting out common market 2.0, which builds on the EFTA model put forward by my hon. Friend the Member for Camborne and Redruth (George Eustice). We helped to set up EFTA: it offers preferential trade with the EU, recourse to an EFTA court for trade disputes and the right to pull the handbrake on migration.

All the options have their critics. However, an agreement on customs with the EU would work for business and help to safeguard jobs—

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

Dame Caroline Spelman: I am afraid I do not have time to do so.

We must weigh up the pros and cons of all options before us. However, given the large manufacturing footprint in many of our constituencies, the impact on jobs must be a key factor. If jobs are lost—

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

Dame Caroline Spelman: No, I will not give way.

If jobs were lost so that we could have a more flexible trade policy in the future, I would find that way forward very difficult to support. The critical issue for business is the need for frictionless trade with our principal market.

Mr Fysh: Will my right hon. Friend give way on that point?

Dame Caroline Spelman: No, I have now said three times that I will not give way.

For the automotive industry, just-in-time manufacturing is critical. Some 1,100 lorries a day pass through Dover. Many firms do not have warehouses to store parts. The lorries are their warehouses. Any logistic disruption at the border is damaging. While I was out canvassing in my constituency, a small business owner explained how 15% of his trade is with the EU, and that is at risk. If he loses that trade, he has to make two of his people redundant.

I agree with my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke) that a customs union alone provides 90% of a solution for a frictionless border. People have been understanding on the doorstep, but they expect Parliament to come together now across parties and find a compromise. Our children's future will depend on the quality of the compromise we achieve, and we must not let them down.

The votes tonight will help to shape phase 2 of the Brexit process when we negotiate that future trading relationship. However, we cannot get to phase 2 without phase 1. That means accepting the treaty, which allows us to leave in an orderly fashion, and I urge more colleagues to do so.

6.52 pm

Mr Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): I rise to speak with great pleasure, because this has been a good debate. Over the weekend, when I was thinking about speaking in the debate should I be lucky enough to be called, I decided that I wanted to be entirely positive. Indeed, I am a Labour and Co-operative Member of Parliament and have a penchant for co-operation in my DNA. The right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke) and I were both born during the blitz. I was born a week before him on 17 August, the day after the heaviest bombing by the Germans in the second world war. A week later, my neighbours—both parents and two little children—were killed by a German bomb.

When I got into Parliament, many of the generation here in 1979 had fought in that war. Denis Healey had been on the beach at Anzio, and Ted Heath had also been in the war. They were great pro-Europeans because they had seen two world wars and knew what the killing and waste had done to Europe—to our economy and to our people. The European economy was set back for

many years and political progress seemed the only way forward. Those men and women built the United Nations and NATO, and started the European Coal and Steel Community, which was the beginning of Europe. We should honour them, and put this debate into context.

I often say that I have been sent here from Huddersfield to make sure that people from my town get a better standard of living, improved health, welfare and prosperity. We all say that, and we all believe it, but we must put it in the broader context of the hallowed duty we have never to go back to that Europe that was so divided and bitter.

To hold out an olive branch to the Conservatives, over the weekend I did a lot of reading of the history of the Labour party on Europe. What a mess that was! One man who is almost canonised in the Labour party—

Chris Ruane (Vale of Clwyd) (Lab): Marx! [*Laughter.*]

Mr Sheerman: No, not Marx. I will give the House another clue: he was our first Prime Minister—

Frank Field (Birkenhead) (Ind): MacDonald?

Mr Sheerman: No, the first with a majority.

Frank Field: Attlee.

Mr Sheerman: Yes, Attlee. He is almost canonised, but anyone who wants to know about the confusion on Europe in the Labour party should read about Clement Attlee. He wanted to reject Europe and continue expanding trade with the colonies. The divisions on Europe in the Labour party were deep, mirroring in part what has happened more recently in the Conservative party. It was Harold Wilson, who came from Huddersfield but was never Member of Parliament for the town, who called the first referendum because of the deep division between left and right in the party, especially with Tony Benn. The result was the innovation, which I much regret, of referendums under our constitution.

I will support all four of the motions this evening, because this is the beginning of a process. We are in a bitter and toxic period. In my nearly 40 years in Parliament, I have never seen such nastiness in the streets, on social media and in the way we treat each other in the House, referring to each other as traitors. I hope tonight we can start the process, by voting for some of these positive motions. Of course, in the end I want to stay in the European Union, but I am willing to meet people halfway and to build bridges.

All the time I have the national interest at the back of my mind. Someone asked me at the weekend, “What is the national interest? The Prime Minister keeps talking about it. The Conservative Prime Minister who first got us into this mess has disappeared and now another one is going to disappear.” The national interest is for this House to come together and replace the vacuum we have had from the present leadership in the major political parties. I say that reluctantly, but it is true. It is time we had that leadership, but until we get it again, the House must pick up the baton and run with it. I hope that tonight will start that process.

Mr Speaker: I will next take the Front-Bench speeches. I have asked the Secretary of State, the shadow Secretary of State and the spokesman for the SNP to try not to exceed five minutes, and then the Back-Bench limit will have to be cut to four minutes to try to maximise participation.

6.58 pm

The Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Stephen Barclay): I will obviously take note of your direction, Mr Speaker: the right hon. and learned Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Keir Starmer) and I are not particularly short of opportunities to debate these issues at the Dispatch Box. I commend the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr Sheerman) on his honesty. He set out clearly that he wishes to stay in the European Union. It is the case, however, that the Government are committed to ensuring that we deliver on the referendum result.

The right hon. Member for North Norfolk (Norman Lamb) is no longer in his place but he spoke about respecting all views, which has very much been the tenor of the debate today. I take issue with one point that he made: when he criticised the Prime Minister for not compromising. Part of the criticism she has received from both wings of the debate is that her deal is seen as too much of a compromise, both for those who want purity on one aspect—a purity of Brexit beyond what 17.4 million people voted for—and those who do not want to leave at all. That is the pincer movement that has bedevilled the agreement she has reached.

Anna Soubry: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Stephen Barclay: I will give way, but I am mindful of Mr Speaker’s direction.

Anna Soubry: Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that there is a difference between those who wanted a pure Brexit and those who did not want us to leave in any event? I suggest to him that that is not any compromise that the Prime Minister has made. She has not compromised. The point is that she has not reached out to those of us who had accepted the result of the referendum and did want to form a way of delivering on it with the least amount of damage.

Stephen Barclay: With all due respect to the right hon. Lady, the passion and persistence with which she campaigns for her specific view is perhaps an indication of the lack of compromise that there sometimes is in the wider debate.

Mr Vaizey: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Stephen Barclay: I have just five minutes, but I will take one further intervention. Then, I think, Mr Speaker, your steer is that I should press on.

Mr Vaizey: I am sorry to intervene on the Secretary of State. I was going to raise this point in my speech with the hope that he would respond to it, but he is now speaking before me. Will he illuminate the House on the letter that has gone to the Prime Minister from 170 of our colleagues? Did he sign it? What is in it? Is it true, as the papers are being briefed, that it keeps no deal on the table, despite the resolution of this House?

Stephen Barclay: All of us, as politicians, are often accused of not answering questions, so let me be very specific. I have not signed any letter of the sort. I have the opportunity to meet the Prime Minister most days and if I have a point to raise with her I do so.

Robert Halfon: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Stephen Barclay: No. I am conscious that I have only five minutes, and I wish to press on.

It is worth reminding the House that it was only last Friday that Members—[*Interruption.*] I do not know why the right hon. Member for Broxtowe (Anna Soubry) is chuntering. I have been given a steer from the Chair to give time for other Members and she wants to come in a second time. I have taken her intervention.

On Friday, the House voted against the withdrawal agreement. It is worth pointing out that a number of the motions before the House require the withdrawal agreement as part of the package, including motions (C) and (D). Likewise, the motions on a public vote are proposals that include the same withdrawal agreement that the Members who signed them opposed. The fourth motion before the House includes a vast number of signatories who stood on manifestos contrary to what they have signed. So, again, that points to the contradictions inherent in the approach that many have taken throughout this debate. People are taking positions one week and then signing motions that are contrary to them the following week.

I have used four minutes of my five, so I will press on very quickly. Many of these points were raised in the debate last Wednesday, including on the permanent customs union. The concern relates to giving control of our trade policy, in particular our trade defences, to EU countries over which we would have no say. It is questionable why we would want to give MEPs in other countries control over our trade defences, whether in ceramics or steel, or on many of the issues debated in this House. My right hon. Friend the Member for Chelsea and Fulham (Greg Hands) has quite often drawn the attention of the House—I am pleased to see him in his place—to some of the issues I do not have time to expand on today. Likewise, the right hon. Member for East Antrim (Sammy Wilson) reminded the House, when he intervened on the Father of the House, that regulatory alignments often drive friction at the border—much more so than the tariffs on which the debate tends to centre.

Motion (D) was debated last Wednesday, so we do not need to rehearse the arguments about financial contributions, the acceptance of freedom of movement or alignment with EU rules—all the issues that cause concern. Indeed, the Governor of the Bank of England, no ardent Brexiteer he, talked about the damage and how highly undesirable this option is, because of the rule-taking element strangulating a part of our economy that paid £72 billion of tax in 2016-17. We should be cautious about the rule-taking implications. In his remarks, my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham and Stamford (Nick Boles) talked about an extension to 22 May. I simply remind my very good friend that—I am sure he is aware of this point—the conclusions from the Council do not give an automatic right to an extension to 22 May, given that we have passed the 29 March deadline.

We debated motion (E) last week. It was defeated by 27 votes, so the arguments were rehearsed. Likewise, we debated motion (D), which was defeated by 109 votes. What we have is a rehashing of a number of arguments that did not curry favour last week. Again, many of the issues remain. Motion (G) does not specify how long the public inquiry should be. On average, they last for three years. Are we going to subject our businesses to a further three years of uncertainty, followed by a further vote?

What we need to do is give certainty to our business community and to safeguard the rights of EU citizens. That is what the House rejected by rejecting the deal. What we see today is a number of motions signed by people who, just last Friday, rejected the withdrawal agreement. They stood on manifestos that contradict the motion before the House and, in essence, are asking colleagues across the House to vote for a package that includes a part that they themselves rejected just a matter of days ago.

7.6 pm

Keir Starmer (Holborn and St Pancras) (Lab): I am glad that we are resuming this indicative vote exercise. It has been a good debate today. There has been a good tone, with good contributions from around the House. I recognise that no majority was found last week for any option, but I equally recognise that Parliament is trying, at some speed, to complete a process that the Prime Minister should have carried out two years ago.

May I begin by saying a few words to all Members across the House, but particularly to colleagues sitting on the Labour Benches behind me? I recognise that many Members have a single preferred option and understandably want to push that option as hard and as far as possible. No one wants to stand in the way of that, but I do urge colleagues to enter into the spirit of the exercise we are now engaged in. That means supporting options other than their own preferred option in order to break the deadlock. It is important that we find a majority if we can this evening—if that is possible. I do recognise how difficult that can be for individual Members and how they have grappled with the positions they have tried to take, but I ask them to enter into the process in that spirit. I thank them for the approach they have taken so far.

As far as the Labour position is concerned, it will again be to support amendments that are consistent with the two credible options we have been advancing time and again: a close economic relationship with the EU based on a customs union and close single market alignment; and a public vote to prevent no deal or a damaging Brexit.

Greg Hands: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Keir Starmer: I am going to come to the customs union in a minute, and I will take an intervention then.

On that basis, we will whip support for motion (C), the customs union as a minimum, in the name of the Father of the House; for motion (D), common market 2.0, in the name of the hon. Member for Grantham and Stamford (Nick Boles); and for motion (E), on a confirmatory public vote, in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Hove (Peter Kyle), assisted by my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Phil Wilson). I will come to motion (G) in one moment.

On motion (C), Labour has long supported a customs union. It is a vital component of any deal which will genuinely protect manufacturing, and it is necessary to protect against a hard border in Northern Ireland. As I said last week, it must be a minimum, and that is written into the motion in terms. That is the position of the Labour party.

Greg Hands: On the customs union, I would like, if I can, to take the right hon. and learned Gentleman back a few years to when the Labour party was wholly opposed to the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership—I think it was before he was in the House. At the time, the UK had a seat at the table. Now, as he is proposing it, the UK would not have a seat at the table and the EU would set our trade policy. Why is he in favour of that arrangement, particularly at a time when the United States says it wants to launch trade talks with the European Union? The EU has, in general, a system of social insurance, not our system for the NHS. How does he think that this is a better arrangement to defend his NHS?

Keir Starmer: That is a serious point. Before the Labour party surfaced its proposition for a customs union, we had long and hard discussions with the EU about the sort of customs union that we were considering—not the customs union, but a customs union—and we looked at the influence that now exists for EU members, and how one could devise a pillar that gave influence to a very close third party. I have stood at the Dispatch Box many times and said that that would not be easy, but that is why we have always said that we should have a customs union with a say. We have sought to discuss that with the EU, and it is telling that when we put our proposal to the Prime Minister, the EU was very warm about the possibility of negotiating it. I take the right hon. Gentleman's point, but we have, I hope, addressed it in our approach to the customs union.

On motion (D), Labour's preference remains the approach that we set out in the letter to the Prime Minister in January this year—that is, a customs union and single market alignment. However, we recognise that motion (D) has a number of similarities and could deliver a close economic relationship with the EU. The motion has been revised since the first phase of indicative votes and now includes further detail about the form of the envisaged customs arrangements, which have similarities with the approach that the Labour party has set out.

The motion does not specify that those arrangements should be permanent—that is our preferred option—but it does say that they should be in place at least until alternative arrangements can be found. There remain differences between our policy position and motion (D), but the motion would allow for close economic partnership with the EU. It is a credible proposition, and on that basis we will support it this evening.

Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Keir Starmer: I will not, because I am trying to make some progress. We will support motion (E), because at this late stage it is clear that any Brexit deal agreed in this Parliament will need further democratic approval, and that is what the motion will provide. It will put a lock around any deal that the Prime Minister forces through at the eleventh hour, or any revised deal that comes about at this very late stage. It will ensure that any Tory Brexit deal is subject to a referendum lock. In other words, it upholds the principle that any such deal must be confirmed by the public if we are to proceed.

I want to finish by dealing briefly with motion (G). I understand why it has been tabled, and I have had the opportunity to discuss it with the hon. and learned

Member for Edinburgh South West (Joanna Cherry). Our focus today is on the way forward, and that is why we are supporting the three motions that I have mentioned. Motion (G) is, in a sense, a fall-back for if that exercise fails, so I understand why it has been tabled. We will not be voting in favour of it tonight, but we accept that it deals with an issue that the House will have to confront in due course.

Joanna Cherry: I am extremely puzzled by the right hon. and learned Gentleman's position. We all have to compromise today. I am going to vote for motion (D), and I am on the record as having concerns about it and saying that it did not go far enough. What does he think will be the reaction of working-class voters if the Labour Front Benchers' failure to support motion (G) means that we crash out with no deal a week on Friday?

Keir Starmer: As we try to find a way forward, I think it is important that we all adopt the right tone, rather than throwing around, "What will people think of this, that and the other?" We have always said that we will take whatever measures are necessary to stop no deal. The exercise that we are involved in is an attempt to break the impasse and find a way through, using the indicative process. I accept that if that fails, there will have to be an insurance exercise, but we are not at that stage yet.

Joanna Cherry *rose*—

Keir Starmer: I am not going to take another intervention. I am not rejecting the principle, but I am not going to stand at this Dispatch Box and listen to Members from across the House throwing around allegations that we are not interested in this, that and the other. We are trying to have a different debate, with a grown-up tone, to find a way forward. I am prepared to engage in that, and I am prepared to accept that we will have to confront the principle, but at the moment our focus is on how we break the deadlock. If we can do that, we will be able to move on to how we progress. If we cannot do that, we will have to look at other options. That is a genuine and sincere position from someone who cares a great deal about whether we crash out without a deal.

7.13 pm

Mr Edward Vaizey (Wantage) (Con): I want to start with my usual mantra. I have voted for Brexit three times, and I have backed the Prime Minister's withdrawal agreement, but I will be supporting the customs union and common market 2.0 tonight. I want to make it absolutely clear to anyone who is thinking of not doing so that supporting those options will not preclude them from supporting the withdrawal agreement, should it come back as MV4.

It is clear that we need a plan B. The House needs to show what it is in favour of if we cannot get the withdrawal agreement through. The reason for that is that, sadly, certain elements in my party are hellbent on shoving through a no-deal Brexit. I apologise to the Secretary of State for putting him in the same category, but I read on the cover of *The Times* this morning that 170 Conservatives had signed a letter to the Prime Minister—they kept it secret from all their other colleagues, by the way, so keen are they on debate—calling for no deal, despite Parliament's resolution. Parliament has to vote tonight in support of these measures to show that

[Mr Edward Vaizey]

it remains in favour of a reasoned exit from the EU, and it must not be taken in by some of the absurd arguments that we are hearing.

I am confused about how, three years after the referendum, we have got to a place in which no deal turns out to be allegedly what people voted for. I look aghast at some colleagues who I have long admired, who have spent the last three years attacking the judges for daring to suggest that Parliament might have a vote on article 50; praying in aid the manifesto which we lost on, despite having supported for five years a coalition Government who governed on a manifesto that had not existed in 2010; and berating remainers for treating with foreign powers and then merrily going off to the Polish and Hungarian Governments and asking them to force a no-deal Brexit on the United Kingdom.

The fact is that too many of our colleagues have decided that they are the self-appointed interpreters of Brexit, and that anything that gets in their way has to be stopped. When those of us in this House—I count in this almost everyone in the Chamber this evening—want to make reasonable progress and deliver Brexit in a reasonable way, the constitutional experts from the hard Brexit wing emerge to tell us that what we are doing represents the biggest constitutional outrage, oblivious to the fact that one of their colleagues has called for the prorogation of Parliament to get through a hard Brexit, and for a no-confidence vote in the Government from which he still takes the Whip.

The fact is that we seek a compromise. I voted for the withdrawal agreement. It has been supported by Gove, Leadsom, Fox, Grayling and Leigh—all people whose Brexit credentials cannot be second-guessed. For those who worry about the manifesto, it accords with the manifesto. If we cannot have the withdrawal agreement, we need a reasonable way to leave the European Union and deliver on Brexit. According to what the Brexiteers said during the leave campaign, Norway was on the table, Switzerland was on the table and EFTA was on the table. The House wants to leave with a deal, but if we do not show tonight that we are in favour of a deal, I guarantee that my colleagues will do their level best in the next two weeks to drive through a hard, no-deal Brexit.

7.17 pm

Hywel Williams (Arfon) (PC): My remarks will be brief. I will explain why Plaid Cymru will be supporting only one option, and two procedures, as a potential solution to the Brexit deadlock. The Prime Minister insists on bringing forward the same votes on her botched deal, only for the House to reject it again, as has happened twice already. We believe it is essential to hold a people's vote on the final deal. Ultimately, it must be a question of deciding between the arrangements that we know, and that have worked well, although not perfectly, for several decades, and what those who advocate change can devise. It is clear that there is no agreement on what that alternative might be, so what was started by a vote of the people must, I think, be ended by a vote of the people. We will be supporting the motion in the name of the hon. Member for Hove (Peter Kyle) tonight.

The best option for Wales is undoubtedly to remain within the European Union. As our economy is heavily dependent on the ability to export tariff-free to the

European Union, leaving the Union would be damaging for the Welsh economy. It is our responsibility as Plaid Cymru, the party of Wales, to mitigate that as much as possible. Therefore, we will also be supporting the motion in the name of the hon. Member for Grantham and Stamford (Nick Boles), which would continue to ensure membership of the single market and a form of customs union, protecting jobs, protecting workers rights and protecting our economy. It is indeed strikingly similar to the proposals entitled “Securing Wales’ Future” that we brought forward some two years ago and which were largely the fine work of our late friend Steffan Lewis AM, whose untimely death this year deprived us of a great future prospect for our politics. If this is the final position adopted, it is imperative that this too is put to a people's vote.

It is essential that we have a means of protection against crashing out of the European Union with no deal at all. The first step to protect against this must be a meaningful extension of article 50. This has to be obtained from the European Union, but were it to be refused—although I think that is unlikely—it must be up to this House to choose between a no-deal Brexit, which we have already rejected, and revoking article 50 and stopping this careering train in its tracks. Therefore, we will be supporting motion (G) in the name of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Edinburgh South West (Joanna Cherry).

Mr Speaker: Last speech at four minutes—I call Greg Hands.

7.20 pm

Greg Hands (Chelsea and Fulham) (Con): I will begin by answering my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke), who said that he had not heard a single argument against a customs union. I credit him for staying for the whole debate, because I am going to give him plenty. He also said that I had been involved in a filibuster, but my contribution to the business of the House motion lasted for one minute and 13 seconds. That must be the shortest filibuster that there has ever been. I did once speak for one hour and 43 minutes on beer duty, but I do not think that one minute and 13 seconds really counts.

Why is a customs union a very bad idea? Broadly speaking, it would mean a huge loss of control over our economic policy, a decline in our foreign policy influence and a huge democratic deficit. Trade policy is not just about trade deals. It is about much more, which we would be handing over to the European Union without a seat at the table. There are tariffs, remedies and preferences as well as trade agreements, and these would all be given over. The House of Commons would abrogate its responsibility in relation to the UK's trade policy. This is not Andorra or San Marino, which are currently in customs unions with the European Union. This is the world's fifth largest economy.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe and I were on the same side in the referendum in 2016, so I am approaching this debate not as some kind of Brexiteer, but from the position of what makes sense for the UK's trade policy. It makes no sense in our democracy for the House of Commons to vote tonight to hand over control of UK trade policy to Brussels. It would mean that a Maltese Commissioner, a Latvian MEP, a Portuguese Commissioner and a Slovene MEP

would all have more say over UK trade policy than any elected politician, including the UK Prime Minister. That is not democratically sustainable, nor is it sustainable for our foreign policy.

My right hon. and learned Friend and I served in the Government together. At that time, I went into various rooms in foreign countries to speak to foreign Governments, so I know that trade is one of the aspects of leverage that we have. As a member of the European Union, the UK has influence on EU trade policy. That will obviously be gone when we are no longer a member, but under a customs union we would also have no influence over our own trade policy. We would be unable to have those conversations with the Government of the United States when we can say, “Well, if we can do this on some other area, we will have a word in Brussels on this particular trade issue.” All of that would be gone.

Mr Kenneth Clarke: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for giving way because I did not have time to give way to him in the end. I think he would acknowledge that it is a slight exaggeration to say that the British Government would have as little influence over deals being negotiated by the EU as a Latvian MEP if we moved into a customs union. As the right hon. and learned Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Keir Starmer) just said, a big economy such as ours would add to the attractions of the EU market for a negotiating partner, so surely we should put in place a structure giving us far more consultation and involvement in the negotiations than my right hon. Friend is describing—not as good as now, but perfectly adequate.

Greg Hands: I think that is wishful thinking. The European Union is highly likely to prioritise the interests of its members versus the interests of non-members. That has always been the case. There are also serious arguments as to whether European Union rules would even allow a non-member to have an influence on EU trade policy. I am afraid that that is just a fact.

Entering into a customs union would be democratically unsustainable. Tariffs would be set by people who are not accountable to this House or to our constituents. That could be damaging for goods coming into the country, if those people were to set high tariffs on goods that our consumers would quite like access to. It could also happen the other way around with things such as trade remedies, as has been briefly mentioned. All these incredibly important aspects, including trade defences, would be handed over to Brussels. Now, Brussels might look after our trade remedies, but it would not give them priority. It would give the defence of its own industries—the fee-paying members of the European Union—priority over countries such as ours. This would mean that those all-important WTO investigations into, say, the ceramics industry, would be relegated below investigations to protect, for example, the German or Dutch steel industries.

On trade deals, the Turkey trap has been mentioned; this is about the asymmetry. The EU would offer access to our 65 million consumers without necessarily being able to achieve anything in return. I can guarantee that the UK asks would be the ones that would be dropped first, and that the UK items of defence would be the ones that the EU would concede first. It is inevitable because we would not be a fee-paying member of the European Union, so we would not be a priority.

Steve Brine: I am listening very carefully to my right hon. Friend. I have a lot of respect for him, I have read his article and I have listened to every speech so far during today’s debate, so I understand what he does not want, which is a customs union. But bearing in mind that Parliament has yet to decide what it does want—and has rejected all other options, and the Prime Minister’s withdrawal agreement and political declaration—what is he arguing for?

Greg Hands: I continue to argue for the Prime Minister’s agreement, and that is where I think we should head. People talk about a compromise; that is the best compromise, and it is the one that my hon. Friend and I have both voted for.

I am astonished that the Labour Front Benchers are supporting the idea of handing over our trade policy. They were the people most passionately against TTIP, and other trade agreements, due to the access that it would supposedly have given foreign companies to the NHS. As it happens, I do not buy into that idea, but the idea that it will now be fine because we are handing over trade policy to the EU without having a seat at the table is for the birds. I think it was Senator Elizabeth Warren who said,

“If you don’t have a seat at the table, you’re probably on the menu.”

That is exactly what I fear will happen in an EU customs union if motion (C) is passed this evening.

7.27 pm

Stephen Gethins (North East Fife) (SNP): This has been a good debate. I pay tribute to the right hon. Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin) for his innovation, and to other hon. Members for the way in which they have engaged in the process.

Let me be clear: every day I am more and more pleased that Scots voted overwhelmingly to remain in the EU. We could have walked away from all this, washed our hands of it and said that it was nothing to do with us, but we must engage and we have done so at every single step of this sad, sorry process. There are no winners in this tragedy of epic proportions. It is a horror show, and this process is all about us making things less bad, rather than better. However, there is one thing that has come out of this situation; this Government seem to be uniquely bad at minority government and at reaching out to other parties, and this process is forcing us to talk to one another in a more meaningful way.

The Scottish National party did not vote for an EU referendum and we did not vote to trigger article 50, and we can see why. I am pro-European. The EU is a force for good that has made us wealthier, safer, greener and fairer. I have benefited from our membership—from freedom of movement, Erasmus, and the privileges and rights that we have as European citizens. But we have to engage in what you, Mr Speaker, were right to call “part of a process”, so let me turn to the motions before us.

I congratulate my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Edinburgh South West (Joanna Cherry) on her proposal. It is a responsible proposal and frankly, anybody who is opposing it tonight is being irresponsible. No deal is a dangerous, damaging Brexit, and to those who call it a clean Brexit, I say this: it is the messiest Brexit possible. My hon. and learned Friend’s proposal is also the best option, and that is the reason we will back it.

[Stephen Gethins]

The motion would revoke article 50 as a reset clause and, frankly, I am astonished that the Labour party has not been able to support it tonight—I have to say, disappointed is the least I can say on that.

We are also in favour of a people's vote, and I support the motion from the hon. Member for Hove (Peter Kyle). As somebody who wants to campaign to remain in the EU, I would look forward to doing so.

Let me make reference to the motion from the hon. Member for Grantham and Stamford (Nick Boles) and pay tribute to the way that he has engaged with us in this process. I hope that he does not mind me saying that I want to remain in the EU and he wants to leave, and that we disagree profoundly on many issues, but I am very grateful for the way in which he has tried to engage with us, and I know that my hon. Friends are very grateful for the way in which he has conducted this process. We would like a referendum. I also think that a long extension is the right way to take things forward, but his reassurances about freedom of movement and the particular situation in which Scotland finds itself have been incredibly important to us, and I would like to acknowledge that. That is not a wholehearted endorsement and, as he rightly pointed out, there will hopefully be a time further down the line when there are amendments and other proposals to that purpose.

We can no longer be held hostage by a small band of Tory extremists on this. It is not the end of the line today. I appeal for Members to support the motion in the name of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Edinburgh South West. We must find a way forward. We should right now be debating poverty, climate change and austerity, but instead, we are focused on the least worst options and damage limitation. We should not be doing that, and it is time for us to put this Brexit nightmare behind us.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: I call the hon. Member for Camborne and Redruth (George Eustice)—a three-minute limit now applies, as he was advised earlier.

7.31 pm

George Eustice (Camborne and Redruth) (Con): For some time, I favoured a simpler and swifter Brexit, based on our leaving the European Union but rejoining the European Free Trade Association, and in so doing, making our existing rights and obligations as a signatory to the treaty establishing the European economic area operable. It would mean that we would have no customs union and an independent trade policy. We would be outside the common fisheries policy and the common agricultural policy, but we would accept regulatory alignment to reduce border friction. My motion was not selected, but this evening, I will support motion (D) in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham and Stamford (Nick Boles)—the so-called common market 2.0 option—for reasons that I will come on to.

There were two ways to address the issue of Brexit. One was to self-confidently resolve from the beginning that we would leave as a third country and prepare on that basis, and be willing to leave without an agreement if necessary. I would have supported the Prime Minister in that, had she seen that through. However, if the Cabinet always believed that we could not leave without

a deal, it had to recognise that that would require significant compromise with the EU, which in turn would require the development of a cross-party consensus in this House. Now that the Prime Minister and her Cabinet have signalled that they are unwilling to leave under a no-deal scenario, we must try to secure a consensus.

Last Friday, the Prime Minister's withdrawal agreement was defeated for a third time, but the vast majority of Government Members voted for the withdrawal agreement, albeit unenthusiastically in many cases. My contention this evening is that hon. Members who were willing to take a second look at the withdrawal agreement should also take a second look at common market 2.0. Certainly, it envisages a temporary customs union, but so does the withdrawal agreement, first through the implementation period, then through a probable extension to the implementation period, and finally through the backstop. It also envisages some regulatory alignment through membership of EFTA and the EEA, but that would be dealt with expeditiously under the motion. Under the withdrawal agreement, the UK is already committed to aligning its regulations in relevant areas. The extent to which we have border checks would depend on any divergence from that.

I believe that this option provides a way to compromise and a way forward for the House. It is far preferable to motion (C), the proposal for a customs union, which, as hon. Members have pointed out, does not make sense for an independent country such as this. It means that we would have our commercial interests traded away in the interests of other countries, and it would not solve the border issues.

7.34 pm

Mr Ben Bradshaw (Exeter) (Lab): While the headlines that greeted last week's indicative votes, saying that they were a shambles and chaos, were patently ridiculous, given that it was the first time that we were given the opportunity to discuss these options after two and a half years of the Government failing to get a consensus, it would be helpful if we made progress today. As other Members have said, that will involve all of us not just sticking to our first preference but voting for our second preference and, indeed, any preference that we can live with. That is certainly something that I shall be doing. I will support Labour's unanimously agreed conference policy in favour of a public vote, and I am minded to support the motion in the name of the Father of the House. However, I and other hon. Members have concern about that and about the length of the extension, because I do not want the Prime Minister to pocket it, add it to her political declaration and take us out of the European Union on 22 May. I do not think that would be acceptable.

I have similar concerns about the motion in the name of the hon. Member for Grantham and Stamford (Nick Boles). It is better—it takes away all the stuff about the free movement of labour—but it still has only a temporary customs union and could still be bagged by the Prime Minister and added to the political declaration, and we would be out within a few weeks.

Sir Oliver Letwin: I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will recognise that the only way in which the Government can carry this forward, if there is a cross-party consensus,

is by bringing in something like the withdrawal agreement and implementation Bill, which would give his party the opportunity to seek to amend it, no doubt with much support around the House, to prevent the eventualities that he is talking about.

Mr Bradshaw: I very much hope the right hon. Gentleman is right, and I take his point on that. I also want absolutely to agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Derby South (Margaret Beckett). If we get progress today and a majority on one or more of these options, my view is that basing the future of our country on a majority that has been agreed in Parliament among Members of Parliament, for whom it might have been not their first preference but their second or third, will lack not only long-term legitimacy but sustainability. It will be impossible for us as a House or for any Government to take this forward without it being ratified in a confirmatory vote by the British public. That is why, whatever happens tonight, I think we are going to have to accept the principle that the Brexit that is now on offer is so different from the Brexit that was offered in 2016 that it would be undemocratic and illegitimate not to give the people a final say on it.

I want to say one last thing about the motion in the name of the hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh South West (Joanna Cherry). I will support that motion and, as I said earlier, I cannot see any reason for anybody—unless they actively want a no-deal Brexit—not to support it tonight. I hope that Labour Front Benchers might support it tonight and that they will support it on Wednesday, if it comes to that, because we have to have an insurance policy against a no-deal, crash-out Brexit. More than 6 million members of our community are demanding it, and I urge all hon. Members, on both sides of the House—it is only a recommendation for Opposition Members—to vote for the motion and to do so with enthusiasm.

7.38 pm

John Stevenson (Carlisle) (Con): I will be short and to the point. Let us go back to first principles. What was the referendum question about? It was about our membership of the EU. This country decided to revoke that membership, and therefore we must implement that decision. By doing so, we effectively become a sovereign, independent nation. Any sovereign, independent nation gets involved in international relations. We do so through our membership of NATO, which has obligations and benefits. We are also a member of the United Nations, which has responsibilities and clear benefits, and interestingly, we also make a financial contribution.

As an independent, sovereign nation, we will clearly want to enter into free trade agreements. Logic would dictate that we should start with the 30 closest countries, which are in Europe. They are our main trading partners, making up 55% of our trade. In any agreement, we would want no tariffs, regulatory alignment and access to a market of 500 million people, including some of the richest in the world. We would like agriculture and fisheries to be excluded. We would want to make sure that there was a fair competition policy, and we would want state aid rules to be fair to all participants. What a wonderful opportunity for our businesses, what benefits for our country.

Clearly, there may—and should—be some obligations. What about payments and contributions? Quite rightly, we would make contributions to the institutions, and we might even make contributions to poorer regions to help them develop, but there would be a significant saving on the amount we pay under the present arrangements. What about free movement? Yes, we would have to accept there might be free movement, but we might in fact want that, because we need employees for our NHS, workers during the summer and the opportunity to tap into that employment base in Europe. Under this agreement, however, we would also have an emergency brake, so if circumstances were such that we wanted to curtail immigration, we would be in a position to do so.

What about changing the rules? Clearly, under any agreement, there would have to be the ability to change rules, and we would have to accept them, but we could be right in at the beginning helping to frame those rules and making sure they were ones we could tolerate. If we were an independent sovereign nation, however, those rules could only be implemented through an Act of Parliament passed by this House—no other body could impose those rules on us.

What if any of this is ultimately unacceptable to us? We could say, “We’re not going to enact those policies because we are a sovereign Parliament and we are not willing to do so”; we could enter into a negotiation with those countries and try to come to some arrangement; or, as an independent country, we could give one year’s notice and leave. This is quite clearly the best possible outcome. We would confirm the revocation of our membership of the EU but also be part of what I consider to be the best free trade arrangement there is.

7.41 pm

Sammy Wilson (East Antrim) (DUP): Many have lauded today’s exercise, but this is a hurried discussion about a wide range of possible solutions, and yet the House once claimed that the five days, and all of the Committee scrutiny, questions and statements, needed to put in place the Government’s proposal were not enough. Of course, people say, “It’s not our fault. It’s the Government’s fault”, but let us not pretend that we will reach a conclusion on these issues after any significant debate or scrutiny.

The DUP judge all the options on two grounds. First, do they deal with the toxic issue of the backstop? Secondly, will they deliver on what people voted for in the referendum? The customs union option, which we have already debated, would not deal with the EU’s objections—in the terms in which it laid them out in the withdrawal agreement—to the problems along the Irish border. Equally, the proposal in the name of the hon. Member for Grantham and Stamford (Nick Boles) would not deal with the issue, because the EU has made it clear that where there is uncertainty about the future relationship—whether we stay fully in the single market or whatever—it would require the backstop to be in place. Indeed, the withdrawal agreement makes it clear that even if the backstop were to be removed, it could be applied in whole or in part depending on how it judged the settlement.

Mr Fysh: Does the right hon. Gentleman also recall that being in a customs union is not a frictionless state but would require physical movements, certificates on

[Mr Fysh]

every consignment, export declarations, import VAT, up to 200 million transactions per annum, and so on, which is not frictionless trade?

Sammy Wilson: For those reasons, the solutions before us do not deal with the backstop.

Some people would say, “Well, of course, there is no solution, other than staying in the EU, that deals with the backstop”. I do not accept that, first, because of current practice, and secondly, because of what the EU has itself said about what would happen in the case of a no deal: it has argued that it would not need barriers along the border between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic.

Mr Kenneth Clarke: I agree that in addition to a customs union we would probably need some modest regulatory alignment to ensure an open border in Ireland and at Dover, but the regulatory alignment would be the same for the whole of the United Kingdom. I thought the DUP’s objection to the backstop was that it would put in place different arrangements for Northern Ireland from the rest of the UK and therefore place a barrier down the Irish sea. Motion (C) avoids that.

Sammy Wilson: I said there were two criteria: first, would it deal with the issue of difference between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom, and, secondly, would it deliver what people voted for when they voted to leave the EU? Of course, if we stayed in the customs union, or a customs union arrangement, with the degree of regulatory alignment required, that would not deliver what people voted for.

On the motion for a confirmatory public vote, the option emerging today is for the people to be given a choice between a deal based on whatever compromise solution comes from this remain Parliament and remaining, but that is not a choice as far as the vast majority of people who voted to leave the EU are concerned: remain or half remain. People voted the first time to leave, and the idea that we give people such a choice is not acceptable. On the SNP motion, its Members have made no secret of where they stand. They want to stay in the EU and to provide for that situation. For those reasons, we would not vote for the SNP motion either. We will not support any of these arrangements tonight because they would not safeguard the Union and they would not deliver Brexit.

7.46 pm

Robert Halfon (Harlow) (Con): Common market 2.0 is a strong Brexit, a workers’ Brexit, a no-backstop Brexit and a Eurosceptic Brexit. We would be out of the political union—out of the common fisheries policy, the farming policy, home affairs policy, taxation—and we would leave the jurisdiction of the ECJ. We would regain our sovereignty and take back control. We would not be rule takers either. Sitting on the EEA Joint Committee, we could delay, adapt or seek a derogation from any single market law or directive. EFTA states have secured over 1,100 derogations and adaptations. Between them, Norway and Iceland alone have obtained a derogation from EU law on more than 400 occasions. We would also have much greater involvement in the law-making process, with a right to be consulted on any new EU single market law.

Richard Harrington (Watford) (Con): I congratulate my right hon. Friend and his colleagues on the intelligent work they have done on promoting common market 2.0, and other right hon. and hon. Members on today’s debate and the sensible compromises that have been brought forward. Would he agree that it would have been much better for all concerned if the House had had this discussion two years ago to help shape our negotiations with the EU?

Robert Halfon: My hon. Friend is right, though of course hindsight is a wonderful thing.

Under common market 2.0, the UK would regain its seat at global bodies such as the WTO and so be able to shape the global standards that are the basis for many EU and EEA laws. As an EFTA member, we would take back control over immigration. Article 112 of the EEA agreement gives us important safeguards that would allow us to “unilaterally take appropriate measures”. Article 28(3) would allow us to apply brakes “on grounds of public policy, security or health”.

We would also be able to do our own trade deals outside of the EU—EFTA states have 27 deals with 43 other countries.

Common market 2.0 is also a workers’ Brexit that would allow us to keep the high standard of workers’ rights on annual leave, equal pay, maternity and parental leave and many other things, and we would be aligned with the single market, which would safeguard our economy, businesses and jobs. It would also be a no-backstop Brexit because it could be negotiated before the end of the transition period, meaning that the backstop would never need to be activated. The former President of the Court of Justice of the European Free Trade Association States, Carl Baudenbacher, said in an interview that a Norway-style deal could solve our issues relating to the backstop. There would also be no backstop because we would mirror customs union arrangements until the frictionless border problem was solved.

Common market 2.0 is a unifying Brexit. It brings together the support of remainers and leavers across the parties, from my hon. Friend the Member for Camborne and Redruth (George Eustice) to my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Goole (Andrew Percy) and the hon. Members for Manchester Central (Lucy Powell) and for Aberavon (Stephen Kinnock). A report produced by King’s College London about changing attitudes to Brexit shows that the most popular option is a Norway-style deal, and it is gaining traction. Since 2017, support for EFTA has increased to 43%. Among leave voters, 34% opted for the EEA option in 2018, up from 24% in 2017. In the past, it has been supported by many of the principal Eurosceptics,

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

Robert Halfon: I will not, because many other Members wish to speak.

Last week, the Government said that we would leave the European economic area automatically when we left the EU. However, in a January 2017 application for a judicial review of exactly this issue, they conceded in court—as can be seen in paragraph 16(d) of their legal submission—that the legal position argued by the applicant,

Mr Adrian Yalland, that we would not leave the EEA automatically, but would do so by giving an article 127 notice, was in fact correct. The Government's legal submission states

"for the avoidance of doubt, the Secretary does not rely on Article 126 as giving rise to the termination of the EEA Agreement."

Common market 2.0 is a Brexit that can unite the Conservative party, unite the country and unite Parliament. It is a Brexit that is for everyone.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Order. There will now be a two-minute speaking limit.

7.51 pm

Lucy Powell (Manchester Central) (Lab/Co-op): It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Harlow (Robert Halfon). He and I have very different perspectives on this issue—I represent a constituency that voted remain, and I campaigned for remain—but we have reached some of the same conclusions. I think today's debate is about that spirit of compromise, trade-off and working out what each of us can live with, rather than being about our preferred option.

I will vote for all the options on the table, although I am sceptical about some of them; my biggest fear at this stage is that we will be heading for a no-deal Brexit on 12 April unless the House can reach a view about what it is in favour of—ideally more than one thing, but at least something. I think it highly unlikely that the EU will give us a longer extension, or will even contemplate that, if we are still locked into the indecision vortex that we have been locked into for so long.

Everything has its trade-offs, not least when it comes to a complex compromise such as the one put together so carefully by the hon. Member for Grantham and Stamford (Nick Boles) and others. It is easy to target different points and to say, "I am against this little bit and that little bit and therefore I will not vote for it", but nothing is perfect. Let me say to colleagues, as I did last week, that we should all hold our noses when it comes to a number of points that might cause us concern. We must break this deadlock before we crash out a week on Thursday with no deal.

7.53 pm

Mrs Anne Main (St Albans) (Con): Tonight we are being urged to seek compromise, but it is not surprising to note that—I think—only five members of the Labour party voted for the Prime Minister's withdrawal agreement. I changed my vote, because I could see this coming down the road towards me. The agreement is a very imperfect beast and I have received a great many criticisms, but tonight's votes will make the position clear. I do not wish to vote for any options that are on the table, but I am being asked to choose one. Well, I chose the Prime Minister's withdrawal agreement.

Interestingly, two of the motions on which we will have a vote tonight require a withdrawal agreement, as was mentioned earlier. Motions (C) and (D) would not give us control over our immigration. I was surprised to hear the two Members who advocated it talking about brakes—those were weasel words, in my view. I am sorry to have to say that, but trying to reassure Scottish National party Members about the number of people who will come over as a result of freedom of movement

and to reassure Labour Members that there are brakes is playing both ends against the middle. The reality is that we are very unlikely to have control over our migration policy. If that is what Members want, fine, but I do not think that it is what has emerged from the debates.

I am absolutely opposed to a second referendum. I do not believe that we would ask the same question. To all intents and purposes, it would be a completely different referendum this time around. I do not know how anyone could explain on the doorstep why they had chosen to ignore the too-difficult question of implementing the referendum result. Let me read these words to the House, because I agree with every one of them:

"Over 33.5 million people cast a vote...72% of the electorate. Turnout at this level has not been seen since the 1992 General Election...No matter which side of the argument won, it was inevitable that there would be people left disappointed. That is the nature of debate, elections and referendums. It is fundamentally undemocratic to argue that the process should be re-run because the outcome was not what some people wanted...arguments over turnout, the majority, or the accuracy or otherwise of statements made throughout the course of the campaign do not invalidate the result."

Those were your words, Mr Speaker, and I agree with every single one of them.

7.55 pm

Chris Ruane (Vale of Clwyd) (Lab): As politicians, we practise the art of politics, and the art of politics is the art of compromise. I have sat here for four and a half hours, and during that time, "compromise" is the word that has been used most often. It is through compromise that we will make progress, and we have made no progress for nearly three years. I think that one of the main reasons for that is the hubris—the arrogance and over-confidence—of the Prime Minister, the former Prime Minister, and leading Conservatives.

When David Cameron decided to call a referendum, Jean-Claude Juncker asked him, "Why have you done this?" David Cameron replied, "Don't worry—I can deliver a 66% 'yes' vote." Juncker said, "I could not get that in Luxembourg." There was also hubris on the Prime Minister's part when she called for an election in 2017. I am not criticising her for that, because by calling for the election she allowed me to get in through the back door. However, she thought that she would secure a majority of 160, and she lost her majority. The Chief Whip said today that she should have recognised the result of that election. I congratulate him on saying that: I think that he is a very wise man, and a very brave man. The same hubris was practised by the Prime Minister's Ministers. Who remembers these quotations? "The Brexit negotiations will take 10 minutes," said Peter Lilley. The free trade agreement with the EU would be

"one of the easiest in human history",

according to the right hon. Member for North Somerset (Dr Fox).

The election result was very close. The Prime Minister could have reached out across the Chamber and across the country, but she failed to do so, and that is why we are here today. I urge all Members to vote for compromise tonight. I will be voting for all four of the options that have been put before us, and I ask other Members to do the same.

7.57 pm

Vicky Ford (Chelmsford) (Con): There are huge divisions in our country. Although I voted remain, I do not support a second referendum or revoking previous decisions because I do not believe that that would heal our divisions. However, having no deal with our largest trading partner is unacceptable. It poses huge risks to our economy and creates uncertainty on the Irish border.

I voted three times for the Prime Minister's deal. It is a bespoke deal and to me it is the best option, but it has failed three times. Saying no to everything does not work. We need a compromise and I will support a customs union this evening. That is not the same as the customs union that we are in today. We can be in a customs union, but out of the common fisheries policy, the common agricultural policy and free movement. All those were big issues in the referendum. Yes, we would have the same tariffs on goods, but we would not have to follow the same regulation on goods. On services—the key part of our economy—we would be free to make our own regulations, and our own trade deals with other parts of the world. A customs union does not involve handing over our trade policy to Brussels because a country Britain's size would influence Brussels policy. Even Turkey retains its own say on trade sanctions.

The fundamental issue is deliverability. We could be in a customs union, combined with the withdrawal agreement, and deal with everything with the future framework. That could all be done by 22 May and we would not need ever longer extensions or another European election.

7.59 pm

Anna Soubry (Broxtowe) (Ind): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Chelmsford (Vicky Ford). I suggest that there is the real rub of what is going on, or the danger we face tonight if we do not look at what is behind what seems like a lot of sensible compromise. My real fear is that unless we vote for motions (E) and (G), which I will vote for, the Government will, as the right hon. Member for Exeter (Mr Bradshaw) phrased it, put it in the bag and table yet again, for another vote, the Prime Minister's withdrawal agreement and slip into the political declaration either the customs union or the so-called common market 2.0. I will not vote for the customs union because it does not deliver the frictionless trade that our manufacturing sector desperately needs. My concern about motion (D) is exactly that.

Ian C. Lucas (Wrexham) (Lab): Compromise!

Anna Soubry: The hon. Gentleman says "Compromise", and I hear exactly what he says, but it would not be in the withdrawal—

8 pm

Debate interrupted (Order, this day).

Mr Speaker: Colleagues, voting forms are available from the Vote Office and in the Division Lobbies. As colleagues know, voting will start at the end of this statement/announcement and will continue for 30 minutes from the moment it starts.

I will now repeat what I said the other day, for the avoidance of doubt and for the sake of clarity. The forms look very similar to deferred Division forms, except that they are blue, and they will list the title and letter of the selected motions. The text of the motions is on the Order Paper. Members with surnames from A to K should hand in their forms in the Aye Lobby at the relevant desk for their surname and Members with surnames from L to Z should hand in their forms in the No Lobby at the relevant desk. As with deferred Divisions, Members may not—I repeat may not—vote Aye and No to the same motion. If this happens, the vote will not be counted. As with deferred Divisions, Members may not hand in forms on behalf of other Members. Each Member must hand in his or her own form. Members with proxy votes in operation will need to get their nominated proxy to hand in their form.

A short note is available in the Vote Office confirming those arrangements. I will announce the results in the Chamber as soon as they are ready. Those results will be published in the same way as deferred Divisions on the Commons debates website and app and in *Hansard*, showing how each hon. Member voted on each motion. Voting is due to start now and colleagues have 30 minutes to cast their votes.

8.1 pm

Sitting suspended.

Business without Debate

Mr Speaker: Motions 3 to 7 not moved.

SCOTTISH AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Ordered,

That Kirstene Hair be discharged from the Scottish Affairs Committee and Paul Masterton be added.—(*Bill Wiggin, on behalf of the Selection Committee.*)

Mr Speaker: Order. I will now suspend the House until the outcomes of the votes on motions relating to the United Kingdom's withdrawal from and future relationship with the European Union are available. The Division bells will be rung 10 minutes before the House resumes.

8.33 pm

Sitting suspended.

EU: Withdrawal and Future Relationship (Votes)

10.4 pm

Mr Speaker: I can now announce the outcome of the Divisions on motions relating to the United Kingdom's withdrawal from and future relationship with the European Union.

In respect of Mr Kenneth Clarke's motion (C)—customs union—the Ayes were 273 and the Noes were 276, so the Noes have it.

In respect of Mr Nicholas Boles's motion (D)—common market 2.0—the Ayes were 261 and the Noes were 282, so the Noes have it.

In respect of Mr Peter Kyle's motion (E)—confirmatory public vote—the Ayes were 280 and the Noes were 292, so the Noes have it.

In respect of Joanna Cherry's motion (G)—parliamentary supremacy—the Ayes were 191 and the Noes were 292, so the Noes have it.

The lists showing how hon. Members voted will be published in the usual way on the CommonsVotes app and website, and in *Hansard*.

The Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Stephen Barclay): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. This is now the second time the House has considered a wide variety of options for a way forward. It has once again failed to find a clear majority for any of the options, yet the result of the House's decision on Friday not to endorse the withdrawal agreement means that the default legal position is that the UK will leave the EU in just 11 days' time. To secure any further extension, the Government will have to put forward a credible proposition to the EU as to what we will do with that extra time. This House has continuously rejected leaving without a deal, just as it has rejected not leaving at all. Therefore, the only option is to find a way through that allows the UK to leave with a deal. The Government continue to believe that the best course of action is to do so as soon as possible. If the House were to agree a deal this week, it may still be possible to avoid holding European parliamentary elections. Cabinet will meet in the morning to consider the results of tonight's vote and how we should proceed.

Mr Speaker: Thank you, Secretary of State.

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. It is disappointing that no solution has won a majority this evening, but I remind the House that the Prime Minister's unacceptable deal has been overwhelmingly rejected three times. The margin of defeat for one of the options tonight was very narrow indeed, and the Prime Minister's deal has been rejected by very large majorities on three occasions. If it is good enough for the Prime Minister to have three chances at her deal, I suggest that possibly the House should have a chance to consider again the options that we had before us today in a debate on Wednesday, so that the House can succeed where the Prime Minister has failed, in presenting a credible economic relationship with Europe for the future that prevents us from crashing out with no deal.

Mr Speaker: I thank the Leader of the Opposition.

Ian Blackford (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. It would indeed be an outrage if the Government sought to bring back their deal. It really is about time they accepted reality: the deal they have put forward has been defeated three times, with the largest defeat in parliamentary history—*[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. No, the right hon. Gentleman is entitled to be heard and, believe me, notwithstanding the shouting from a sedentary position, he will be heard. That is the be all and end all of it. It is as simple as that: the right hon. Gentleman will be heard.

Ian Blackford: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I acknowledge that I am disappointed that we have not won tonight in respect of revoking article 50, having a people's vote or having a single market and customs union, but the reality is that two of the votes were won by a very small number. We need to try to see where we can find consensus and work together.

Fundamentally for those of us who represent seats in Scotland, we voted to remain in the European Union. Tonight, a vast majority of Scottish MPs voted to revoke article 50. A vast majority of Scottish MPs voted for a people's vote. A vast majority of Scottish MPs voted to stay in the single market and customs union. It is crystal clear to us from Scotland that our votes in this House are disrespected, and it is becoming increasingly clear to the people of Scotland that, if we want to secure our future as a European nation, we are going to have to take our own responsibilities. The case is this: sovereignty rests with the people of Scotland, not with this House. The day is coming when we will determine our own future, and it will be as an independent country.

Mr Speaker: Thank you.

Nick Boles (Grantham and Stamford) (Con): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I have given everything to an attempt to find a compromise that can take this country out of the European Union while maintaining our economic strength and our political cohesion. I accept that I have failed. I have failed chiefly because my party refuses to compromise. I regret, therefore, to announce that I can no longer sit for this party.

Mr Speaker: I thank the hon. Gentleman for what he has told the House.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Of course I shall come to other Members. I call Sir Vince Cable.

Sir Vince Cable (Twickenham) (LD): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. It is even clearer than it was the last time we had indicative votes that one compromise option has substantial support. There is the largest number of votes in the House for a people's vote—larger than last time. Is it not possible to combine the two and therefore find a way forward through consensus?

Mr Speaker: The right hon. Gentleman's question is of course of a rhetorical character. It invites no response from me, but he has registered his view, upon which I am sure colleagues will reflect.

Nigel Dodds (Belfast North) (DUP): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Just to remind the House, is it not the case that the only proposition that has ever had a majority in this House is the Brady amendment? That is a fact. Whatever Members may think or say, that is the proposition that has had a majority in this House and that could allow the withdrawal agreement to go through. With Chancellor Merkel due to visit the Irish Prime Minister this Thursday, there is still an opportunity for the Prime Minister and the Government to prosecute the issue that has bedevilled her withdrawal agreement throughout: the backstop. That issue still needs to be addressed. If it is addressed, we can be in business.

Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Having looked at the figures, I reinforce the comments from the right hon. Member for Twickenham (Sir Vince Cable). I regret what the hon. Member for Grantham and Stamford (Nick Boles) has had to do, but were he to link to his proposal the opportunity to have a public vote, we would have a huge majority in this House. The idea that we would avoid doing that for fear of the democratic moment of the European elections is frankly absurd. Why would we be afraid of one democratic event and for fear of that avoid a further one? That makes no sense. The Prime Minister's deal is dead. We should look at where the majorities in this House lie, and they lie with a softer Brexit going against a people's vote to the country.

Mr Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Kenneth Clarke (Rushcliffe) (Con): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. With the help of the people who work with me, I have got a damn sight nearer to a majority in this House than anybody else has so far, apart from the rather curious and now historic Malthouse compromise, which I fear is dead. Three votes is quite near.

We cannot go on with everybody voting against every proposition. The difficulty is that there are people who want a people's vote who would not vote for my motion because they thought they were going to get a people's vote. There were people—the Scottish nationalists—who wanted common market 2.0, so would not vote for my motion. All of them had nothing against mine. If they continue to carry on like that, they will fail. I say to the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Caroline Lucas) that if we added the people's vote to a motion such as mine, we would lose votes from all over the place, and from the Labour party. We would lose more than we would gain. Those Members should accept that they do not have a majority yet for the people's vote and vote for something that they have no objection to as a fall-back position. That is politics. I sometimes think that this particular Parliament in which I find myself sitting is not very political at the moment, and it is confounding the general public.

Mr Speaker: Thank you.

Anna Soubry (Broxtowe) (Ind): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. What you do not know is that a week ago an effort was made to put forward composite motions. Unfortunately, despite the efforts of a number of us, that was resisted. However, as the Father of the House rightly identifies, there is undoubtedly a way of getting this together—that is why this is a three-stage process.

[*Interruption.*] Hon. Members should just let me explain this. As the Father of the House knows, the reason why many of us could not support the customs union was that it did not have the regulatory alignment that the Labour party had put forward, which unfortunately it did not get round to tabling anything today. If we put the customs union, regulatory alignment and the people's vote together—[*Interruption.*] Hon. Members could then vote against it. If we look at the figures—[*Interruption.*] If Members could stop yelling in my ear, I would say that there is every chance on Wednesday that we will find a compromise.

Mr Speaker, another thing needs to be said. I am very upset, as I am sure many others are, that the hon. Member for Grantham and Stamford (Nick Boles), who is a fine champion for his community, has made the decision that he has. He is wrong, because he has been right in what he has tried to achieve. The reason his motion failed was that it did not have the longevity of being in the withdrawal agreement, and on that basis, again, a compromise does exist that can get a majority.

Mr Speaker: Thank you.

Dr Julian Lewis (New Forest East) (Con): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. May I, within the rules of order, just point out that a clear majority of Conservative MPs—no fewer than 159 including tellers—voted a week ago that we should leave the European Union without a deal? I find it very strange that everybody assumes that, because of the House's position as a whole, that cannot be a way forward. If it was always going to be left to the House of Commons, dominated as it is by remainers, to have the final say, there was never any hope for a referendum to achieve anything whatsoever.

Mr Speaker: The right hon. Gentleman has made his own point in his own inimitable way, and he gives every indication of being well satisfied with his prodigious efforts this evening.

Hilary Benn (Leeds Central) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. The consequence of tonight's votes is that the House has voted in favour of nothing. As a result, in 11 days' time, the United Kingdom will leave the European Union without an agreement unless the Prime Minister, who has just left the Chamber, acts. One thing that we have now voted three times to tell the Prime Minister is that we will not accept leaving the European Union without an agreement—the last time it was by 400 votes to 160. The Prime Minister indicated a week ago that she would respect the will of the House. Mr Speaker, has she given you any indication that she intends to make a statement from the Dispatch Box to the effect that she will now be writing to the European Council to seek a further extension to article 50?

Mr Speaker: The short answer to the right hon. Gentleman is that the Prime Minister has given me no such indication and I have received no such indication from any other Minister. Indeed, we have just had the results of the votes—I announced them only a matter of minutes ago—and there has been no communication to me from Government Ministers, but if that were to change I would of course notify the House, or it would become apparent to the House, ere long.

Vicky Ford (Chelmsford) (Con): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. It is probably worth recalling that last Friday the withdrawal agreement negotiated by our Prime Minister achieved more votes than any of the options we voted on tonight.

Mr Speaker: That requires no response, but I am grateful to the hon. Lady.

Peter Kyle (Hove) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I think that now is the time for a little reflection and humility. I would have expected a little more humility from the Brexit Secretary in his statement, because when it comes to the need for a majority, we are all in this together, and that includes Government, too.

The bottom line is that in the last two sessions of these indicative votes, the proposition that my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgfield (Phil Wilson) and I have offered has come top, and tonight came within eight votes of the Secretary of State's own proposition—the proposition put forward by Government. Is it not now the case that if there is not a majority for anything outright, we have to start looking to see how minorities in this House can be brought together in order to get the blockage within the House of Commons sorted, so that we can move forward, our politics can move forward, the Commons can move forward, and our country can get the resolution it needs? Mr Speaker, can you help guide us as to how Government can start acting with humility, reaching out and working with those of us with propositions rather than sticking to their guns?

Mr Speaker: I fear that the hon. Gentleman invests me with powers that I do not claim to possess. It is late at night. I think we have to await, as Macmillan used to say, events, and see what transpires tomorrow. God willing, I shall be in my place, and I will always seek to facilitate the House, which is it is the responsibility of the Speaker to do, but I cannot say with any confidence what will happen, and in that respect I think I am, frankly, not in a minority. I think that most colleagues would say with confidence that they do not know what is to follow.

Sir William Cash (Stone) (Con): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. In the light of the word “blockage” that was just used, and the suggestion that somehow or other there is something wrong with our democratic system, may I simply say this? I recall the fact that section 1 of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 quite clearly states, as a matter of law, that the European Communities Act 1972 is repealed on exit day, and if that exit day happens to be 12 April, so be it. That is the law of the land. That is something that we ought to hang on to, because it is the anchor of the referendum in which the British people voted.

Mr Speaker: I thank the hon. Gentleman. He has represented his own position correctly, and I know that because I have heard him make that point with comparable eloquence on several occasions. Whether he has entirely fairly characterised the position of the hon. Member for Hove (Peter Kyle), I do not know, but the hon. Gentleman will doubtless study the *Official Report* and make his own assessment.

Helen Goodman (Bishop Auckland) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. This is obviously a very disquieting evening for all of us. Unlike some other Members who have made points of order, I am not going to promote the merits, great though they are, of the motion put forward by the Father of the House. I just want to point out that the Government have an opportunity tomorrow to bring something forward to resolve this. The House has another day on Wednesday, and we might consider how we best use that, perhaps by looking at some different way of addressing these problems. We have got the time booked, so although this is desperate and last-minute, it is not the end.

Mr Speaker: Thank you. I am grateful to the hon. Lady.

Sir Peter Bottomley (Worthing West) (Con): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. This point of order may involve you. The motion that had the greatest number of votes was motion (E), on a confirmatory public vote. Although, as my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Vicky Ford) pointed out, that was fewer than the number of votes for the Prime Minister's deal on Friday, may I invite you to get party leaders together to see whether there could be a run-off between those two, with a free vote across the House?

Mr Speaker: I always reflect on points that colleagues make to me, but I am not anticipating what might happen in days to come. The hon. Gentleman has made his own point in his own way. I do not mean it in any unkind or discourteous sense, but it is a point I have heard floated in parts of the popular prints in recent days; that does not invest it with the validity that it might otherwise lack.

Gareth Snell (Stoke-on-Trent Central) (Lab/Co-op): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I profess myself upset that the Father of the House's motion missed getting a vote by three votes, particularly given that five members of my party who profess to want a softer Brexit voted against it and could have made a decisive impact on tonight's decision. Given that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bishop Auckland (Helen Goodman) said, we are considering this again on Wednesday, can you give us an early indication of what procedural wisdom will look like, when motions can start to be tabled and whether there will be a new way of looking at this, in order to come to a conclusive outcome?

Mr Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. The only early indication I can give him is that I think it is reasonable, on the basis of what was passed earlier today in the business of the House motion, to suppose that the right hon. Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin) will be carefully contemplating the intended procedure for Wednesday. Specifically, I think it is reasonable to expect that he will be looking to table a business of the House motion and, from that, the hon. Gentleman will gather what the right hon. Member for West Dorset has in mind.

Colleagues will be able to take a view about that. Moreover, just as colleagues have spoken to each other in recent days to bid for support for particular options, it is open to colleagues to communicate with each other about these matters before Wednesday, and I rather imagine that they will do so. Precisely what procedure is

[Mr Speaker]

envisaged I cannot say, nor is it self-evident that there can be only one procedure proposed. There may well be a number of alternative ideas circulating in colleagues' minds, and I cannot say more than that. We will have to see. [Interruption.] There is nothing very significant about that. I hear a knowing grunt from someone on the Treasury Bench as though something remarkably significant or suspicious has been said, but neither of those things is so.

Graham P. Jones (Hyndburn) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. To follow on from what my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent Central (Gareth Snell) said about the influence that you may have on the business of the House motion on Wednesday, we need now to be brutal about this. The Prime Minister's deal was last defeated by 58 votes—that is the worst option, so that should get taken off the table. Are we going to have an eliminatory process? Common market 2.0 lost by 21 votes. A confirmatory ballot lost by 12 votes. Revocation lost by 11 votes. Clearly top of the table was the Father of the House's motion on the customs union. Are we going to have a brutal process whereby we get to one outcome on Wednesday, and can you influence that? It needs to happen.

Mr Speaker: I do not cavil at the hon. Gentleman's point, and I do not want him to think I am being pedantic, but I dislike the use of the word "brutal". I am not in favour of brutality. I am in favour of clarity, of decisiveness and of resolution.

Graham P. Jones: I apologise for that.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Gentleman does not need to apologise. In so far as that requires some concentrated thinking, I agree. Some colleagues will be pleased with the outcome of tonight's votes. [Interruption.] The hon. Member for Shipley (Philip Davies) is noisily yelling his approval of that observation, beaming as he stands by me. Other colleagues are disappointed. We are where we are. Nothing has won tonight.

In what do I take comfort? Well, Roger Federer put on a majestic masterclass in Miami last night. I am happy about that, and of course I am happy that, although nothing won tonight here in this Chamber, at the Emirates Arsenal won 2-0. I just have to content myself with that for tonight—I appreciate that Newcastle Members will not be so pleased—and we shall have to see what happens tomorrow. I am sorry that I cannot add to that, but I feel that colleagues have ventilated their points, and it is right that they should do so. I do not think we can advance matters further this evening, so I suggest that we look to get a decent night's rest, recharge our batteries and try to do our duty with resolution but good humour tomorrow.

Blaydon Quarry Landfill Site

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

Mr Speaker: If colleagues who are toddling out of the Chamber, including past the hon. Lady who has the Adjournment debate, could do so quickly and quietly, that would be greatly appreciated.

10.29 pm

Liz Twist (Blaydon) (Lab): I am very pleased to have secured this Adjournment debate on the Blaydon Quarry landfill site. It is a matter of great concern to my constituents in the communities surrounding the site.

My constituency has had more than its fair share of landfill sites, both in the past and more recently; there are landfill sites on either side of the main road from the town of Blaydon out to the west, so complaints about them are a constant. In 2016, there was a major incident at one of them, Path Head, when for months a heavy, sulphurous smell hung over large parts of Ryton, causing intense concern about the impact on health and seriously affecting residents' ability to enjoy a normal life. Thankfully, that site has now closed and is being restored, but it has left an enduring concern about the effect that landfill sites have on our communities. In particular, it has had an effect on the established former mining community of Stargate and Crookhill, within just a few hundred yards of the site, which have had to endure odours and other problems throughout its life, but it also affects the Stella area. It is in that context that this debate and the concern of my constituents must be understood.

I turn to the subject of tonight's debate. Blaydon Quarry is a landfill site in the west of my constituency. It is located in the village of Greenside, but is surrounded by the communities of Greenside, Winlaton, Barlow, Stargate, Ryton, Blaydon Burn and Blaydon itself. It is very close to each of those communities, and each has felt the impact of the site over many years. Over the years, there have been a number of different site operators—Premier Waste, Niramax, Octagon Green Solutions—each bringing its own problems. The site is now owned by a company called Recyclogical, but following the refusal of a transfer of the environmental permit to it last year, Octagon Green Solutions remains as the permit holder and site operator—an issue to which I intend to return later.

Over the period that my predecessor, Dave Anderson, was the Member of Parliament for Blaydon, and while I was a local councillor, residents have consistently—perhaps I should say, persistently—complained about the Blaydon Quarry landfill site, so this is by no means a new issue, but it is a very current one.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I spoke to the hon. Lady beforehand to seek her permission to intervene. As her case is very similar to ones I have had in my constituency of Strangford, I wanted to make a short intervention. Does the hon. Lady agree that it is essential that quarry landfill sites are held to the highest standards when it comes to neighbourhood issues? A little common sense and perhaps a little money as well from quarries in due season would go a long way in ensuring good neighbour relations and, subsequently, result in fewer complaints. In the council I served on, Ards Borough Council—it is now Ards and North Down Borough

Council—there were some issues, and we were able to have those issues addressed. Does the hon. Lady agree that people have a right to live in peace at night and without offensive smells, no matter what their postcode is?

Liz Twist: I agree, of course, with the hon. Gentleman's last statement, but I disagree with some of his earlier comments, because I think the time is now ripe for us to go beyond monitoring, controlling or whatever. We need a totally different approach to landfill for the benefit of our communities.

As I was saying, over the period that my predecessor was in post and I was councillor, there were persistent complaints about the site, so it is by no means a new issue, but it is a very current one. Most recently, about two months ago, as they have done on many previous occasions, many residents contacted me about a bad smell in the air. I call it a smell, because calling it an odour, as the official documents do, is far too polite. In fact, residents did not need to contact me about it, as I could most definitely smell it myself when I was at home. The smell was persistent and very unpleasant. Some people reported the smell to the Environment Agency's incident hotline, and many more complained to me, to councillors and to neighbours.

I raised the issue with the Environment Agency team, who were responsive, as always. Residents were very pleased to hear in mid-February that the site had been stopped from receiving waste for a period of up to two weeks while the operators fixed the problem of the smells from uncovered waste that were affecting our communities. The required action was taken and the tip reopened for waste, but problems continue.

That was just one of the latest incidents at the site that have blighted our communities over several years and, frankly, our communities have had enough. They have had enough of bad smells, enough of heavy vehicles on our country lanes, enough of litter from the site and trucks being scattered in our fields, and enough of dust from the site. They have had enough of the site and want to see it closed, and so do I. That will come as no surprise to the site owner or operator as I have made my views clear in the site liaison meetings, when we have had them—they are often very heated—and elsewhere.

In early 2015, during a period of high winds and despite advice from the Environment Agency, there was a huge escape of litter from the site, with litter sprayed around the hedges, in fields and in trees. Our usually green and pleasant area was festooned with rubbish. It was, frankly, disgusting and not easy to clear, and still today the tatter of plastic bags can be seen in trees and bushes around the periphery of the site. It created a huge outcry, with residents protesting, angry at this littering of their local environment. It was environmental vandalism of the highest order. No lay person could fail to see the devastating nature of this rubbish escape. Astonishingly, after consideration by the Environment Agency legal team, we were told that it was not possible to prosecute that breach, even though the scale of the devastation was clear to local residents.

Over the years, there have been other issues too. The Winlaton Action Group was set up by local residents after many people found dust settling on their cars and became extremely concerned about the impact that this and other issues at the site were having on their health. That remains a concern for local people, particularly in

the context of the major problem that I mentioned earlier at the Path Head site causing really bad smells over a long period.

Another issue is the height to which rubbish is being tipped. I met some residents recently in Stargate, Ryton, who showed me photographs of an uninterrupted view past the landfill site over to a neighbouring village. When we lifted up our eyes from the photograph, all we could see was a mound of rubbish with a digger on top. The Environment Agency has been out to check the height and I understand that some action is being taken, but the tip has changed our local landscape.

Then there are the large lorries that transport waste from other parts of the country to Blaydon. It is not even our rubbish that is being tipped at the site—it comes from all over. Our waste goes to an energy from waste site under the South Tyne and Wear Waste Management Partnership. Not only is it inefficient for trucks to transport rubbish for miles and miles, but it is a hazard on the narrow roads immediately surrounding the site, creating mud and dust for other road users.

The Environment Agency, with whom I meet frequently, has sent me a list of enforcement actions taken since 2012—I am sure that the Minister will have a copy. It shows that there have been a number of formal interventions as well as the usual monitoring and advice that takes place.

In December 2014, an enforcement notice was served under regulation 36 of the environmental permitting regulations requiring actions following an escape of litter from the site. That ensured that any escaped litter was collected and that the site-specific litter management plan was revised. In March 2015, another enforcement notice was served under regulation 36 requiring actions following a further escape of litter from the site. That ensured that the further escaped litter was collected and that the site-specific litter management plan was again revised. Additional control measures were installed on the site.

In February 2016, a regulation 36 enforcement notice was served requiring the progression of engineering works to manage landfill gas. This notice ensured additional gas extraction wells were installed within a recently completed area on the site. In July 2017, a regulation 36 enforcement notice was served requiring improvements to the leachate management system on site. This notice ensured that more leachate was removed from the site, rather than just being recirculated around the site. In January and February 2018, two further regulation 36 enforcement notices were served, requiring the implementation of additional engineering works to manage landfill gas. These notices were served following odour issues identified from landfill gas emissions. The notices required the installation of additional gas extraction and further areas of capping.

In February 2019, a regulation 37 suspension notice was served, preventing waste inputs while remedial works were carried out. The notice was served following complaints of odour from the site. The odour complaints were linked to an area of waste not properly tipped or covered. The notice required that this area of waste be re-profiled and covered appropriately. The notice was served on 19 February. The work was completed and the notice lifted on 26 February. As we can see, there is a whole series of issues concerning smells, leachate and litter, on top of the day-to-day concerns residents have raised and continue to raise through liaison meetings and meetings with the Environment Agency.

[Liz Twist]

Of course, it is not just the Environment Agency that is concerned with regulating the site. Gateshead Council also has a part to play through planning enforcement. There is quite a catalogue here, too. In May 2018, there was a report to the planning committee which summarised the outstanding issues, including: restoration of some completed areas; ecological provisions, including nesting for sand martins; and, perhaps most importantly, proposals for the drainage scheme on site. As late as last week, the council issued the company with a letter refusing to discharge all but one of the planning issues that had been raised. All that came after a stop notice was issued by the council in April 2018 requiring the removal of caravans from the site. The caravans were removed, but really they should never have been there in the first place.

On top of that, we have a very real concern that the split between the operator holding the environmental permit and the land owner, who appears to be actually working the site, represents a real danger for the effective running of the site. There have now been three applications for the transfer of the environmental permit and none has been granted. That has to raise real questions about the sustainability of the current arrangements and people are quite understandably concerned that this exposes our communities to further risks, as clearly the current operator, having sold the site itself, wishes to give up the permit.

My constituents and I are well and truly fed up with the impact the landfill site is having on our environment and our lives. We just cannot understand why repeated breaches on planning and environmental grounds cannot lead to the landfill site being closed, safely, once and for all, and the site restored. I should say that in my experience, staff at both the Environment Agency and Gateshead Council have been very good and helpful in pursuing the issues we raise, but we have had enough and believe that the site should be closed forthwith.

So what am I asking the Minister for? First, to strengthen the law covering landfill and waste sites to ensure that, where there are recurring problems, communities do not have to continue to endure the problems arising from landfill sites. We need much stronger powers for the Environment Agency to act to really protect our environment and to deal with landfill operators that fail to meet their duties as good neighbours.

Secondly, I ask the Minister to work with her colleagues in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to strengthen planning enforcement, but moreover to ensure that no landfill sites should be allowed so very near to where people live, as is the case in Blaydon. There are families living immediately around the perimeter of the site who, over the years, have suffered from incidents directly affecting their properties, as have the villages and the people who live in communities just that little bit further out. Living next to a landfill site is never going to be pleasant and we must tighten up planning to ensure that this can never happen again.

Thirdly, I ask the Minister to take practical and legislative steps to end the use of landfill sites by strengthening environmental legislation and reducing waste to landfill. Fourthly, and perhaps most importantly for my community, I ask her to work with me, my constituents and statutory bodies to see that the Blaydon

quarry landfill site, like the neighbouring Path Head quarry site, is closed safely and restored, to bring an end to the years of misery my constituents have had to endure.

10.45 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Dr Thérèse Coffey): I congratulate the hon. Member for Blaydon (Liz Twist) on securing this debate. She has spoken with eloquence and passion in representing her constituents here today. She referred to some of the work that was undertaken by her predecessor, Dave Anderson, who was also very proactive on the subject. She is right to ask why it is taking years to sort the situation out. If she does not mind, I will set out a few ways in which action has been taken and is still proactively under way, as I think she is aware.

It is important to ensure we have clear and strong environmental regulation and planning controls that work for the environment, for people and for business. Twice in her four questions, the hon. Lady asked about practical and legislative steps, including stronger powers for the Environment Agency. I am pleased to say that, during the next Session of Parliament, in the Environment Bill, we hope to introduce powers to tackle some of the issues that she raised. An ongoing policy, and a success of both the former Labour Government and this Government, is the gradual and significant reduction in the amount of waste that goes to landfill. That has largely been driven by the success of the landfill tax. We will continue to do more to try to increase recycling.

A well-functioning and regulated waste industry is essential for us. It enables us to maximise the efficient use of our resources and to minimise the impacts of waste on the environment. The Environment Agency is the regulator for the sector in England. The hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) referred to an issue in his constituency, and he is right that neighbourhood relations are important for any waste operator. He will be aware that a different regulator applies. He mentioned strong community relations, which were made possible by the council on which he used to serve.

The Environment Agency issues environmental permits for waste operators and regulates against them. It particularly targets operators that do not comply with the regulatory framework and that, in turn, cause suffering to nearby communities. Environmental permits are issued for regulated activities carried out at sites. In the case of a permitted landfill facility, such as that located at Blaydon quarry, the permit will cover hazards and risks arising from the activities on the site of the landfill. The current permit has been in place since landfill activity recommenced in 2004. The permit allows for the deposit of up to 329,000 tonnes of non-hazardous waste within engineered cells on the site.

Environmental permits do not cover wider planning controls, and nor should they if we are to avoid unnecessary regulatory duplication. The site has planning permission to allow landfilling, and that was issued and is governed by Gateshead Council. I am conscious of the hon. Lady's request to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government about enforcement and location. We believe that councils already have the opportunity to do both those things. I recognise the challenges on historic sites where relocation is no longer necessarily possible.

In May 2012 the permit was transferred from the initial operator to Niramax Group Ltd. It was transferred again in May 2013 to Octagon Green Solutions Ltd, which continues to operate the site today. In 2017, two applications were made to transfer the permit, first to the landowner, Recycological Ltd, and secondly to a company called Midwest Solutions Ltd. A third transfer application was received in September 2018, again in relation to Midwest Solutions Ltd. All those applications have been refused, most recently just last week, because the Environment Agency has not been satisfied that the companies had sufficient competence to comply with the permit.

It is right that only properly competent people can hold a waste permit. In this instance, the Environment Agency was concerned that the applicants lacked the ability to comply with permits and to run a waste site effectively. That is in line with our work to tighten up the waste permitting and exemptions regime by raising the bar for people to operate in the sector.

Understandably, the hon. Lady read out a litany of non-compliance, which resulted in notices being served. Between 2014 and 2018, the Environment Agency served a series of enforcement notices for the identified issues on the Blaydon site. Those breaches included litter escaping from the site, for which additional control measures were installed, including the improved management of landfill gas and leachate. There were also additional engineering works following odour issues. In February 2019, it was found that odour issues were coming from an area of waste that was not properly tipped or covered, and a regulation 37 suspension notice was served to prevent waste input while remedial works were carried out. As the hon. Lady pointed out, that notice was served on 19 February, and the work was completed and the notice lifted on 26 February.

The hon. Lady is right to point out that there have been a number of breaches. By and large, the company—perhaps cleverly—has responded quite quickly to those breaches. However, we would of course rather that the breaches did not happen in the first place. A number of planning contraventions on the site are also being investigated by Gateshead Council. The Environment Agency and Gateshead Council work closely together on the site and have ongoing engagement with the local community, including through attending regular meetings. I encourage Gateshead Council to do more on planning enforcement in this regard.

The Environment Agency is concerned about the level of non-compliance with the permit. Following the issues that led it to serve a suspension notice in February, it is now investigating fully whether the operator is fit to continue to run the site, and is exploring its options regarding further sanctions. In addition to prosecution, further sanctions could include serving a permit revocation notice, which would prevent any further landfilling from taking place.

Let me turn to the wider policy context. After our consultation last year, from 7 April, all permitted waste sites will need to demonstrate technical competence through a scheme approved by the Government. This change will provide the regulator with the flexibility to use its full range of enforcement powers, such as enforcement or suspension notices, on all waste operation permits to ensure that the operators are technically competent. The Government recently announced a tougher approach to the regulation of environmental permits, including tightening up technical competence requirements and allowing the Environment Agency to take a wider range of criminal convictions—beyond environmental offences—into account when considering permit applications and variations.

Our resources and waste strategy commits us to the recommendations of the review into serious and organised criminality in the waste sector, which was completed last autumn by Lizzie Noel. We will continue to bear down on criminal activity in the waste sector and drive out of the sector the organisations that undercut legitimate businesses and make communities' lives miserable. Let me be clear to the hon. Lady and the House that the Government and the Environment Agency take the regulation of the waste sector very seriously.

I thank the hon. Lady for raising this issue. I am very much alive to the challenges faced by residents in her constituency and beyond, as is the Environment Agency, and I will continue to work proactively with her and to bear down on those operating in a manner that causes pollution, ugliness and misery in the affected communities.

Question put and agreed to.

10.53 pm

House adjourned.

EU: Withdrawal and Future Relationship (Votes)

MOTION (C) CUSTOMS UNION—That this House instructs the Government to (1) ensure that any Withdrawal Agreement and Political Declaration negotiated with the EU must include, as a minimum, a commitment to negotiate a permanent and comprehensive UK-wide customs union with the EU; (2) enshrine this objective in primary legislation.—(Mr Kenneth Clarke.)

The House divided: Ayes 273, Noes 276.

Division No. 397]

AYES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
Abrahams, Debbie
Ali, Rushanara
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
Amesbury, Mike
Antoniazzi, Tonia
Ashworth, Jonathan
Bailey, Mr Adrian
Barron, rh Sir Kevin
Beckett, rh Margaret
Benn, rh Hilary
Benyon, rh Richard
Betts, Mr Clive
Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta
Blomfield, Paul
Boles, Nick
Brabin, Tracy
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
Brennan, Kevin
Brine, Steve
Brown, Lyn
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
Bryant, Chris
Buck, Ms Karen
Buckland, Robert
Burden, Richard
Burgon, Richard
Burt, rh Alistair
Butler, Dawn
Byrne, rh Liam
Cadbury, Ruth
Campbell, rh Sir Alan
Carden, Dan
Chalk, Alex
Champion, Sarah
Chapman, Jenny
Charalambous, Bambos
Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth
Clwyd, rh Ann
Coaker, Vernon
Cooper, Julie
Cooper, Rosie
Cooper, rh Yvette
Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Costa, Alberto
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
Debonnaire, Thangam
Dent Coad, Emma
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
Dodds, Anneliese
Doughty, Stephen
Dowd, Peter
Drew, Dr David
Dromey, Jack
Duffield, Rosie
Duncan, rh Sir Alan
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eagle, Maria
Efford, Clive
Elliott, Julie
Ellman, Dame Louise
Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
Elmore, Chris
Esterson, Bill
Evans, Chris
Farrelly, Paul
Field, rh Frank
Field, rh Mark
Fitzpatrick, Jim
Fletcher, Colleen
Flint, rh Caroline
Ford, Vicky
Fovargue, Yvonne
Foxcroft, Vicky
Frith, James
Furniss, Gill
Gaffney, Hugh
Gardiner, Barry
George, Ruth
Gill, Preet Kaur
Glindon, Mary
Godsiff, Mr Roger
Goodman, Helen
Graham, Luke
Graham, Richard
Green, rh Damian
Green, Kate
Greenwood, Lilian
Greenwood, Margaret
Griffith, Nia
Grogan, John
Gwynne, Andrew
Haigh, Louise
Hamilton, Fabian
Hammond, Stephen
Hanson, rh David
Hardy, Emma
Harman, rh Ms Harriet
Harrington, Richard
Harris, Carolyn
Hayes, Helen

Hayman, Sue
Heald, rh Sir Oliver
Healey, rh John
Hendrick, Sir Mark
Herbert, rh Nick
Hill, Mike
Hillier, Meg
Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Hollern, Kate
Howarth, rh Mr George
Huq, Dr Rupa
Hussain, Imran
James, Margot
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
Lamb, rh Norman
Lavery, Ian
Lee, Karen
Lefroy, Jeremy
Letwin, rh Sir Oliver
Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
Lewis, Clive
Lewis, Mr Ivan
Lloyd, Stephen
Lloyd, Tony
Long Bailey, Rebecca
Lucas, Ian C.
Lynch, Holly
Madders, Justin
Mahmood, Mr Khalid
Mahmood, Shabana
Malhotra, Seema
Marsden, Gordon
Martin, Sandy
Maskell, Rachael
Masterton, Paul
Matheson, Christian
McCabe, Steve
McCarthy, Kerry
McDonald, Andy
McDonnell, rh John
McFadden, rh Mr Pat
McGinn, Conor
McGovern, Alison
McInnes, Liz
McKinnell, Catherine
McMahon, Jim
Mearns, Ian
Miliband, rh Edward
Milton, rh Anne
Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
Moon, Mrs Madeleine
Morden, Jessica
Morgan, rh Nicky
Morgan, Stephen
Morris, Grahame
Murray, Ian
Nandy, Lisa
Neill, Robert
Newton, Sarah
Norris, Alex
O'Mara, Jared
Onn, Melanie
Onwurah, Chi
Opperman, Guy
Osamor, Kate
Owen, Albert
Pawsey, Mark
Peacock, Stephanie
Pearce, Teresa
Pennycook, Matthew
Perkins, Toby
Phillips, Jess
Phillipson, Bridget
Pidcock, Laura
Platt, Jo
Pollard, Luke
Pound, Stephen
Powell, Lucy
Prentis, Victoria
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
Sandbach, Antoinette
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
Smyth, Karin
Snell, Gareth
Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
Sobel, Alex
Spellar, rh John
Spelman, rh Dame Caroline
Starmer, rh Keir
Stewart, Rory
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
Vaizey, rh Mr Edward
Vaz, rh Keith
Vaz, Valerie
Walker, Thelma
Watson, Tom

West, Catherine
Western, Matt
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Whitfield, Martin
Williamson, Chris
Wilson, Phil
Yasin, Mohammad

NOES

Adams, Nigel
Afriyie, Adam
Aldous, Peter
Allan, Lucy
Allen, Heidi
Amess, Sir David
Andrew, Stuart
Argar, Edward
Atkins, Victoria
Bacon, Mr Richard
Badenoch, Mrs Kemi
Baker, Mr Steve
Baldwin, Harriett
Baron, Mr John
Bebb, Guto
Bellingham, Sir Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Berger, Luciana (*Proxy vote
cast by Mr Chris Leslie*)
Berry, Jake
Blackman, Bob
Blunt, Crispin
Bone, Mr Peter
Bottomley, Sir Peter
Bowie, Andrew
Bradley, Ben
Brady, Sir Graham
Brake, rh Tom
Braverman, Suella
Brereton, Jack
Bridgen, Andrew
Bruce, Fiona
Burghart, Alex
Burns, Conor
Campbell, Mr Gregory
Campbell, Mr Ronnie
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Cartlidge, James
Cash, Sir William
Caulfield, Maria
Chishti, Rehman
Chope, Sir Christopher
Churchill, Jo
Clark, Colin
Clarke, Mr Simon
Cleverly, James
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
Coffey, Ann
Coffey, Dr Thérèse
Collins, Damian
Courts, Robert
Crabb, rh Stephen
Crouch, Tracey
Davey, rh Sir Edward
Davies, Chris
Davies, David T. C.
Davies, Glyn
Davies, Mims
Davies, Philip
Davis, rh Mr David
Dinenage, Caroline
Docherty, Leo

Dodds, rh Nigel
Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
Donelan, Michelle
Dorries, Ms Nadine
Double, Steve
Dowden, Oliver
Doyle-Price, Jackie
Drax, Richard
Duddridge, James
Duguid, David
Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
Dunne, rh Mr Philip
Ellis, Michael
Elphicke, Charlie
Eustice, George
Evans, Mr Nigel
Evennett, rh Sir David
Fabricant, Michael
Fallon, rh Sir Michael
Foster, Kevin
Francois, rh Mr Mark
Freer, Mike
Fysh, Mr Marcus
Gale, rh Sir Roger
Gapes, Mike
Ghani, Ms Nusrat
Gibb, rh Nick
Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl
Girvan, Paul
Glen, John
Goldsmith, Zac
Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
Grant, Bill
Grant, Mrs Helen
Gray, James
Green, Chris
Griffiths, Andrew
Hair, Kirstene
Halfon, rh Robert
Hall, Luke
Hands, rh Greg
Harper, rh Mr Mark
Harris, Rebecca
Harrison, Trudy
Hart, Simon
Heapey, James
Heaton-Harris, Chris
Heaton-Jones, Peter
Henderson, Gordon
Hepburn, Mr Stephen
Hermon, Lady
Hobhouse, Wera
Hoey, Kate
Hollingbery, George
Hollinrake, Kevin
Hollobone, Mr Philip
Holloway, Adam
Hopkins, Kelvin
Howell, John
Hughes, Eddie
Jack, Mr Alister
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
Kennedy, Seema
Kerr, Stephen
Knight, rh Sir Greg
Knight, Julian
Kwarteng, Kwasi
Lamont, John
Lancaster, rh Mark
Latham, Mrs Pauline
Lee, Dr Phillip
Leigh, rh Sir Edward
Leslie, Mr Chris
Lewer, Andrew
Lewis, rh Dr Julian
Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
Little Pengelly, Emma
Lopez, Julia
Lopresti, Jack
Lord, Mr Jonathan
Loughton, Tim
Lucas, Caroline
Mackinlay, Craig
Macleay, Rachel
Main, Mrs Anne
Mak, Alan
Malthouse, Kit
Mann, John
Mann, Scott
Maynard, Paul
McDonagh, Siobhain
McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick
McMorrin, Anna
McPartland, Stephen
McVey, rh Ms Esther
Menzies, Mark
Mercer, Johnny
Merriman, Huw
Metcalfe, Stephen
Miller, rh Mrs Maria
Milling, Amanda
Mills, Nigel
Moore, Damien
Morris, Anne Marie
Morris, David
Morris, James
Morton, Wendy
Murray, Mrs Sheryll
Murrison, Dr Andrew
Norman, Jesse
O'Brien, Neil
Offord, Dr Matthew
Onasanya, Fiona
Paisley, Ian
Parish, Neil
Patel, rh Priti
Paterson, rh Mr Owen
Penning, rh Sir Mike
Penrose, John
Percy, Andrew
Philp, Chris
Pincher, rh Christopher
Poulter, Dr Dan

Pow, Rebecca
Prisk, Mr Mark
Pritchard, Mark
Pursglove, Tom
Quin, Jeremy
Quince, Will
Raab, rh Dominic
Redwood, rh John
Rees-Mogg, Mr Jacob
Robertson, Mr Laurence
Robinson, Gavin
Robinson, Mary
Rosindell, Andrew
Ross, Douglas
Rowley, Lee
Rutley, David
Ryan, rh Joan
Scully, Paul
Seely, Mr Bob
Selous, Andrew
Shannon, Jim
Shapps, rh Grant
Sharma, Alok
Shelbrooke, Alec
Shuker, Mr Gavin
Simpson, David
Simpson, rh Mr Keith
Skidmore, Chris
Smith, Angela
Smith, Chloe
Smith, Henry
Smith, Owen
Smith, Royston
Soubry, rh Anna
Spencer, Mark
Stephenson, Andrew
Stevens, Jo
Stevenson, John
Stewart, Bob
Stewart, Iain
Streeter, Sir Gary
Stride, rh Mel
Stringer, Graham
Stuart, Graham
Sturdy, Julian
Sunak, Rishi
Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
Swinson, Jo
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
Tugendhat, Tom
Umunna, Chuka
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	Wollaston, Dr Sarah
Whittingdale, Mr John	Wood, Mike
Wiggin, Bill	Wragg, Mr William
Williams, Dr Paul	Zahawi, Nadhim
Wilson, Mr Sammy	

Question accordingly negated.

MOTION (D) COMMON MARKET 2.0—That this House (1) directs Her Majesty's Government to (i) renegotiate the framework for the future relationship laid before the House on Monday 11 March 2019 with the title 'Political Declaration setting out the framework for the future relationship between the European Union and the United Kingdom' to provide that, on the conclusion of the Implementation Period and no later than 31 December 2020, the United Kingdom shall (a) accede to the European Free Trade Association (Efta) having negotiated a derogation from Article 56(3) of the Efta Agreement to allow UK participation in a comprehensive customs arrangement with the European Union, (b) enter the Efta Pillar of the European Economic Area (EEA) and thereby render operational the United Kingdom's continuing status as a party to the EEA Agreement and continuing participation in the Single Market, (c) agree relevant protocols relating to frictionless agri-food trade across the UK/EU border, (d) enter a comprehensive customs arrangement including a common external tariff, alignment with the Union Customs Code and an agreement on commercial policy, and which includes a UK say on future EU trade deals, at least until alternative arrangements that maintain frictionless trade with the European Union and no hard border on the island of Ireland have been agreed with the European Union, (ii) negotiate with the EU a legally binding Joint Instrument that confirms that, in accordance with Article 2 of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland of the Withdrawal Agreement, the implementation of all the provisions of paragraph 1(i) of this motion would cause the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland to be superseded in full; (2) resolves to make support for the forthcoming European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Bill conditional upon the inclusion of provisions for a Political Declaration revised in accordance with the provisions of this motion to be the legally binding negotiating mandate for Her Majesty's Government in the forthcoming negotiation of the future relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union.—(Nick Boles.)

The House divided: Ayes 261, Noes 282.

Division No. 398]**AYES**

Abbott, Mr Diane	Brown, Mr Nicholas
Afolami, Bim	Bryant, Chris
Ali, Rushanara	Buck, Ms Karen
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena	Burden, Richard
Amesbury, Mike	Burgon, Richard
Ashworth, Jonathan	Butler, Dawn
Austin, Ian	Byrne, Mr Liam
Bailey, Mr Adrian	Cadbury, Ruth
Bardell, Hannah	Cameron, Dr Lisa
Bebb, Guto	Campbell, Mr Sir Alan
Beckett, Mr Margaret	Carden, Dan
Benn, Mr Hilary	Cartledge, James
Benyon, Mr Richard	Chapman, Douglas
Betts, Mr Clive	Chapman, Jenny
Black, Mhairi	Charalambous, Bambos
Blackford, Mr Ian	Cherry, Joanna
Blackman, Kirsty	Clarke, Mr Kenneth
Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta	Coaker, Vernon
Blomfield, Paul	Collins, Damian
Boles, Nick	Cooper, Julie
Brabin, Tracy	Cooper, Ms Yvette
Bradshaw, Mr Ben	Corbyn, Mr Jeremy
Brennan, Kevin	Cowan, Ronnie
Brine, Steve	Coyle, Neil
Brock, Deidre	Crausby, Sir David
Brown, Alan	Crawley, Angela
Brown, Lyn	Creasy, Stella

Cruddas, Jon	Huq, Dr Rupa
Cryer, John	Hussain, Imran
Cummins, Judith	Jarvis, Dan
Cunningham, Alex	Johnson, Diana
Cunningham, Mr Jim	Jones, Gerald
Dakin, Nic	Jones, Helen
David, Wayne	Jones, Sarah
Day, Martyn	Kane, Mike
De Cordova, Marsha	Keeley, Barbara
De Piero, Gloria	Kerr, Stephen
Debonnaire, Thangam	Khan, Afzal
Dent Coad, Emma	Kinnock, Stephen
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh	Kyle, Peter
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan	Laird, Lesley
Docherty-Hughes, Martin	Lake, Ben
Dodds, Anneliese	Lamb, Mr Norman
Dowd, Peter	Lavery, Ian
Drew, Dr David	Law, Chris
Dromey, Jack	Lee, Karen
Eagle, Ms Angela	Lefroy, Jeremy
Eagle, Maria	Letwin, Mr Sir Oliver
Edwards, Jonathan	Lewis, Clive
Efford, Clive	Lewis, Mr Ivan
Elmore, Chris	Linden, David
Esterson, Bill	Lloyd, Stephen
Eustice, George	Lloyd, Tony
Evans, Chris	Long Bailey, Rebecca
Farrelly, Paul	Lucas, Ian C.
Farron, Tim	Lynch, Holly
Fellows, Marion	Madders, Justin
Fletcher, Colleen	Mahmood, Mr Khalid
Foxcroft, Vicky	Mahmood, Shabana
Frith, James	Malhotra, Seema
Furniss, Gill	Marsden, Gordon
Gaffney, Hugh	Martin, Sandy
Gardiner, Barry	Maskell, Rachael
George, Ruth	Masterton, Paul
Gethins, Stephen	Matheson, Christian
Gibson, Patricia	Mc Nally, John
Gill, Preet Kaur	McCabe, Steve
Glendon, Mary	McDonald, Andy
Godsiff, Mr Roger	McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
Goodman, Helen	McDonald, Stuart C.
Grady, Patrick	McDonnell, Mr John
Grant, Bill	McFadden, Mr Pat
Grant, Peter	McGinn, Conor
Gray, Neil	McGovern, Alison
Green, Kate	McInnes, Liz
Greenwood, Lilian	McMahon, Jim
Greenwood, Margaret	Mearns, Ian
Griffith, Nia	Miliband, Mr Edward
Grogan, John	Morden, Jessica
Gwynne, Andrew	Morgan, Mr Nicky
Haigh, Louise	Morgan, Stephen
Halfon, Mr Robert	Murray, Ian
Hamilton, Fabian	Nandy, Lisa
Hammond, Stephen	Newlands, Gavin
Hanson, Mr David	Newton, Sarah
Hardy, Emma	Norris, Alex
Harman, Mr Ms Harriet	O'Hara, Brendan
Harrington, Richard	O'Mara, Jared
Harris, Carolyn	Onasanya, Fiona
Hart, Simon	Onn, Melanie
Hayman, Sue	Onwurah, Chi
Healey, Mr John	Osamor, Kate
Hendrick, Sir Mark	Owen, Albert
Hendry, Drew	Pawsey, Mark
Herbert, Mr Nick	Peacock, Stephanie
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon	Pearce, Teresa
Hollern, Kate	Pennycook, Matthew
Hollinrake, Kevin	Penrose, John
Howarth, Mr George	Percy, Andrew

Phillips, Jess
Pidcock, Laura
Platt, Jo
Pollard, Luke
Pound, Stephen
Pow, Rebecca
Powell, Lucy
Qureshi, Yasmin
Rashid, Faisal
Rayner, Angela
Reed, Mr Steve
Rees, Christina
Reeves, Rachel
Reynolds, Emma
Reynolds, Jonathan
Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
Rodda, Matt
Rowley, Danielle
Ruane, Chris
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
Sandbach, Antoinette
Saville Roberts, rh Liz
Shah, Naz
Sharma, Mr Virendra
Sheerman, Mr Barry
Sheppard, Tommy
Sherriff, Paula
Slaughter, Andy
Smith, Cat
Smith, Eleanor
Smith, Jeff
Smith, Nick

Smyth, Karin
Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
Sobel, Alex
Spelman, rh Dame Caroline
Starmer, rh Keir
Stephens, Chris
Stevenson, John
Sweeney, Mr Paul
Tami, rh Mark
Thewliss, Alison
Thomas, Gareth
Thomas-Symonds, Nick
Thornberry, rh Emily
Timms, rh Stephen
Tredinnick, David
Trickett, Jon
Turner, Karl
Twigg, Stephen
Twist, Liz
Vaizey, rh Mr Edward
Vaz, rh Keith
Vaz, Valerie
Watson, Tom
Western, Matt
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Whitfield, Martin
Whitford, Dr Philippa
Williams, Hywel
Wilson, Phil
Wishart, Pete
Yasin, Mohammad

Duguid, David
Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
Dunne, rh Mr Philip
Ellis, Michael
Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
Elphicke, Charlie
Evans, Mr Nigel
Evennett, rh Sir David
Fabricant, Michael
Fallon, rh Sir Michael
Field, rh Frank
Flint, rh Caroline
Ford, Vicky
Foster, Kevin
Fovargue, Yvonne
Francois, rh Mr Mark
Frazer, Lucy
Freer, Mike
Fysh, Mr Marcus
Gale, rh Sir Roger
Gapes, Mike
Ghani, Ms Nusrat
Gibb, rh Nick
Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl
Girvan, Paul
Glen, John
Goldsmith, Zac
Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
Graham, Luke
Graham, Richard
Grant, Mrs Helen
Gray, James
Green, Chris
Green, rh Damian
Griffiths, Andrew
Hair, Kirstene
Hall, Luke
Hands, rh Greg
Harper, rh Mr Mark
Harris, Rebecca
Harrison, Trudy
Heald, rh Sir Oliver
Heappey, James
Heaton-Harris, Chris
Heaton-Jones, Peter
Henderson, Gordon
Hepburn, Mr Stephen
Hermon, Lady
Hill, Mike
Hobhouse, Wera
Hoey, Kate
Hollingbery, George
Hollobone, Mr Philip
Holloway, Adam
Hopkins, Kelvin
Howell, John
Hughes, Eddie
Jack, Mr Alister
Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
Jenkin, Sir Bernard
Jenkyns, Andrea
Jenrick, Robert
Johnson, rh Boris
Johnson, Dr Caroline
Johnson, Gareth
Jones, Andrew
Jones, rh Mr David
Jones, Mr Marcus
Kawczynski, Daniel
Keegan, Gillian
Kennedy, Seema
Knight, rh Sir Greg

Kwarteng, Kwasi
Lamont, John
Lancaster, rh Mark
Latham, Mrs Pauline
Lee, Dr Phillip
Leigh, rh Sir Edward
Leslie, Mr Chris
Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
Lewer, Andrew
Lewis, rh Dr Julian
Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
Little Pengelly, Emma
Lopez, Julia
Lopresti, Jack
Lord, Mr Jonathan
Loughton, Tim
Lucas, Caroline
Mackinlay, Craig
Maclean, Rachel
Main, Mrs Anne
Mak, Alan
Malthouse, Kit
Mann, John
Mann, Scott
Maynard, Paul
McDonagh, Siobhain
McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick
McMorin, Anna
McPartland, Stephen
McVey, rh Ms Esther
Menzies, Mark
Mercer, Johnny
Merriman, Huw
Metcalfe, Stephen
Miller, rh Mrs Maria
Milling, Amanda
Mills, Nigel
Moore, Damien
Morris, Anne Marie
Morris, David
Morris, Grahame
Morris, James
Morton, Wendy
Murray, Mrs Sheryll
Murrison, Dr Andrew
Norman, Jesse
O'Brien, Neil
Offord, Dr Matthew
Opperman, Guy
Paisley, Ian
Patel, rh Priti
Paterson, rh Mr Owen
Penning, rh Sir Mike
Philp, Chris
Pincher, rh Christopher
Poulter, Dr Dan
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
Rutley, David
Ryan, rh Joan
Scully, Paul

NOES

Adams, Nigel
Afriyie, Adam
Aldous, Peter
Allan, Lucy
Allen, Heidi
Amess, Sir David
Andrew, Stuart
Antoniazzi, Tonia
Argar, Edward
Atkins, Victoria
Bacon, Mr Richard
Badenoch, Mrs Kemi
Baker, Mr Steve
Baldwin, Harriett
Baron, Mr John
Barron, rh Sir Kevin
Bellingham, Sir Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Berger, Luciana (*Proxy vote
cast by Mr Chris Leslie*)
Berry, Jake
Blackman, Bob
Blunt, Crispin
Bone, Mr Peter
Bottomley, Sir Peter
Bowie, Andrew
Bradley, Ben
Brady, Sir Graham
Brake, rh Tom
Braverman, Suella
Brereton, Jack
Bridgen, Andrew
Bruce, Fiona
Buckland, Robert
Burghart, Alex
Burns, Conor
Campbell, Mr Gregory

Campbell, Mr Ronnie
Cash, Sir William
Caulfield, Maria
Chalk, Alex
Champion, Sarah
Chishti, Rehman
Chope, Sir Christopher
Churchill, Jo
Clark, Colin
Clarke, Mr Simon
Cleverly, James
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
Coffey, Ann
Coffey, Dr Thérèse
Cooper, Rosie
Costa, Alberto
Courts, Robert
Crabb, rh Stephen
Crouch, Tracey
Davey, rh Sir Edward
Davies, Chris
Davies, David T. C.
Davies, Glyn
Davies, Mims
Davies, Philip
Davis, rh Mr David
Dinenage, Caroline
Docherty, Leo
Dodds, rh Nigel
Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
Donelan, Michelle
Dorries, Ms Nadine
Double, Steve
Dowden, Oliver
Doyle-Price, Jackie
Drax, Richard
Duddridge, James

Seely, Mr Bob
Selous, Andrew
Shannon, Jim
Shapps, rh Grant
Sharma, Alok
Shelbrooke, Alec
Shuker, Mr Gavin
Simpson, David
Simpson, rh Mr Keith
Skidmore, Chris
Smeeth, Ruth
Smith, Angela
Smith, Chloe
Smith, Henry
Smith, Laura
Smith, Owen
Smith, Royston
Snell, Gareth
Soubry, rh Anna
Spellar, rh John
Spencer, Mark
Stephenson, Andrew
Stevens, Jo
Stewart, Bob
Stewart, Iain
Streeter, Sir Gary
Stride, rh Mel
Stringer, Graham
Stuart, Graham
Sunak, Rishi
Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
Swinson, Jo
Swire, rh Sir Hugo

Syms, Sir Robert
Thomas, Derek
Thomson, Ross
Throup, Maggie
Tolhurst, Kelly
Tomlinson, Justin
Tomlinson, Michael
Tracey, Craig
Trevelyan, Anne-Marie
Tugendhat, Tom
Wigg, Derek
Umunna, Chuka
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
Williams, Dr Paul
Wilson, rh Sammy
Wollaston, Dr Sarah
Wood, Mike
Wragg, Mr William
Zahawi, Nadhim
Zeichner, Daniel

Cooper, rh Yvette
Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Cowan, Ronnie
Coyle, Neil
Crausby, Sir David
Crawley, Angela
Creagh, Mary
Creasy, Stella
Cryer, John
Cunningham, Alex
Cunningham, Mr Jim
Daby, Janet
Dakin, Nic
Davey, rh Sir Edward
David, Wayne
Davies, Geraint
Day, Martyn
De Cordova, Marsha
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
Farrelly, Paul
Farron, Tim
Fellows, Marion
Fletcher, Colleen
Foxcroft, Vicky
Freer, Mike
Frith, James
Furniss, Gill
Gaffney, Hugh
Gapes, Mike
Gardiner, Barry
Garnier, Mark
George, Ruth
Gethins, Stephen
Gibson, Patricia
Gill, Preet Kaur
Godsiff, Mr Roger
Goodman, Helen
Grady, Patrick
Grant, Peter
Gray, Neil
Green, Kate
Greening, rh Justine
Greenwood, Lilian
Greenwood, Margaret
Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
Griffith, Nia
Grogan, John
Gwynne, Andrew
Gyimah, Mr Sam
Haigh, Louise
Hamilton, Fabian
Hanson, rh David
Hardy, Emma
Harman, rh Ms Harriet
Harrington, Richard

Hayes, Helen
Hayman, Sue
Healey, rh John
Hendrick, Sir Mark
Hendry, Drew
Hermon, Lady
Hillier, Meg
Hobhouse, Wera
Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Hollern, Kate
Howarth, rh Mr George
Huq, Dr Rupa
Hussain, Imran
James, Margot
Jardine, Christine
Johnson, Diana
Johnson, Joseph
Jones, Darren
Jones, Gerald
Jones, Graham P.
Jones, Sarah
Jones, Susan Elan
Keeley, Barbara
Kendall, Liz
Khan, Afzal
Killen, Ged
Kinnock, Stephen
Kyle, Peter
Laird, Lesley
Lake, Ben
Lamb, rh Norman
Lammy, rh Mr David
Law, Chris
Lee, Karen
Lee, Dr Phillip
Leslie, Mr Chris
Lewis, Clive
Linden, David
Lloyd, Tony
Long Bailey, Rebecca
Lucas, Caroline
Lucas, Ian C.
Lynch, Holly
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
McKinnell, Catherine
McMorrin, Anna
Merriman, Huw
Miliband, rh Edward
Moon, Mrs Madeleine
Moran, Layla
Morden, Jessica
Morgan, Stephen
Murray, Ian

Question accordingly negated.

MOTION (E) CONFIRMATORY PUBLIC VOTE—That this House will not allow in this Parliament the implementation and ratification of any withdrawal agreement and any framework for the future relationship unless and until they have been approved by the people of the United Kingdom in a confirmatory public vote.—(Peter Kyle.)

The House divided: Ayes 280, Noes 292.

Division No. 399]

AYES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
Abrahams, Debbie
Ali, Rushanara
Allen, Heidi
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
Amesbury, Mike
Antoniazzi, Tonia
Ashworth, Jonathan
Bailey, Mr Adrian
Bardell, Hannah
Bebb, Guto
Beckett, rh Margaret
Benn, rh Hilary
Berger, Luciana (*Proxy vote cast by Mr Chris Leslie*)
Betts, Mr Clive
Black, Mhairi
Blackford, rh Ian
Blackman, Kirsty
Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta
Blomfield, Paul
Boles, Nick
Brabin, Tracy
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
Brake, rh Tom

Brennan, Kevin
Brine, Steve
Brock, Deidre
Brown, Alan
Brown, Lyn
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
Bryant, Chris
Buck, Ms Karen
Burden, Richard
Burgon, Richard
Butler, Dawn
Byrne, rh Liam
Cable, rh Sir Vince
Cadbury, Ruth
Cameron, Dr Lisa
Campbell, rh Sir Alan
Carden, Dan
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Chapman, Douglas
Chapman, Jenny
Charalambous, Bambos
Cherry, Joanna
Clwyd, rh Ann
Coaker, Vernon
Coffey, Ann

Newlands, Gavin
Norris, Alex
O'Hara, Brendan
O'Mara, Jared
Onasanya, Fiona
Onwurah, Chi
Osamor, Kate
Owen, Albert
Pearce, Teresa
Pennycook, Matthew
Perkins, Toby
Phillips, Jess
Phillipson, Bridget
Pidcock, Laura
Pollard, Luke
Pound, Stephen
Powell, Lucy
Qureshi, Yasmin
Rashid, Faisal
Rayner, Angela
Reed, Mr Steve
Rees, Christina
Reeves, Ellie
Reeves, Rachel
Reynolds, Emma
Reynolds, Jonathan
Rimmer, Ms Marie
Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
Rodda, Matt
Rowley, Danielle
Ruane, Chris
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
Ryan, rh Joan
Sandbach, Antoinette
Saville Roberts, rh Liz
Shah, Naz
Sharma, Mr Virendra
Sheerman, Mr Barry
Sheppard, Tommy
Shuker, Mr Gavin
Siddiq, Tulip (*Proxy vote cast
by Vicky Foxcroft*)
Skinner, Mr Dennis
Slaughter, Andy

Smith, Angela
Smith, Cat
Smith, Eleanor
Smith, Jeff
Smith, Nick
Smith, Owen
Smyth, Karin
Sobel, Alex
Soubry, rh Anna
Starmer, rh Keir
Stevens, Chris
Stevens, Jo
Stone, Jamie
Streeting, Wes
Sweeney, Mr Paul
Swinson, Jo
Tami, rh Mark
Thewliss, Alison
Thomas, Gareth
Thomas-Symonds, Nick
Thornberry, rh Emily
Timms, rh Stephen
Turley, Anna
Turner, Karl
Twigg, Stephen
Twist, Liz
Umunna, Chuka
Vaizey, rh Mr Edward
Vaz, rh Keith
Vaz, Valerie
Walker, Thelma
Watson, Tom
West, Catherine
Western, Matt
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Whitfield, Martin
Whitford, Dr Philippa
Williams, Hywel
Williams, Dr Paul
Wilson, Phil
Wollaston, Dr Sarah
Woodcock, John
Yasin, Mohammad
Zeichner, Daniel

NOES

Adams, Nigel
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
Baron, Mr John
Barron, rh Sir Kevin
Bellingham, Sir Henry
Benyon, rh Richard
Beresford, Sir Paul
Berry, Jake
Blackman, Bob
Blunt, Crispin
Bone, Mr Peter
Bottomley, Sir Peter
Bowie, Andrew
Bradley, Ben

Brady, Sir Graham
Braverman, Suella
Brereton, Jack
Bridgen, Andrew
Bruce, Fiona
Buckland, Robert
Burghart, Alex
Burns, Conor
Campbell, Mr Gregory
Campbell, Mr Ronnie
Cartledge, James
Cash, Sir William
Caulfield, Maria
Champion, Sarah
Chishti, Rehman
Chope, Sir Christopher
Churchill, Jo
Clark, Colin
Clarke, Mr Simon
Cleverly, James
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
Coffey, Dr Thérèse
Collins, Damian
Cooper, Rosie
Costa, Alberto

Courts, Robert
Crabb, rh Stephen
Crouch, Tracey
Cruddas, Jon
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
Flint, rh Caroline
Ford, Vicky
Foster, Kevin
Fovargue, Yvonne
Francois, rh Mr Mark
Frazer, Lucy
Fysh, Mr Marcus
Gale, rh Sir Roger
Ghani, Ms Nusrat
Gibb, rh Nick
Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl
Girvan, Paul
Glen, John
Glendon, Mary
Goldsmith, Zac
Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
Graham, Luke
Graham, Richard
Grant, Bill
Grant, Mrs Helen
Gray, James
Green, Chris
Green, rh Damian
Griffiths, Andrew
Hair, Kirstene
Halfon, rh Robert
Hall, Luke
Hands, rh Greg
Harper, rh Mr Mark
Harris, Rebecca
Harrison, Trudy
Hart, Simon
Heald, rh Sir Oliver
Heapey, James
Heaton-Harris, Chris
Heaton-Jones, Peter
Henderson, Gordon

Hepburn, Mr Stephen
Herbert, rh Nick
Hill, Mike
Hoey, Kate
Hollingbery, George
Hollinrake, Kevin
Hollobone, Mr Philip
Holloway, Adam
Hopkins, Kelvin
Howell, John
Huddleston, Nigel
Hughes, Eddie
Jack, Mr Alister
Jarvis, Dan
Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
Jenkin, Sir Bernard
Jenkins, Andrea
Jenrick, Robert
Johnson, rh Boris
Johnson, Dr Caroline
Johnson, Gareth
Jones, Andrew
Jones, rh Mr David
Jones, Helen
Jones, rh Mr Kevan
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
Lefroy, Jeremy
Leigh, rh Sir Edward
Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
Lewer, Andrew
Lewis, Mr Ivan
Lewis, rh Dr Julian
Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
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
Maynard, Paul
McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick
McPartland, Stephen
McVey, rh Ms Esther
Menzies, Mark
Mercer, Johnny
Metcalf, Stephen
Miller, rh Mrs Maria
Milling, Amanda
Mills, Nigel
Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
Moore, Damien
Morgan, rh Nicky
Morris, Anne Marie
Morris, David
Morris, Grahame

Morris, James
Morton, Wendy
Murray, Mrs Sheryll
Murrison, Dr Andrew
Norman, Jesse
O'Brien, Neil
Offord, Dr Matthew
Onn, Melanie
Opperman, Guy
Paisley, Ian
Parish, Neil
Patel, rh Priti
Paterson, rh Mr Owen
Pawsey, Mark
Peacock, Stephanie
Penning, rh Sir Mike
Penrose, John
Percy, Andrew
Philp, Chris
Pincher, rh Christopher
Poulter, Dr Dan
Pow, Rebecca
Prentis, Victoria
Pritchard, Mark
Pursglove, Tom
Quin, Jeremy
Quince, Will
Raab, rh Dominic
Redwood, rh John
Rees-Mogg, Mr Jacob
Robertson, Mr Laurence
Robinson, Gavin
Robinson, Mary
Rosindell, Andrew
Ross, Douglas
Rowley, Lee
Rutley, David
Scully, Paul
Seely, Mr Bob
Selous, Andrew
Shannon, Jim
Shapps, rh Grant
Sharma, Alok
Shelbrooke, Alec
Simpson, David
Simpson, rh Mr Keith
Skidmore, Chris
Smeeth, Ruth
Smith, Chloe

Smith, Henry
Smith, Laura
Smith, Royston
Snell, Gareth
Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
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
Tugendhat, Tom
Twigg, Derek
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
Williamson, Chris
Wilson, rh Sammy
Wood, Mike
Wragg, Mr William
Zahawi, Nadhim

Question accordingly negated.

MOTION (G) PARLIAMENTARY SUPREMACY—That (1) If, at midday on the second last Day before exit day, the condition specified in section 13(1)(d) of the Act (the passing of legislation approving a withdrawal agreement) is not satisfied, Her Majesty's Government must immediately seek the agreement of the European Council under Article 50(3) of the Treaty to extend the date upon which the Treaties shall cease to apply to the United Kingdom; (2) If, at midday on the last Day before exit day, no agreement has been reached (pursuant to (1) above) to extend the date upon which the Treaties shall cease to apply to the United Kingdom, Her Majesty's Government must immediately put a motion to the House of Commons asking it to approve 'No Deal'; (3) If the House does not approve the motion at (2) above, Her Majesty's Government must immediately ensure that the notice given to the European Council under Article 50 of the United Kingdom's intention to withdraw from the European Union is revoked in accordance with United Kingdom and European law; (4) If the United Kingdom's notice under Article 50 is revoked pursuant to (3) above a Minister of Her Majesty's Government shall cause an inquiry to be held under the Inquiries Act 2005 into the question whether a model of a future relationship with the European Union likely to

be acceptable to the European Union is likely to have majority support in the United Kingdom; (5) If there is a referendum it shall be held on the question whether to trigger Article 50 and renegotiate that model; (6) The Inquiry under paragraph (4) shall start within three months of the revocation; and (7) References in this Motion to "Days" are to House of Commons sitting days; references to "exit day" are references to exit day as defined in the Act; references to the Act are to The European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018; and references to the Treaty are to the Treaty on European Union.—(Joanna Cherry.)

The House divided: Ayes 191, Noes 292.

Division No. 400]

AYES

Ali, Rushanara
Allen, Heidi
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
Antoniazzi, Tonia
Bailey, Mr Adrian
Bardell, Hannah
Bebb, Guto
Berger, Luciana (*Proxy vote cast by Mr Chris Leslie*)
Black, Mhairi
Blackford, rh Ian
Blackman, Kirsty
Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta
Blomfield, Paul
Boles, Nick
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
Brake, rh Tom
Brennan, Kevin
Brock, Deidre
Brown, Alan
Brown, Lyn
Bryant, Chris
Buck, Ms Karen
Burden, Richard
Cable, rh Sir Vince
Cadbury, Ruth
Cameron, Dr Lisa
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Chapman, Douglas
Charalambous, Bambos
Cherry, Joanna
Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth
Clwyd, rh Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cowan, Ronnie
Coyle, Neil
Crawley, Angela
Creagh, Mary
Creasy, Stella
Daby, Janet
Davey, rh Sir Edward
Davies, Geraint
Day, Martyn
De Cordova, Marsha
Debbonaire, Thangam
Dent Coad, Emma
Docherty-Hughes, Martin
Dodds, Anneliese
Doughty, Stephen
Drew, Dr David
Duffield, Rosie
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eagle, Maria
Edwards, Jonathan
Efford, Clive
Ellman, Dame Louise
Elmore, Chris

Esterson, Bill
Farrelly, Paul
Farron, Tim
Fellows, Marion
Field, rh Mark
Fitzpatrick, Jim
Foxcroft, Vicky
Frith, James
Gaffney, Hugh
Gapes, Mike
George, Ruth
Gethins, Stephen
Gibson, Patricia
Gill, Preet Kaur
Godsiff, Mr Roger
Goodman, Helen
Grady, Patrick
Grant, Peter
Gray, Neil
Green, Kate
Greening, rh Justine
Greenwood, Lilian
Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
Grogan, John
Hamilton, Fabian
Harman, rh Ms Harriet
Harrington, Richard
Hayes, Helen
Hendrick, Sir Mark
Hendry, Drew
Hermon, Lady
Hillier, Meg
Hobhouse, Wera
Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
Huq, Dr Rupa
Jardine, Christine
Jones, Darren
Jones, Sarah
Jones, Susan Elan
Kendall, Liz
Killen, Ged
Kyle, Peter
Laird, Lesley
Lake, Ben
Lammy, rh Mr David
Law, Chris
Lee, Dr Phillip
Leslie, Mr Chris
Lewis, Clive
Linden, David
Lucas, Caroline
Lynch, Holly
Mahmood, Shabana
Martin, Sandy
Maskell, Rachael
Matheson, Christian
Mc Nally, John

McCabe, Steve
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
 McDonald, Stuart C.
 McGinn, Conor
 McGovern, Alison
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McMorrin, Anna
 Mearns, Ian
 Moon, Mrs Madeleine
 Moran, Layla
 Morgan, Stephen
 Murray, Ian
 Nandy, Lisa
 Newlands, Gavin
 O'Hara, Brendan
 Onwurah, Chi
 Osamor, Kate
 Owen, Albert
 Pearce, Teresa
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Phillips, Jess
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Pollard, Luke
 Pound, Stephen
 Rashid, Faisal
 Reed, Mr Steve
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reeves, Rachel
 Rodda, Matt
 Rowley, Danielle
 Ruane, Chris
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
 Ryan, rh Joan
 Sandbach, Antoinette
 Saville Roberts, rh Liz
 Sharma, Mr Virendra
 Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Sheppard, Tommy

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
 Baron, Mr John
 Barron, rh Sir Kevin
 Bellingham, Sir Henry
 Benyon, rh Richard
 Beresford, Sir Paul
 Berry, Jake
 Blackman, Bob
 Blunt, Crispin
 Bone, Mr Peter
 Bottomley, Sir Peter
 Bowie, Andrew
 Bradley, Ben
 Brady, Sir Graham
 Braverman, Suella
 Brereton, Jack

Bridgen, Andrew
 Bruce, Fiona
 Buckland, Robert
 Burghart, Alex
 Burns, Conor
 Burt, rh Alistair
 Campbell, Mr Gregory
 Campbell, Mr Ronnie
 Cartledge, James
 Cash, Sir William
 Caulfield, Maria
 Champion, Sarah
 Chishti, Rehman
 Chope, Sir Christopher
 Churchill, Jo
 Clark, Colin
 Clarke, Mr Simon
 Cleverly, James
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
 Coffey, Dr Thérèse
 Collins, Damian
 Cooper, Rosie
 Costa, Alberto
 Courts, Robert
 Crabb, rh Stephen
 Crouch, Tracey
 Cruddas, Jon
 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
 Flint, rh Caroline
 Ford, Vicky
 Foster, Kevin
 Fovargue, Yvonne
 Francois, rh Mr Mark
 Frazer, Lucy
 Freer, Mike
 Fysh, Mr Marcus
 Gale, rh Sir Roger
 Garnier, Mark
 Ghani, Ms Nusrat
 Gibb, rh Nick
 Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl
 Girvan, Paul
 Glen, John
 Goldsmith, Zac
 Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
 Graham, Luke
 Graham, Richard
 Grant, Bill
 Grant, Mrs Helen
 Gray, James
 Green, Chris
 Green, rh Damian
 Griffiths, Andrew
 Hair, Kirstene
 Halfon, rh Robert
 Hall, Luke
 Hands, rh Greg
 Harper, rh Mr Mark
 Harris, Rebecca
 Harrison, Trudy
 Hart, Simon
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver
 Heapey, James
 Heaton-Harris, Chris
 Heaton-Jones, Peter
 Henderson, Gordon
 Hepburn, Mr Stephen
 Herbert, rh Nick
 Hoey, Kate
 Hollingbery, George
 Hollinrake, Kevin

Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holloway, Adam
 Hopkins, Kelvin
 Howarth, rh Mr George
 Howell, John
 Huddleston, Nigel
 Hughes, Eddie
 Hurd, rh Mr Nick
 Jack, Mr Alister
 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, Helen
 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
 Lefroy, Jeremy
 Leigh, rh Sir Edward
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Lewer, Andrew
 Lewis, Mr Ivan
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Little Pngelly, 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
 Maynard, Paul
 McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick
 McPartland, Stephen
 McVey, rh Ms Esther
 Menzies, Mark
 Mercer, Johnny
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria
 Milling, Amanda
 Mills, Nigel
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Moore, Damien
 Morgan, rh Nicky
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Morton, Wendy
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll
 Murrison, Dr Andrew
 Neill, Robert
 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
 Perkins, Toby
 Philp, Chris
 Pincher, rh Christopher
 Poulter, Dr Dan
 Pow, Rebecca
 Prentis, Victoria
 Pritchard, Mark
 Pursglove, Tom
 Quin, Jeremy
 Quince, Will
 Raab, rh Dominic
 Redwood, rh John
 Rees-Mogg, Mr Jacob

Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Robinson, Gavin
 Robinson, Mary
 Rosindell, Andrew
 Ross, Douglas
 Rowley, Lee
 Rutley, David
 Scully, Paul
 Seely, Mr Bob
 Selous, Andrew
 Shannon, Jim
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, Alok
 Shelbrooke, Alec
 Simpson, David
 Simpson, rh Mr Keith
 Skidmore, Chris
 Smeeth, Ruth
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, Royston
 Snell, Gareth
 Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
 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
 Tugendhat, Tom
 Twigg, Derek
 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
 Wilson, rh Sammy
 Wood, Mike
 Wragg, Mr William
 Zahawi, Nadhim

Question accordingly negated.

Westminster Hall

Monday 1 April 2019

[JAMES GRAY *in the Chair*]

Leaving the European Union

4.30 pm

Catherine McKinnell (Newcastle upon Tyne North) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House has considered e-petitions 241584, 235138 and 243319 relating to leaving the European Union.

It is a real pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Gray, and to lead this incredibly important debate on behalf of the Petitions Committee. As hon. Members will be aware, the Committee decided to schedule a single debate on all three Brexit-related petitions because we wanted to ensure that all three, having reached the 100,000 signature threshold, were debated as soon as possible, so that they would not be overtaken by events.

It is entirely coincidental that the date is 1 April, but I must confess to hoping right up until noon that the Prime Minister was at some point going to reveal to the nation that the Government's entire handling of Brexit has actually been the most painstaking and elaborate April fool's day hoax in history, and that she does in fact have a plan to get us out of this mess. Regrettably, that did not happen, and we are still in a national crisis.

Of course, as is now inevitable for anything related to Brexit, one of the e-petitions has already been overtaken by events: 29 March has been and gone and, three days later, we remain members of the European Union. As such, with just under two weeks to go until the next deal or no deal deadline, we find ourselves through the looking glass, debating potential Brexit outcomes here in Westminster Hall at exactly the same time as colleagues in the main Chamber deliberate the ways out of this ludicrous situation. A national conversation should clearly have been led and listened to by the Prime Minister right at the start of this historic process, rather than one being commenced against her will just before midnight on the Brexit clock.

Ian Murray (Edinburgh South) (Lab): My hon. Friend has been utterly fantastic on Brexit from start to finish. I am sure she will mention this later, but our constituents have been signing up to the big petition to revoke article 50, including 32% of my electorate in south Edinburgh. She will be as disappointed as I am that the Prime Minister and the Government, given that they are in such a mess, have simply dismissed those people and will not action anything they say.

Catherine McKinnell: My hon. Friend raises an important point. That is why this debate is so important: to get these issues aired and make sure that we get answers from the Minister. I will make sure that he is clear on the questions and issues that we need answers for.

As I said, we are discussing three petitions. Despite being overtaken by events, e-petition 243319, calling for the UK to leave the EU on 29 March 2019 come what may, secured 175,121 signatures as of 3.30 pm today. I make that point because the petitions are all still open. That figure undoubtedly reflects the great unhappiness

and frustration felt by many people across the UK that we did not leave the European Union on Friday, as the Prime Minister repeatedly pledged that we would. Indeed, I know that many thousands signing these petitions, alongside a small minority of hon. Members, strongly advocate that the UK should have left the EU on Friday without a deal, and that we should now do so on 12 April, leaving us to trade on the much-heralded World Trade Organisation terms.

It clear that, for some, leaving the EU as quickly as possible has become of paramount importance in order to deliver on the narrow outcome of a referendum held almost three years ago, regardless of whether there remain any coherent, cogent arguments for pursuing that course of irrevocable action and regardless of the circumstances in which that might take place or the potential consequences for our country. There are some who suggest that every one of the 17.4 million people who voted in good faith back in June 2016 to leave the European Union did so safe in the knowledge that it could well mean exiting the world's largest trading bloc after 46 years without a deal. Indeed, the wording of the e-petition suggests that both main parties pledged that in the 2017 general election.

However, I only need point them in the direction the Vote Leave campaign, which quite clearly stated:

"Taking back control is a careful change, not a sudden stop—we will negotiate the terms of a new deal before we start any legal process to leave."

Or the pledge made in the 2017 Labour party manifesto:

"Labour recognises that leaving the EU with 'no deal' is the worst possible deal for Britain and that it would do damage to our economy and trade. We will reject 'no deal' as a viable option".

Or, indeed, the 2017 Conservative party manifesto, which said that the Prime Minister would deliver:

"The best possible deal for Britain as we leave the European Union delivered by a smooth, orderly Brexit."

There were many other occasions when those playing leading roles in the campaign for our departure from the EU suggested what doing so would or would not involve. Perhaps the most notable example is Daniel Hannan MEP, who declared:

"Absolutely nobody is talking about threatening our place in the single market."

Regardless of what each person voted for at that time—I have spoken to many leave voters who voted for a variety of legitimate reasons and have completely different visions of what Brexit means—I know with absolutely certainty that nobody was discussing the need to set aside £4.2 billion to prepare for the ramifications of no deal, whether that means awarding a £108 million ferry contract to a firm that has no ships or our becoming the largest buyer of fridges in the world, in order to stockpile medicines, vaccines and blood products.

Rushanara Ali (Bethnal Green and Bow) (Lab): To reinforce my hon. Friend's point, according to the Bank of England, two-thirds of warehouses have already been filled; we actually do not have the capacity to stockpile, because our system does not work like that. In the context of no deal, the economy will shrink by 8% and inflation will go up—[*Interruption.*]

4.37 pm

Sitting suspended for a Division in the House.

4.52 pm

On resuming—

James Gray (in the Chair): As the sitting was suspended for 15 minutes, 15 minutes will be added to the end as injury time, so the debate will finish at 7.45 pm instead of 7.30 pm. We were listening to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne North (Catherine McKinnell).

Catherine McKinnell: My hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Bow (Rushanara Ali) was in the middle of her intervention when we were interrupted for that vote, so I am more than happy for her to finish her intervention.

Rushanara Ali: I wanted to highlight the fact that, according to the Bank of England, warehouses are already running out of space—two-thirds are full. We do not have the capacity to cope with the kind of system that a no-deal Brexit would pose. If we have a no-deal Brexit, the worst-case scenario is an 8% reduction in our economy, with unemployment and inflation rising. Some 6 million people have signed the e-petition on revoking article 50, including 24,000 in my constituency. People are adamant that if we cannot settle this in the House in a way that protects their interests, jobs and livelihoods, then revocation should be on the table. I support my hon. Friend's speech.

Catherine McKinnell: My hon. Friend speaks from the experience that we have shared as members of the Treasury Committee, scrutinising in agonising and often frustrating and concerning detail the economic impact of the Brexit proposals, and in particular the potential ramifications of a no-deal Brexit.

If anyone had told me when I was first elected to Parliament in 2010 that less than a decade later the Government of this country would be pursuing a policy that necessitates the stockpiling of body bags, I would have questioned my own sanity. Yet this is the appalling position that we now find ourselves in, because the Prime Minister has remained resolutely of the belief that refusing to rule out the prospect of a no-deal Brexit, thereby threatening to drive her own country off a cliff, somehow represents a bargaining chip when conducting an international negotiation. That is precisely what she would be doing to so many businesses in my region, with around 60% of our exports currently going to EU countries, leading the North East England Chamber of Commerce to state that its 3,000 members "have been clear, North East businesses do not want a messy and disorderly exit from the EU."

They are perplexed that, despite all the evidence, the Government have allowed a no-deal scenario to be seen as a credible Brexit outcome.

Many people will have wanted the UK to leave the EU last Friday, or just as soon as possible, and not because of an arbitrary date set by the Prime Minister, having triggered article 50 when she did, but because they are frankly sick to the back teeth of hearing about this issue, day in, day out. They have had enough of Brexit dominating every single news bulletin, newspaper headline or radio discussion. Understandably, they just want what has turned into a national nightmare to be finally over.

I, too, am angry. I am angry that we have spent three years not properly focusing on the myriad issues that we know desperately require our attention: climate change,

the NHS, public transport, child poverty, food bank use, social care and universal credit. To provide just one example of how all-consuming this exercise in futility has become, it was reported over the weekend that two-thirds of staff at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs are now working on Brexit, instead of focusing on other crucial issues, such as tackling poor air quality or rising food poverty.

I am equally furious that billions of pounds can be found by the Treasury to prepare for a Brexit scenario that can never happen, while schools in my constituency are making teachers redundant and women across the country born in the 1950s are facing dire financial circumstances.

Jo Swinson (East Dunbartonshire) (LD): The hon. Lady is absolutely right that those are the other important issues that we should be directing our energy and focus on. Of course, Brexit will make them all more difficult to solve, because we will be poorer as a country and have less influence in the world. Does she think that that is one reason why 49 of the 65 polls taken on Brexit since the referendum have found a majority for remain? We have to go as far back as June 2017 to find the last poll that had more people supporting leave. Is it not entirely possible that the will of the people has changed?

Catherine McKinnell: The hon. Lady makes some excellent and important points. It is good that they are now on the record.

The reason I say all this, and why I have spent so much time holding the Government to account on this issue since 2016, is that I know that if we get Brexit wrong, it will significantly diminish our capacity as a country to fund our public services—to tackle the "burning injustices" that the Prime Minister once pledged to fight. I say to those who, quite understandably, just want Brexit to be over that if the UK leaves in the coming weeks, it is not over—Brexit and all of its ramifications has not even begun.

Turning to the second e-petition that we are debating, in the week after we were due to leave the European Union, and following two and a half meaningful votes on the Prime Minister's withdrawal agreement, the only thing that is clear is that Parliament remains in Brexit gridlock, although today's further indicative votes may help to provide some much needed clarity on a potential way forward. However, as things stand, we still face this cliff edge on 12 April. It is unclear how the Prime Minister's agreement can be passed by Parliament before that date, given the scale of the challenge she continues to face, unless she is finally prepared to change course.

I have long believed the answer to this seemingly never-ending and hugely damaging parliamentary gridlock lies in what is advocated by the second e-petition that we are considering. Signed by 185,542 people as of 3.30 pm, it calls for a second referendum to be held to enable the British public to choose whether to accept the Prime Minister's deal—the one that she and the EU have repeatedly told us is the only and best Brexit deal available—or to remain in the EU with the deal that we already have.

Anna McMorrin (Cardiff North) (Lab): My hon. Friend is making an excellent speech on an important issue. Does she agree that, with the CBI and TUC calling this

a national emergency, we need to take urgent action, decide on something and make sure that it goes to a public vote?

Catherine McKinnell: My hon. Friend succinctly says what I will say in more words.

I agree, and hon. Members are aware that I have campaigned for that outcome for the best part of a year. I have pressed for whatever deal the Prime Minister negotiated to be put back to the British public, given the enormity of the implications for our country's future for decades to come. I have subsequently voted three times against the withdrawal agreement, because I simply cannot support something that I and the Government know will make constituents in Newcastle North and the wider north-east poorer. Indeed, as the Government's analysis shows, the north-east will be hardest hit by any form of Brexit.

Christine Jardine (Edinburgh West) (LD): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Marsha De Cordova (Battersea) (Lab): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Catherine McKinnell: I give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Marsha De Cordova)

Marsha De Cordova: My hon. Friend is making an eloquent speech about the petitions and the need for us to remain part of the European Union. My constituents voted 78% remain, and thousands have signed petitions to revoke article 50 or call for a second referendum. Does she agree that if the Prime Minister can keep bringing her deal back to the House for us to vote it down, it is about time that she put her deal back to the public with the option to remain?

Catherine McKinnell: It is a strong point. I have been clear about the potential ramifications of the Prime Minister's Brexit deal and my concerns about exiting with no deal, but I am prepared to accept that many people in my constituency voted to leave and want to leave the European Union. That is why, if this Brexit deal is the best deal available—the only deal available, as the Prime Minister and the EU have told us—the Government should have the courage of their convictions and put it back to the people for them to have the final say.

Ged Killen (Rutherglen and Hamilton West) (Lab/Co-op): My hon. Friend is making an excellent point about people who still want to leave the European Union. Is it not the case that, given all the water that has gone under the bridge, if we do not put it back to the people, the deadlock that we in Parliament are trapped in will continue through the next stage of the negotiations? It will never be over unless we give it democratic legitimacy. Even if people want to leave, at least they can confirm it.

Catherine McKinnell: Absolutely. So much has become evident since the referendum vote in 2016 and we all, including the public, those in Parliament and those in the European Union, know more about what Brexit means. If the Prime Minister is confident that her deal is the best deal available for the country, we must surely go back to the public to ask if it is what they want for their families and communities, and for our country.

Andrea Jenkyns (Morley and Outwood) (Con): I thank the hon. Lady for giving way. Hearing your speech—

James Gray (in the Chair): Her speech.

Andrea Jenkyns: Hearing her speech makes me believe that she is trying to give the public the option of Brexit in name only, with the Prime Minister's deal, or no Brexit. Is that fair to the 17.4 million people who voted to leave? She says that she is prepared to accept that her constituency voted to leave, but is she prepared to accept that the country overall voted to leave?

Catherine McKinnell: Absolutely. We had a referendum in 2016 that put the basic question, "Do you want to leave the European Union?", and 17.4 million people voted to leave. I have said clearly that I respect all the different reasons on which those people based their vote to leave. I have spoken to many people who have given many different reasons why they wanted to leave the European Union and why they voted in that way.

We are three years on, however, and the hon. Lady's Government have spent two years negotiating an agreement with the European Union. That is the only Brexit agreement that exists for us to leave with a deal. Given that we in this House have voted three times to rule out the catastrophic prospect of a no-deal exit from the European Union, I have made it clear, and many hon. Members share the view, that we must find a deal that Parliament can agree to.

In my view, if we are confident—as the Government say they are—that the Government's deal is the best available, we should put it back to the public and let them have the final say. That is why I was proud to join many hon. Members and more than 1 million people to demonstrate in London on 23 March to call for the withdrawal agreement to be put back to the British public via a people's vote. That is the only democratic way out of the impasse.

In contrast with the ugly, angry, threatening and sinister behaviour outside Parliament on Friday by people who have clearly hijacked the Brexit campaign for more dangerous ends, the People's Vote march was fantastic. It was a positive advert for Britain and full of people who care deeply about the future of our country and its place in the world. As I have since made clear to my constituents, and to the Prime Minister directly, however, I recognise that we all now need to compromise in the national interest if we are to get out of this crisis.

Andy Slaughter (Hammersmith) (Lab): My hon. Friend mentions what happened last Friday afternoon. It is extraordinary that Parliament was closed down in the middle of the afternoon and our staff were sent home. I was with a party of schoolchildren who, ironically, were the chief debaters who had won a competition in the London boroughs, and were looking forward to their tour of Parliament. They were mainly black, Asian, and minority ethnic youngsters, including identifiably Muslim and Jewish children, who were then asked to leave the estate and filter out into the crowd. Is it not extraordinary that we can be brought to such lengths by a few extremists and thugs?

Catherine McKinnell: Yes; many hon. Members were disturbed by the scenes they witnessed on Friday directly and on the news. As many have made clear, those people

[Catherine McKinnell]

do not reflect the people who voted leave, but they professed to be the spokespeople for the leave campaign on the streets of London.

Here in Parliament, we have run out of road. We cannot keep going round in ever-decreasing circles while the international standing of our country diminishes further by the day. For me, compromise means allowing the passage of a deal through Parliament that I know will make my constituents poorer. I will allow that, however, to get past the gridlock, on the condition that we put it back to the people to make the final decision in a confirmatory, binding public vote.

Some people feel that the Beckett or Kyle-Wilson proposal somehow undermines the outcome of the 2016 referendum, the conduct of which has become increasingly suspect, and which was in some aspects downright illegal, or that it undermines the integrity of our democracy as a whole. It does not. Democracy cannot be undermined by trying to resolve an issue democratically or by holding a vote in which every single person in the country can participate. Democracy is surely an ongoing process, not one moment frozen in time to which our entire country's future must for ever be held to ransom, regardless of the consequences that emerge.

Heidi Allen (South Cambridgeshire) (Ind): People talk about the divisiveness of a second referendum, which seems to be the biggest reason not to have one. To follow on from the hon. Lady's point, however, I would argue that nothing could be more healing than involving the entire country in the decision about what to do next. Everybody's voice is equal—nobody loses and nobody wins—because that is democracy. Fortunately, we do not live in a country where some voices are more important or more valid than others.

Catherine McKinnell: The hon. Lady makes the point well. There are people who think that the radical approach of democratically asking the public what they think would unleash an almighty backlash and all sorts of dangerous extremism, but I say to them that such extremism clearly exists already. We saw it on the streets of London on Friday and I am certainly not prepared to roll over and appease it.

However, there is always the prospect that the Prime Minister will refuse to change her approach and that she will lurch ever closer to 12 April with the threat of our crashing out of the EU still with us. That brings me to the third e-petition that we are considering today, which calls for article 50 to be revoked and for the UK to remain in the EU.

As hon. Members will be aware, this petition has been supported by an unprecedented number of people, although that is not surprising, because we live in unprecedented times. Indeed, this is the most signed petition ever received on the petitions website of the House of Commons and the Government. As of 3.30 pm today, it had received a staggering 6,034,845 signatures, over 26,000 of which come from my city of Newcastle.

Dr Julian Lewis (New Forest East) (Con): That is indeed an extremely impressive total of petition signatories. Therefore, would the hon. Member like to suggest that instead of having held the referendum in the first place,

it would have been sufficient to put an e-petition in and get that particular fraction of the population voting for it, in order to set aside a democratic vote by a much larger number of people?

Catherine McKinnell: Clearly not. Before turning to the content of this petition—

Andy Slaughter: My hon. Friend is being very generous in giving way, but that was a bit of sophistry that we have just heard. Six million people—an extraordinary number—signed this petition as against some of the leave petitions, just as there was a 1 million-person march as opposed to the pathetic little leave march, showing a change in the zeitgeist, if I am allowed to use European words. Are we not seeing the people speaking up at last and saying, “We are not going to allow some of the people in the House of Commons to ruin the country, economically and politically, for the future”?

Catherine McKinnell: My hon. Friend has put that very well.

Before turning to the content and substance of this petition, I will first put on the record my gratitude to the Government Digital Service, which worked hard to keep the petitions website up and running under the strain of the highest usage it has ever experienced, which at its peak saw the petition receiving around 2,000 signatures a minute. I am keen to emphasise that, contrary to some of the rumours that have been put around to try to undermine the integrity of this petition, the Government Digital Service has a number of automated and manual systems in place to detect bots, disposable email addresses and other signs of fraudulent activity.

Mr Chris Leslie (Nottingham East) (Ind): On this point about the number of signatures—in my constituency, there were more than 9,500 signatures—I understand that General Data Protection Regulation rules mean that I cannot necessarily see who has signed that particular petition. Normally, however, in a petition we get a sense of who has signed. Is it possible that the House authorities would at least be able to email back those people who have signed the petition, to give them some feedback about what has happened to it in Parliament, because, like many others, I would like them to know that, yes, I am prepared to support revoke and remain, rather than have us crash out of the EU?

Catherine McKinnell: I am sure that is now on the record and the Petitions Committee, which is a formal cross-party Committee of the House that processes the petitions tabled by members of the public which reach the threshold for a petition to be debated, will obviously notify the people who have signed it, to tell them that the issue has been tabled for debate or that there is a response from the Government.

When someone signs a petition, they are directed to their MP, so that they can let them know if they want to. I have been contacted directly by constituents who have signed the petition and who want me to know that they have signed it, and obviously they can then receive feedback from me as a Member of Parliament. I am sure that there are many members of the public who have signed the petition who will be watching the proceedings today with great interest.

Dr Julian Lewis: May I just encroach one more time?

Catherine McKinnell *indicated assent.*

Dr Lewis: The hon. Lady is being terribly courteous and I really appreciate it. Let us just try this new form of democracy a bit more. Let us suppose that her party—the Labour party—gets its wish and there is a general election. Guess what? The Labour party wins and the right hon. Member for Islington North (Jeremy Corbyn) becomes Prime Minister. Then, some of us who did not like the result set up a petition and get 6 million people to say, “No, we ought to revoke that result and do it again”. Would she be satisfied with that?

Catherine McKinnell: May I clarify matters for the right hon. Gentleman, because he does not seem to understand the nature of a petition, which is a very long-established process in Parliament and a way for our constituents to express their view on matters, and for many years—probably since it began—Parliament has processed petitions and tabled them on behalf of MPs’ constituents? The nature of our modern democracy is that the petitions process has gone online and it was indeed the former Prime Minister who created the Government’s online petitions system in 2010. Since then, it has grown in popularity and use.

As a member of the Petitions Committee, I know that it processes a range of petitions on any subject that Members can imagine, but no petition has received the number of signatures that this petition has, and the right hon. Gentleman seems somewhat irked by that. However, a petition does not replace our normal democratic processes. It is simply a reflection of the level of interest in this issue and the strength of feeling among the public, for which, as representatives of our constituents, we ought to be very grateful, as they have the means to make their voices heard—and this petition is a roar.

Christine Jardine: I thank the hon. Lady for giving way and I will just reinforce that point. As someone who was elected here to represent my constituents, I find it extremely useful in the difficult decision-making process that we are going through to have the figures to show that more than 15,000 people in my constituency signed this petition and that they want us to reconsider matters, not blindly go off a cliff and crash out of Europe. It behoves us well to pay attention to what our constituents are telling us.

Catherine McKinnell: Indeed, because what this petition—combined with the million-plus people who gave up their Saturday to march here on the streets of London just a week ago—demonstrates is that there is a very large number of people in this country who are extremely concerned about Brexit, the Government’s approach to this process and the implications of all this for the future of our country.

Wera Hobhouse (Bath) (LD): The hon. Lady is generous in giving way. I come back to the suggestion that after each election somebody could launch a petition to reverse the result. The extraordinary thing about the 2016 referendum is that the Government, and many Members in this House, insist that the result of that referendum can never be changed, whereas we have elections every four or five years, so decisions can be reversed. However, in this case it seems that we can never, ever change our mind about the referendum in 2016.

Catherine McKinnell: That is an important point, which is now on the record.

Andrea Jenkyns: I thank the hon. Lady for giving way again. To raise a contrary point to the one just made by the hon. Member for Bath (Wera Hobhouse), does the hon. Lady agree that this petition and those in this place who support it actually have only one goal, which is to overturn the referendum result?

Catherine McKinnell: No, I completely disagree with that. I have already set out very clearly my views and my concerns, which I think are shared by a huge number of people. However, I absolutely share the concerns that have been expressed by those calling for a public vote on the outcome of the Brexit negotiations, because I did not come into politics to make my constituents poorer and I did not get elected to this place to drive my country and its economy off a cliff.

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con): Perhaps, then, the hon. Lady would like to tell us why the remain Bank of England/Treasury forecast for what would happen in the first two years after a leave vote—it was said that there would be a recession, big job losses, an investment collapse, a share market collapse and a housebuilding problem, and the reverse of all those things happened, with jobs up and no recession, and we now have better growth than Germany or Italy—was so wrong and why we should believe her pessimistic forecast for 15 years’ time, when they could not get the first two years right.

Catherine McKinnell: Many of the predictions that were made—for example, that we would see a stall in investment or the economy being affected—have happened, and even when there is an increase in jobs, which the Government often like to talk about, we see more and more people using food banks and struggling to make ends meet. So, if anyone suggests that we are somehow better off now than we were in 2016, they are wrong. All the projections show that we will be only more greatly affected and that investment and economic growth will be further deflated.

The right hon. Member for Wokingham (John Redwood) makes his point, and he makes it regularly. I recognise that the economy was not the driving factor for many people when they voted in 2016, nor was it their determination that we must leave the EU as soon as possible at whatever cost. All the parliamentary sovereignty in the world will not make up for the impact of rising unemployment, reduced living standards and lost opportunities, not least in a region such as the north-east, which has been abandoned to the economic scrapheap too many times.

Rushanara Ali: Does my hon. Friend agree that since this whole affair began there has been no parliamentary sovereignty? It has been sovereignty for the Prime Minister and her Cabinet, trying to ram through a deal that has been rejected three times. It has been an obsession of the Tory party, and a division within that party. The whole country and its future are being roped into the collective breakdown that the Conservative party is having. The right hon. Member for Wokingham (John Redwood) will know, from his own party’s history and his part in it, about the Tory party’s tearing itself apart for the last three decades. And it continues, but this time it is destroying our constituents’ livelihoods.

Catherine McKinnell: My hon. Friend speaks with great wisdom and insight.

[Catherine McKinnell]

From speaking to my constituents, I am aware that many deep and entirely unresolved issues underpinned the leave vote back in 2016, including a huge sense of being left behind and not being listened to for far too long, but ploughing ahead with a damaging Brexit will not enable anyone to deliver on the pledges that were made during the referendum campaign. They will not address those issues, not least if the approach taken does not even have a clear democratic mandate, as is the case at the moment.

I have equally serious concerns about what continuing down this path could mean for the integrity of the United Kingdom, as it is currently formed, and I strongly urge others to consider whether that is more important than the outcome of one vote held three years ago, which—my hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Bow (Rushanara Ali) put it very well—was to shore up the Conservative vote and Conservative party support in the 2015 general election.

Anna McMorris: As we have heard, the Electoral Commission found Vote Leave and Leave.EU guilty of corrupt activities. Does my hon. Friend agree that until the National Crime Agency has done its investigation we cannot take the result of that vote as clear?

Catherine McKinnell: Those concerns are being expressed by many members of the public as they watch the reality of the 2016 referendum campaign and vote unravel. As we get closer and closer to 12 April, I have been making it clear to my constituents that I am prepared to support the revocation of article 50 if necessary, to prevent our country from leaving the EU without a deal.

It is because I am as patriotic, and care as passionately about the future of my city, my region and my country, as anyone that I cannot stand back and watch us crash out of the EU in that way. Allowing such a scenario would be a dereliction of my duty as a Member of Parliament, which is clearly set out as that of acting in the interests of the nation as a whole, with a special duty to my constituents. It would be contrary to the responsibilities of Members of the House as set out by Edmund Burke as far back as 1774:

“Your representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgement; and he betrays, instead of serving you, if he sacrifices it to your opinion.”

And, indeed, contrary to the guidance of Sir Winston Churchill:

“The first duty of a Member of Parliament is to do what he thinks in his faithful and disinterested judgement is right and necessary for the honour and safety of Great Britain.”

Those duties weigh heavily on us all, and they are responsibilities that I take very seriously.

Dr Julian Lewis: There is one slight difference between the hon. Lady’s examples and what happened in 2016, when the MPs, the Government and the Opposition—everyone—agreed that they would take the view of the electorate directly and obey the verdict that they gave them. That did not apply in the scenario she describes relating to Edmund Burke, great constitutionalist though he was.

Catherine McKinnell: The right hon. Gentleman seems a bit stuck in the past. What we are talking about today is what we directly face. We could rerun the 2016 referendum campaign. We can debate the rights and wrongs, and the arguments for and against, over and over. I did not vote for the referendum or to invoke article 50, for the very reason that I could see us setting a clock ticking on a negotiation without an agreed strategy or plan. Many Members did not vote to invoke article 50, and many Members who are in the House now were not even elected at the time of the referendum. We had a general election subsequently, and that general election returned a hung Parliament, so we are where we are. The petition considers the immediate possibility that is staring us in the face—a no-deal exit from the EU, which is the legal default position if nothing changes today, or this week, to remove that possibility for 12 April.

Rather than going over the history, I am interested to know what the right hon. Gentleman thinks. Is he genuinely happy for this economy just to be driven off a cliff, with all the ramifications that flow from that?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Chris Heaton-Harris) rose—

Catherine McKinnell: I think the Minister wants me to give way.

Dr Julian Lewis rose—

Catherine McKinnell: I was hoping the right hon. Gentleman would make a speech.

Dr Lewis: I am sorry; I thought the hon. Lady wanted an answer now. I think there are three possibilities: the Government’s deal, leaving on World Trade Organisation terms and revoking the result of the referendum. I, together with 158 of my colleagues, which is more than half the parliamentary Conservative party, voted in the multiple options we were given about a week ago that we should leave on WTO terms, and I think that would be the right solution.

Catherine McKinnell: We can agree to disagree on that.

Chris Heaton-Harris: I will congratulate the hon. Lady properly later. She mentioned that things had moved on and that there had been a general election. Will she remind the House what the Labour party’s position was, in that election, on respecting the result of the referendum?

Catherine McKinnell: What is so difficult about the debate is that it has wedded itself to events in the past, rather than looking at the reality right in front of us.

Our country remains in a crisis. The situation is completely unacceptable and intolerable, and I am hugely aware of the costly uncertainty and anxiety that it is causing for businesses and people up and down the country, but I am also clear that, despite the Prime Minister’s disgraceful and inflammatory attempts to lay the blame at the feet of democratically elected representatives doing their jobs, this appalling mess is entirely of the Prime Minister’s, and the Government’s, own making.

The time-limited article 50 process was triggered without any plan or agreed strategy for where we wanted to end up—I voted against it at the time for that very reason—and months of valuable negotiating time were wasted on a general election that resulted only in a hung Parliament. After that election, there was a complete failure to listen and to reach out to or engage with MPs—either by party, geographically or according to their views on Brexit—to build that much-needed consensus, with every decision taken by the Prime Minister in her narrow party interest, rather than with the greater good of the country in mind. Yet more time was wasted by repeatedly postponing, or simply ignoring, meaningful votes on the agreement, even though it was clear some four months ago that it would not command Parliament’s support.

I implore the Minister not to respond to this important debate simply by trotting out the same tired old lines that we have heard from those on the Government Benches today, or what we have heard time and again about the Government’s approach to Brexit. I implore him to engage with the fact that this Government’s total failure to steer the country through this historic process has resulted in 6 million people signing a petition in a matter of days, calling for the only policy that this Government have pursued for the past three years to be reversed.

Craig Mackinlay (South Thanet) (Con): Has this petition not shown clearly what the People’s Vote is about, and made its veil drop? One could argue that the People’s Vote has no grand ambitions such as, “Let’s have democracy,” because this has nothing to do with another vote; it is about revocation. Will the hon. Lady now be honest and say that what she and others have been supporting through the people’s vote is revocation, not some grand democratic rerun of a vote?

Catherine McKinnell: I am not sure that the hon. Gentleman has been here for the full debate. [HON. MEMBERS: “He hasn’t.”] He has not, so he was not here when I set out the three petitions that we are debating. This one is about revoking article 50; the previous petition was in relation to a second referendum on the EU debate. I take great exception to his suggesting that, in some way, I am being dishonest in what I am saying.

James Gray (in the Chair): No, the hon. Gentleman did not.

Catherine McKinnell: He did.

James Gray (in the Chair): Order. I am perfectly certain that the hon. Gentleman was not suggesting that the hon. Lady was being dishonest in any shape, size or form, and therefore I think we need not ask him to—

Catherine McKinnell: He did.

James Gray (in the Chair): I think he did not. However, *Hansard* will tell. But I am sure that he was not intending to do so.

Catherine McKinnell: Thank you, Mr Gray. The hon. Member for South Thanet (Craig Mackinlay) did suggest that I should be honest. I have been honest, and I am being honest. This petition calls for the option of a revocation of article 50 to avoid us crashing out of the EU without a deal. The campaign that I support, which

is for the Brexit deal that Parliament arrives at to be put back to the people in a public vote, is obviously connected to that, but is an entirely different proposition. I hope that has clarified it for the hon. Gentleman.

Instead of more dithering and delay, it is incumbent on us to urgently find ways to put a stop to this crisis. I believe that the only democratic way to move this process on for the country is one that would require an act of true national leadership by the Prime Minister: she must now agree to put her withdrawal agreement back to the public for a final confirmatory vote. If she is not prepared to do that, she—or we—must step back from the precipice and revoke article 50 in the short-term, medium-term and long-term interests of our still-great nation. It is clear that, however this Brexit saga ends, things have to change. As a country, we have an enormous amount of work and listening to do. We must rebuild to put our economy and our society back together and give everybody a stake in, and hope for, the future. The sooner we can all get on with that, the better.

James Gray (in the Chair): A glance around the Chamber demonstrates that a great many Members wish to take part in this debate. While I do not intend to impose a formal time limit, an informal limit of five minutes would be a courtesy to each other, and would make good sense.

5.33 pm

Mr Chris Leslie (Nottingham East) (Ind): The petition that I particularly wish to address is that signed by over 6 million members of the public, calling on the Government and Members of Parliament to be prepared to revoke article 50 in the face of a Brexit catastrophe and support remaining in the European Union. Over 8.6% of my constituents—some 9,500 people in my constituency—have signed that petition. In December, I and other Members whose constituencies will come back to me—I could name them, but I am trying to think of their constituencies—took a case to the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg. We took a risk and prosecuted the case that, as the United Kingdom, we had the unilateral right to rescind the notification of article 50 if we needed to do so. We took that case despite many people saying that we should not do it, that it was impossible, or that the decision to trigger article 50 was a one-way street.

We expected that once the mythology of Brexit—the unicorns—was held up to the light, and once Members of Parliament and other people looked at this question, we would find ourselves in the situation that we are in this week. We predicted that the concept of a jobs-first Brexit, or a Brexit that promised all of those wonderful things that were on the side of the big red bus, was a mirage that would prove impossible to deliver. There was a notion that Britain could pull up the drawbridge and everything would be fine: that we did not need to worry about our European alliances, or care particularly about the border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, because these things could all be ironed out and it would be sorted out. We now know that is not the case.

Many of my constituents, and many hon. Members present, have looked at some of the options that we are debating in the other Chamber today: a customs union, the Norway option, the Canada option, or a supposed

[Mr Chris Leslie]

managed no deal. They have looked at the evidence, as they should, and have concluded that every single form of Brexit will make our constituents worse off. Therefore, how can I in good conscience say to my constituents, “That’s fine—no problem at all,” especially as they voted for remain? How can I possibly allow that situation to continue without giving them, at the very least, the right to sign it off through a form of final consent? They should have the final say.

I found myself finally having to leave the Labour party because I could no longer continue with the charade that somehow the Labour party was going to eventually get to the position of offering the public a vote. That option has remained on the ballot paper; it looks as though there has been some movement, and many good Labour MPs have been trying their best to get their Front-Bench team to support it. However, that was one of the reasons why I could no longer stay in the Labour party and had to join the Independent Group. Our view is that the public, if they so choose, should have the right to instruct their Government to revoke the article 50 notice and support remaining in the European Union. We are in a difficult set of circumstances, but if we want to truncate them and bring this situation to a conclusion sooner, a referendum is the best way to do so, rather than entering into four, five, six or seven years of long negotiations about our future relationship with the European Union.

Geraint Davies (Swansea West) (Lab/Co-op): The hon. Gentleman may know that I tabled the Terms of Withdrawal from the EU (Referendum) Bill on 6 July 2016, and that my hon. Friend the Member for Hove (Peter Kyle) is putting forward that proposal now. It is taking time, but we are getting there.

Mr Leslie: My hon. Friend has been very prescient on this issue. He has been consistent throughout—as have many hon. Members present—and I give him credit for that.

Faced with this petition, which has been signed by 6 million people, it is our duty to ensure that these views are not pigeonholed and sidelined in Westminster Hall, but that they are heard by the Government. It is not just a junior Minister—with respect to the hon. Member for Daventry (Chris Heaton-Harris)—who needs to hear the voices of the people, but the Prime Minister and senior Cabinet Ministers. When we come to the end of this debate, I do not believe we should simply nod through the motion that this Chamber, Westminster Hall, has considered this petition. It is important that we fight for those who have signed it, and take this issue to be considered in the main Chamber of the House of Commons. That is the position that I will be taking today.

5.39 pm

Rachael Maskell (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Gray. I rise in particular to speak on the petitions on the public vote and revoking article 50. Some 14,824 of my constituents have signed the petition to revoke article 50 to date. I keep watching as the numbers rise. It is a significant number of my constituents, and my constituency voted overwhelmingly to remain in 2016.

It seems that we have reached a real impasse in Parliament at this juncture. For all the political games that we are seeing played today, we need something clear and pure that moves forward. I am witnessing political fixes by the political elite for political survival, and that simply will not do. If Brexit gets through on the margins we are seeing in the votes as they progress—it may be meaningful vote 5 or meaningful vote 6—the country will never forgive Parliament for the economic disaster we see ahead of us. I have met employers in my constituency to discuss the impact that Brexit will have.

John Redwood: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Rachael Maskell: No, I will continue. I met a manufacturing employer just over a week ago. We are also due to lose 300 jobs in one of the agencies as a result of leaving Europe. We are in real need of high-skilled jobs in our city. There will also be a real impact on the university, not to mention our public services and our hospital, which is 500 staff short. The hospital recruited a cohort of 43 nurses from Spain. Only a handful remain today, because of what is happening over leaving the European Union. It is putting my local city at risk, so I will stand up for how people in my city voted back in 2016 to ensure that we do not end up in a disastrous Brexit mess.

The reality is that we are not seeing clear, cool, calm heads progressing the debate. We saw that clearly when the Prime Minister came to the podium and started pitching MPs against the people. We have seen it with her decisions, such as her catastrophic miscalculation on Friday. She thought that separating the political declaration from the withdrawal agreement would help to progress her deal, but we could all see that it would be a blind Brexit, with no leadership or certainty. People did not know what future they were voting for or who would be leading the negotiations.

It is absolutely clear that we need to move forward in a calmer way, and that will not be achieved over the next few days. It is clear that the country divided in 2016, but that has not yet been addressed by the Government. In fact, we have seen greater polarisation of our country with the austerity measures that have been brought forward. That has had a real impact. When people call for a different process to be exercised, and when people say, “Do not press this through,” it is Parliament’s duty to listen. It is unprecedented to see more than 6 million people take time out to sign a petition. As a result, it is so important that Parliament listens to the public.

I have questioned the Prime Minister, and I am confused. Why does she think it is okay for MPs to change their mind and vote time and again, yet it is not okay for the people of our country to do that? After all, every five years we expect the country to change its mind in voting in general elections. In fact, the Prime Minister wanted the country to change its mind so that the Government had a stronger majority. Clearly that did not go well for her, but that was after just two years. We are now nearly three years out from the 2016 referendum. My constituents are absolutely right to call for a public vote with the second petition.

Short of real political fixes, it seems inevitable that we will move to a longer extension. That would be the right move, giving us time to put our country back together and to decipher the relationship that we need with Europe

as we move forward. Brexit will have a serious impact on our country. In the early stages, an amendment came forward for citizens' assemblies. That would be a helpful way of proceeding, before then moving to a further public vote to decide how to take things forward. I thank my constituents for signing the petitions, and I trust that Parliament will hear them.

5.44 pm

Wera Hobhouse (Bath) (LD): It is a big honour not only to serve under your chairship, Mr Gray, but to speak in this debate. More than 6 million people have signed the petition. Let us reflect on the extraordinary circumstances that have led to this debate and the extraordinary number of people who have expressed their will in this way, combined with the 1 million people who marched peacefully just over a week ago in the streets of London to voice their opinion. They are unashamedly and for good reasons voicing their opinion that they want to stay members of the European Union.

Throughout the past three years, I have campaigned to remain. Within two weeks of the 2016 referendum, we set up Bath for Europe with like-minded people. We understood that democracy is not only about majorities, but about people being represented. I have proudly represented the will of the 48% who wanted to stay in the European Union. I believe that the number of people who want to stay in the European Union is now more than 48%, and it would be wrong not to openly represent that view. It would be wrong to be demonised for that.

It is also true that the referendum happened, so my preferred choice has always been to put the issue back to the people. My view is that revoking article 50 is the last thing we can do, in extremis, if we do not get the people's vote over the line. I believe very much—I would have to test it with the people—that those who have signed the petition agree with that view. Many millions of people probably hope that we will get to a people's vote where they can express their opinion.

Dr Julian Lewis: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Wera Hobhouse: I will not, because many Members want to speak.

One reason that people have been inspired to sign the petition is the fear of no deal. It exercises a lot of people, and that is why we need to put a people's vote on the table now, not as our preferred option, but because no deal could happen. If no deal happens, the blame will lie firmly at the Government's feet, because they have options. They could agree to a people's vote. If that option was combined with the Government's deal, it would go through Parliament. Alternatively, they could revoke article 50.

If we crash out in two weeks, the blame will lie with the Government alone. I am proud of all the people who have signed the petition, including 18,000 in my constituency. That is the will of the people in Bath. Anyone who refuses to listen to the will of the people in 2019 is not a true democrat. Saying that the people have spoken once and should never be allowed to speak again is a travesty.

I am proud to hear the will of people and to hear them voice their concerns. I definitely listen to them, and I have not given up on the possibility of us staying

in the European Union. I will fight to the end. I hope we get a people's vote, but in extremis we need to revoke article 50.

5.48 pm

Helen Hayes (Dulwich and West Norwood) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Gray. The Brexit negotiations over the past two years have culminated in a constitutional crisis and the inability of our Government to resolve the single biggest issue that our country has faced in a generation. Our Prime Minister has refused to take any responsibility for her role in that crisis, yet it is she who has led us to the current impasse. Faced with a country split down the middle in its opinion on Brexit, the Prime Minister said almost nothing on Brexit between July 2016 and January 2017, except "Brexit means Brexit". She failed at that early stage to chart a way forward that could bring the country together: a basis for negotiation with the EU that placed the national interest and protecting our economy, employment rights and environmental protections at the heart of the negotiating objectives.

In January 2017, the Prime Minister finally announced her Brexit red lines, which were essentially the red lines of the European Research Group—a hard-line sub-group of the Tory party not in any way representative of a majority of the country and advocating for the most divisive and damaging version of Brexit possible.

Heidi Allen: I am sure the hon. Lady is as curious as I am about tonight's documentary with Laura Kuenssberg, in which the Tory party Chief Whip says that his recommendation in the early days after the referendum result and after the 2017 general election result was that the Prime Minister could deliver only a softer Brexit that would reach a cross-party compromise in the House of Commons. It will be interesting to watch.

Helen Hayes: I thank the hon. Lady for her intervention. It will indeed be interesting to see that documentary.

It was the Prime Minister who took the UK into a snap general election in June 2017 and sought a mandate from the British people for her own explicitly hard interpretation of Brexit. She failed to achieve that mandate, but refused to accept that the will of the British people was not for a hard Brexit. It was the Prime Minister who negotiated with the EU on the basis of hard-Brexit red lines, and secured the only deal that could be secured on the basis of those red lines, when a negotiation genuinely based on the national interest might have yielded a different outcome. It was the Prime Minister who, despite facing the biggest defeat in parliamentary history on her deal, and two subsequent enormous defeats, recklessly and stubbornly failed to acknowledge that her deal cannot command support.

The vast majority of my constituents do not support Brexit—77% voted to remain in the European Union. They believe it will be utterly disastrous for our country and do not wish us to leave the EU. It is therefore no surprise to me that more than 26,000 of my constituents signed the petition calling for article 50 to be revoked, which is around 33% of the electorate. The many people who have been in touch with me about the petition support revocation because they oppose Brexit and because it is an essential protection against a no-deal Brexit, which is entirely within the power of the UK Government

[Helen Hayes]

to implement. For those reasons, I support motion (G) and will vote for it tonight. Parliament has rejected no deal. If no deal and no extension can be agreed, revocation is the only responsible course of action for the Government to take to protect our country from the calamity of a no-deal Brexit.

My constituents are, however, hugely supportive of the opportunity for the British people to have a final say on Brexit by way of a confirmatory vote. The only democratic way through the terrible impasse in Parliament is to allow the British people to express a view on whether they wish to leave the EU with a deal capable of being agreed by the EU, or whether to remain in the EU. Those who support leaving the EU with a deal have nothing to fear from such a process. They would be free to campaign and vote according to their views. I would, of course, campaign for remain in any such referendum.

Three years on from the EU referendum, it is clear that the leave campaign lied, promising many things: additional money for the NHS and multiple trade deals with other large economic powers that have simply not materialised. We now know things that were simply not discussed in 2016, chief among them the risks presented by Brexit to security in Northern Ireland. The official leave campaign has now accepted that it broke the law to win by a very small majority. It simply cannot be claimed in this context that the 2016 referendum result can accurately be read as the will of the people for ever and a day.

Dr Julian Lewis: I merely point out that the remain campaign heavily outspent the leave campaign and the Government sent a letter—a leaflet—to every household in the country at a cost of £9 million with an entirely one-sided pro-remain argument in it, so the hon. Lady cannot claim that leave got the better of the options in getting propaganda out to the masses.

Helen Hayes: I simply say to the right hon. Gentleman that only the leave campaign was found by the Electoral Commission to have broken the law. That is the point.

The Government must act to stop the damage that Brexit is doing. The democratic way to do that is to renew the mandate to proceed any further by giving the British people a final say. If they will not do that, and we stand at the edge of the no-deal cliff, the Government must revoke article 50.

5.54 pm

Chuka Umunna (Streatham) (Ind): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Gray, and also a pleasure to follow my neighbour, the hon. Member for Dulwich and West Norwood (Helen Hayes). I agree with every single word she said. I want to speak to e-petition 235138 on holding a people's vote, but, most of all, I want to talk to e-petition 241584 on revoking article 50 and remaining in the EU, which, as has been said, has been signed by more than 6 million people, including more than 25,000 people in my constituency, which is just under a third of the registered electors in Streatham.

I do not want to speak for long, but I will make these points. There is clearly no mandate whatever for the chaos that we have seen unfold in this country since the vote in 2016. Whether people voted leave or remain, there is simply no majority in the country for the mess

that has unfolded, despite the comments that we have heard in this debate. Given that there is not a mandate for this mess in this House, hopefully the indicative vote process will indicate what there is a majority for. I very much hope it will be for a people's vote. However, if there was no resolution, and on either 11 April or 21 May we faced falling off the cliff, it is clear that no responsible Government would allow this country to leave the European Union without a deal. I want to explain why, with particular reference to the Government's own documents on the implications of our leaving the European Union with no deal. I want to draw attention to four or five of the points made in the documents that the Government—I hope the Minister will speak to this—have published.

First, we are told:

“Despite communications from the Government, there is little evidence that businesses are preparing in earnest for a no deal scenario”,

and the evidence indicates that small and medium-sized businesses in particular are unprepared for such a possibility. Secondly,

“individual citizens are also not preparing for the effects”

of our leaving the European Union with no deal. According to the evidence that the Government have published—their own economic impact assessments—if we were to leave without a deal on an orderly basis, we would be looking at the economy being 6.3% to 9% smaller than it otherwise would have been, but one of the things missed in the commentary is that that is an assessment of an orderly departure. If we were to leave and crash out on 11 April or 21 May without a deal on WTO terms, the contraction in the economy is likely to be far bigger.

Look at the practicalities:

“Every consignment would require a customs declaration, and so around 240,000 UK businesses that currently only trade with the EU would need to interact with customs processes for the first time”.

I quote directly from the Government's own briefing papers. If we read between the lines, we are looking at an increase in food prices, panic buying by consumers and tariffs in the region of

“70% on beef... 45% on lamb... and 10% on finished automotive vehicles.”

And that before we look at the non-tariff barriers and their impact on the majority of the economy, which is service based. Based on the things that I have quoted from the Government's own document, I do not see how any responsible Government could say that they had a mandate to bring about the disaster that they have published in their own papers.

[STEVE McCABE *in the Chair*]

Chris Heaton-Harris: The hon. Gentleman raises important points from the paper. I am sure he saw the Treasury Monetary Policy Committee minutes last week that said 80% of businesses were ready for a no-deal scenario. He might have misread the number: it is 145,000 businesses that trade solely with the European Union and the Government have contacted them on three occasions so far. So, there has been some progress since the paper that he quotes from was published.

Chuka Umunna: I am just quoting from the Minister's own document. Technically, he is—dare I say it?—the Minister for no deal. He is responsible for ensuring that

we are prepared if we leave in those circumstances. Never mind no responsible Government allowing us to leave without a deal; I cannot see how any Member of this House who held the post that he does as the Minister responsible could stand in the way of article 50 being revoked were we on the cusp of the disaster that he is supposed to be preparing for.

Dr Julian Lewis: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Wera Hobhouse *rose*—

Chuka Umunna: I will finish on this point: above all, the people who will be most angered by us allowing the country to crash out with no deal are the younger generations. For all the impact that this will have on older generations, the younger generations are the ones who will have to live with the results of Brexit for far longer than the rest of us. To my increasing surprise, every time we debate these matters, those people are never discussed. I think I am the first to mention them today; I am sure that they have been in everyone else's minds. They are the ones who, above all, will never forgive this generation of politicians if we allow this catastrophe to happen.

6 pm

Geraint Davies (Swansea West) (Lab/Co-op): As I mentioned, on 6 July 2016 I introduced the Terms of Withdrawal from EU (Referendum) Bill to give people a vote on the deal, in the knowledge that what they were voting on in good faith might not be what was delivered. We have certainly found that to be the case. It is now clear from the evidence that Britain will be poorer, weaker, more isolated and more divided if we Brexit.

I stand here on behalf of people in Swansea West who voted to leave. They voted for more money, more trade, more control over migration and our laws, and they are getting none of those things. They see a £40 billion divorce bill and an economy projected to shrink by 10%. It has already shrunk by 2.5%—around £360 million a week, when we were promised £350 million a week for the NHS. Under the Prime Minister's deal, we will still be controlled by EU laws. Under the absurd and irresponsible idea of no deal, we would be controlled by the WTO, which has 260 members, a massive commission, and an unelected pool of judges who would force various laws on us so that we could not, for example, choose to bring the railways and water into public ownership.

Migration will not be controlled, with an open border in Northern Ireland, and the no-deal scenario is a sort of Evel Knievel irresponsible madness. People who voted to leave did not know that Trump would be elected. They did not know that Trump would undermine trade, whether it is steel or Bombardier, undermine the Paris agreement, or undermine our world security by withdrawing from nuclear deals with Iran and so on. We are in a completely different scenario. They did not know that the Chinese would abolish the limited amount of democracy that they had, and that in any trade deals—

Dr Julian Lewis: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Geraint Davies: No, I will not give way—we have heard enough from you already, thank you. *[Interruption.]* We did not know that we would be crushed between China and the United States in terms of the EU's ability to negotiate.

Dr Lewis: Just talk to each other then. *[Interruption.]*

Geraint Davies: I am sorry that Government Members have decided to leave, after multiple interventions to hear some logic. This is not the will of the people; this is a curse on the people by those such as the Members who have now left the Chamber, who do not really agree with democracy at all. We can see the empty Benches. They do not really care about the 6 million people who have seen that this is a complete shambles. Frankly, the people who vote for this will never be forgiven for what they are pushing on the country.

Heidi Allen: I appreciate that everybody's diaries are incredibly busy in Westminster, but I find it extraordinary that there is now literally nobody on the side of the House that is responsible for responding to the petition, given it is of such a size. Does that not tell us how poorly the 6 million people in this country who are terrified by the prospect of Brexit feel? This is supposed to be democracy—I find it absolutely startling.

Geraint Davies: I completely agree. We have seen 6 million people in a matter of days saying, "Enough is enough—we want revocation." A million people were on the streets, and for every one of them, there are probably 20 more. I personally could not make it; due to various commitments, I could not come along. We must have a vote of the people. Clearly there is a crying need for us to move forward.

Daniel Zeichner (Cambridge) (Lab): Further to the previous intervention, in the last debate in Westminster Hall we had exactly the same situation; very few Government Members attended. Does my hon. Friend agree that the petition shows a real passion on the side of people who want to remain? They do not want a fudge. For them, remain means remain, and that is what we should do.

Geraint Davies: People have the right to exercise their views, whether to leave or to remain, and increasingly people want to remain. They can see how awful this is. We have been talking about this matter endlessly, and if we do not revoke or have a public vote, we will spend another 10 years talking about it, with ridiculous deals that will push us down the economic toilet in my view. It is time to put Brexit out of its misery. It is time to let the people decide.

6.5 pm

Martyn Day (Linlithgow and East Falkirk) (SNP): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr McCabe, in what has been an interesting, highly topical and well-attended debate, although I note that the leavers have now all left, after making a few interventions and, bizarrely, no speeches—something that I am sure that the public will have noticed.

I am very grateful to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne North (Catherine McKinnell) for opening on behalf of the Petitions Committee, on which we both serve. I echo her thanks to the Committee staff and the digital staff for all their hard work in surviving the petition. The number of signatories and the interest shown have certainly improved our processes. Few people will not have heard about the Petitions Committee as a result of the viral "Revoke Article 50" petition, so the Committee may become a tad busier in future. I also

[*Martyn Day*]

pay tribute to the cross-party and cross-Parliament Scottish parliamentarians whose work has given us legal certainty on the ability to revoke article 50, without which the debate would almost be a moot point.

As of this morning, the “Revoke Article 50 and remain in the EU” petition has been signed by 10,156 of my constituents—a staggering number, although it seems almost paltry compared with some of the numbers that we have heard from other constituencies—the “Hold a second referendum on EU membership” petition has been signed by 229, and the “Parliament must honour the Referendum result. Leave deal or no deal” petition has been signed by 129. I am sure that all Members will have been inundated with emails about Brexit in general of late, and about the petitions and today’s debate in particular over recent days. The overwhelming majority of emails and messages that I have received are from people who wish to remain in the EU, and who would support revoking article 50 and/or going back to the people in a second referendum.

That is no surprise, given the volume of signatures on today’s petitions and the fact that 62% of Scotland voted remain, as did an estimated 58% of my constituents at the time, including me, I might add. I think it would be considerably higher if we had another vote today. During the 2016 referendum, and over the years since, I have seen nothing to shake my belief that staying in the EU is better than any of the possible alternative deals. Access to the EU single market and freedom of movement are vital both to protect jobs and to meet Scotland’s need for key workers in public services such as health and social care.

Much of the problem with the 2016 referendum was the result of its rather hasty nature. It was a relatively short campaign of a very vacuous nature. There were vague mantras and slogans on the side of a bus, the proposal was ill defined, and the reality is that, as other speakers have mentioned, Brexit means different things to different people; the number of emails that I have received from Brexiteers and leavers has proven that. As a consequence, agreement even among leavers is nigh-on impossible, as has been demonstrated through the parliamentary process and the impasse in this building to date.

People who voted to leave in 2016 did not vote to leave on 29 March or 12 April, as there was no date on the ballot. We need to pause and think seriously about the consequences of what we are about to do. I am reminded of the expression “act in haste, repent at leisure”. In this scenario, we may regret pressing on regardless with these arbitrary, self-imposed deadlines, and find ourselves unable to rectify mistakes after the event.

Quite a number of constituents have been saying that the debate should have taken place in the main Chamber. Although I agree with them, the reality is that the Committee does not have the ability to bring debates to the main Chamber—something that perhaps needs to change. Hopefully the powers that be in Parliament are listening to that. Today we are debating in Westminster Hall, while other crucial Brexit-related business takes place in the main Chamber: the latest round of indicative votes—a process that I look forward to taking part in later tonight. Unless a withdrawal agreement is approved by the Commons, the UK must decide within days

whether to ask for a long delay to Brexit that would involve holding elections to the European Parliament. The only remaining alternatives would be to leave without an agreement or to revoke the formal article 50 exit procedure altogether.

Time is not with us. Today is 1 April, the EU Council will meet on 10 April and, unless something is agreed, we will leave without a deal on 12 April. Ultimately, this is a political choice. Crashing out of the EU with no deal need not be the default—it is not the only alternative to the PM’s deal. It is imperative that we choose to revoke article 50 and put the question back to the people, because we must ensure that the UK does not crash out without the express consent of our electorate.

As I have pointed out, Scotland did not vote for Brexit and we should not be dragged out of the EU against our will. Revoking article 50 would honour the wishes of the majority in Scotland. If this UK truly is a Union of equals and a family of nations, as Scots were promised during our referendum on independence, our different views must be respected. I implore the House to listen to them. If that is not possible, the UK is not fit for purpose and its days are numbered.

6.10 pm

Catherine West (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab): It is a pleasure to speak under your chairmanship, Mr McCabe. May I put it on record how proud I am that Hornsey and Wood Green currently ranks as the constituency with the second-highest number of signatories to the petition to revoke article 50? That is the main argument that I will make in this debate, because I know that other hon. Members wish to contribute.

Andy Slaughter: I cannot compete with my hon. Friend—Hammersmith has only 22,346 signatories, although that is 30% of my constituents. However, I must observe that even New Forest East, whose hon. Member stormed out earlier, has 7,245 signatories. Is it not shameful that hon. Members cannot represent their constituents, who are desperate for a resolution and for us to take the lead?

Catherine West: My hon. Friend is correct. Even though a very small percentage of my constituents voted to leave the EU, I have tried to engage with them and talk about what happened in the election and why they felt like that. That is the spirit that we need to move towards as a Parliament, but it is difficult to do that when hon. Members leave the Chamber.

On the Saturday after 23 June 2016, I hired a small room in the old Hornsey town hall for any EU nationals who wanted to discuss their worries with me. When I opened the door, it was biblical: 500 people had come. They were not all connected to the EU in a personal way; for some, it was just a general feeling. That is the sort of constituency I have, but I still want to engage with those who hold the opposite argument, who may feel just as passionately even though there are fewer of them. I hope that this debate will take place in a spirit of co-operation and of listening to one another.

When 1 million people took to the streets of London on 23 March, it was quite an amazing day. Only last Monday, MPs voted to take control of the Order Paper in response to a Government who have failed to deliver

a deal that protects the interests of the British people. Yesterday, the petition that we are debating surpassed 6 million signatures—as it is 1 April, Mr McCabe, you may be amused to hear that this morning my other half came into the room and said, “It’s at 9 million!” I leapt out of bed and he said, “April fool.” At least we can try to maintain a sense of humour in these difficult days.

We know that the Prime Minister intends to make a fourth attempt at bringing her deal back—possibly on Wednesday, although the Minister may enlighten us further—and tonight MPs will take part in a second round of indicative votes. It seems completely nonsensical that the people should be prohibited from speaking again at this moment of intense crisis.

Nearly three years have passed since the narrow result, and we understand from commentators that with every passing week a further £600 million is wiped off the national economy. How can something like new computer systems for our ports—to give one example from my time on the International Trade Committee—be more important than providing free dental care for children in our most deprived areas, free university education for our students or the crucial funds that our local authorities need to fight knife crime? There are so many things that £600 million per week could be used for—it is enough to make one weep.

Each hour, £171,000 is spent on preparing for a no-deal Brexit, which we know would have a devastating effect on the economy and inflict disproportionate harm on deprived communities. To put it into context, that money could be spent on recruiting 85,000 nurses, 50,000 teachers or 49,000 police officers—a move that would begin to repair the damage done by eight-and-a-half years of austerity.

On 14 March, the Commons voted to extend article 50—an important step to ensure that the UK did not crash out of the EU last Friday. That action was necessary, but it is not a long-term solution. There are now 271 hours left of the short extension to article 50, so we must ensure that we have an insurance policy to protect the UK from a catastrophic no-deal scenario. As other hon. Members have said, that insurance policy is the revocation of article 50.

I was proud to support the amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Na h-Eileanan an Iar (Angus Brendan MacNeil), not least because he chairs the International Trade Committee, on which I sat until recently—I am sure that hon. Members will correct my faulty Gaelic pronunciation of his constituency. Many hon. Members present will be giving a lot of thought to a similar motion on the Order Paper this evening, which was tabled by the hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh South West (Joanna Cherry) and has the same aim. If we are heading towards no deal, revocation seems the most sensible, straightforward and logical course of action. Her amendment would not preclude hon. Members from continuing to pursue a second referendum, as I shall, or from advocating a Norway or Canada-style deal.

I am proud to be voting for the revocation amendment tonight, along with the second referendum amendment that it will enable. I encourage all hon. Members to join me in the Aye Lobby—although I feel that I may be speaking to the converted in this funny debate, in which the Minister, as the only Conservative Member, is looking a little lonely.

6.16 pm

Ann Coffey (Stockport) (Ind): Our relationship with Europe continues to divide communities and generations. Many people see the relationship in terms of Europe’s economic value to us; some see it as a way of putting to rest forever the terrible wars that divided Europe for centuries, while for others it is a bulwark against oppressive regimes and it is a protection of citizens’ rights. Yet others see membership of the EU as a threat to national sovereignty and identity.

In the 1975 referendum, the British people voted to stay in Europe, with 62.7% voting yes. The referendum split the country and the then Labour Cabinet, and did not settle the question: almost immediately afterwards, anti-marketeters began their campaign to overturn the result. In the 2016 referendum, the people voted to leave Europe by a smaller margin; in my constituency, 53.2% voted to remain, compared with 46.8% who voted to leave.

I conducted a survey of constituents shortly after that vote, and I have just conducted another poll to see how people feel two years on. I sent out surveys to 4,500 households; 71% replied that they now feel that the people should have the final say on the Brexit deal, while 72% said that remaining in the EU should be an option in another referendum. The young were much more pro-Europe than older people: 83% of 25 to 49-year-olds said that there should be an option to remain, compared with 50% of those aged 64-plus. Of those who voted to leave, approximately a fifth either would now vote to remain or are undecided, with those in the 25-to-49 age bracket being most likely to have changed their mind.

The issue of sovereignty and what it means to be British, which was so important in 1975, continued as a strong thread in the replies to my 2016 and 2018 surveys. The latest survey contained many opposing views. For example, one respondent said:

“As a sovereign nation, I want the UK to remain in a community and work together to share information and provide mutual support”.

Conversely, another respondent said:

“We want our country back, our sovereignty, our laws.”

I voted to stay in Europe in 1975, partly for economic reasons. The economy—as probably no one present will recall—was in a very bad state, but my overriding reason was that as a young person I saw belonging to Europe as a break from the past, with the possibility of a better future. As a child, I was brought up in the shadow of the war because of the traumatic experiences of my parents and grandparents. Peace in Europe was an overwhelming prize for our generation. I wanted us to be a nation that took our place alongside other countries and contributed to the responsibility that the international community has to resolve some very challenging issues, such as climate change and migration.

Clearly, it was always going to be difficult to get support for the deal that the Prime Minister has brought back. Indeed, it is difficult to think of any deal that could win overwhelming support, because we all want very different outcomes. It is not very satisfactory for any option to be the majority view of the House by a handful of votes, which is why I believe that having another vote by the public on whatever option the House supports, together with the option to remain, is the only way forward. I do not think that another public

[Ann Coffey]

vote will settle the issue of what our relationship with Europe should be; communities and generations will continue to be divided.

I believe that the younger generation will, in time, have a more settled view of what its relationship with Europe should be. It is only when that happens that this issue will be resolved. The only long-term solution to the issue of identity is time. However, in a public vote, people would be voting this time on proper, detailed options for the way forward, with the full knowledge of what a deal with the EU would look like, and with the option of voting to remain in the EU if that appeared a better option. Perhaps that could put back into the debate a space for rational consideration, which would be welcomed by many members of the public.

6.21 pm

Martin Whitfield (East Lothian) (Lab): It is an honour to serve under your chairmanship, Mr McCabe. I thank the Petitions Committee for the debate on the three petitions and my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne North (Catherine McKinnell) for introducing it. We have heard a lot of very interesting arguments, and I extend my thanks to the 98 people in East Lothian who signed the petition asking to respect the original referendum—they have a right to a voice. I thank the 356 people in East Lothian who signed the petition to hold a second referendum. I thank the 13,099 signatories—nearly 12.5% of my constituents—who signed the petition to revoke article 50.

I offer the same thanks to all three groups, because this is a debate in which we need to listen to all sides. We need to address the concerns. It is not a debate in which time should be wasted with interventions and shouting down to try to silence the other side; that is a problem we have had in previous years, and we are not getting any better at it.

I also thank the hon. Member for Stockport (Ann Coffey), who reminds us that the precursor of the EU was an organisation to keep peace—that was its fundamental purpose. People looked to countries across Europe that were devastated by war and said, “How can we make things better?” We came up with the idea of trying to share, and we liked it; it worked. The UK was instrumental in the creation of that organisation, then we sought to join. We were shunned, but we did not take that as a no; we went back and asked again. We did so because we saw that what was happening there was the right thing for the future. It was the right thing for young people then the way it is the right thing for them now. It was right for industry then, just as it is now.

We live in a world where we have a growing challenge from the west and a challenge in the east. Standing together makes us stronger, which is important. I was going to pick up on a variety of comments such as, “Oh, it’s in your manifesto,” and so forth, but, given the shortage of time, I shall not give them the dignity that they do not deserve.

I shall instead answer my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne North, who said that petitions have been used in Parliament for ages; they have, and date back to 1832. The very first petition was drawn up by the suffragettes, who wanted a vote, and presented to the House. I suggest that if we had listened to that petition

then, some of what happened subsequently might have played out very differently and been more respectful of the sort of community and society that we want to live in today.

I want to look briefly at what article 50 says and why it should be revoked. It is a very simple clause:

“Any Member State may decide to withdraw from the Union in accordance with its own constitutional requirements.”

It is those last two words—“constitutional requirements”—that have, as much as anything else, caused us problems. We have a challenging constitution; it is unwritten, but it is also versatile. It allows people to say, “This is what I think it is, and you disagree with me at your peril,” but our constitution works because we all agree on certain elements of it.

One of those elements is democracy. If we revoke article 50 as the petition requests, we will create space in which we can perhaps have a better discussion with people who are involved. Some young people in my constituency—primary schoolchildren—wrote to me, and one of them said, “We really should have another vote. We’ve talked about this; it makes sense.” Another boy wrote to me and said, “Why don’t we give the vote to everyone who didn’t have the vote then, but has the vote now? Let’s ask them.” Those young people are looking at adult problems that they know affect them, and coming up with solutions.

Sandy Martin (Ipswich) (Lab): Does my hon. Friend agree that should article 50 be revoked, that needs to be in conjunction with a people’s vote? We need to maintain people’s faith in democracy. If people are to have faith in democracy if we decide against something that was decided, albeit with a very small majority, we need to have another vote to be able to confirm the decision.

Martin Whitfield: I very much agree; we cannot have enough democracy. One of the questions that needs to be answered is what sort of democracy we want going forwards. We have looked at the referendum, and a group of people say, “The original referendum is sacrosanct; we can’t have another.” We have people who say, “We’ve had a general election—it’s sacrosanct, and we’re not going to change it.”

Very serious constitutional questions need to be addressed urgently. One way to do that is to create a space for that discussion to happen. The request to revoke article 50 does not mean that we will never leave the EU; it means that we can start to reconcile the country away from screaming and shouting and towards a situation in which discussion takes place and we can move forward together.

Bambos Charalambous (Enfield, Southgate) (Lab): Businesses are affected, and many of them do not know who they will employ in the future, what supply chains they will use and which regulatory regime they will use. Surely we need to have space to allow them to have certainty.

Martin Whitfield: Absolutely; I agree. The handling of the no-deal nightmare cliff edge has not been the greatest moment in parliamentary history. We can have a great moment in that history by opening up the discussion again and trusting our voters—the public—to take it forward.

6.27 pm

Dr Sarah Wollaston (Totnes) (Ind): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr McCabe.

“If a democracy cannot change its mind, it ceases to be a democracy.”

Those are not my words, but those of our first Brexit Secretary, the right hon. Member for Haltemprice and Howden (Mr Davis), who is one of many. The ability to change one’s mind is a beautiful thing and something that we should particularly value in parliamentarians. As Maynard Keynes said:

“When the facts change, I change my mind.”

Having a sealed mind—the inability to change one’s mind—is something that we should be very careful about. That is where we are at the moment, I am afraid. We are in a situation in which people seem incapable of changing their mind, but the public are not.

It is very difficult to quote a figure for the number of people who have signed the petition to revoke article 50, because it is changing. When we started the debate, it was 6,036,045, but the last time I checked—a couple of minutes ago—it was 6,037,286. Some 10,804 of those signatories are in my constituency, which is almost 16% of the electorate. I pay tribute to the 355 people who signed the petition to leave with or without a deal, because we should recognise their voices in the debate. I also pay tribute to the 496 people who signed the petition for the second referendum.

There are lots of reasons to change one’s mind. A good reason to change one’s mind is that the circumstances have changed. Another is that one has looked at the evidence. I come to this seeing both sides of the debate, because I started out—originally, when the referendum campaign was launched—as a soft-leave Eurosceptic. However, as Chair of the Health and Social Care Committee, I heard the evidence of harm week in, week out, and I came to the view that I was wrong. I was not afraid to say that. In fact, many colleagues said to me, “Don’t tell people that you’ve changed your mind. Just put a cross in a different box. It will be very bad for your political career if you change your mind.” It is astonishing that we have come to that—that parliamentarians are not honest and are not prepared to change their mind when they have looked at the evidence.

We focus on the idea that this is all about a WTO Brexit and trade, but from chairing the Health and Social Care Committee it became obvious to me that there is clear evidence of harm to social care, science and research from unpicking a close relationship that has brought enormous benefits for more than four decades. I looked at the harm that Brexit would cause to science and research. There is no version of Brexit that will benefit science and research, improve the situation for our health and social care workforce, or do anything positive for NHS funding.

Of course, the biggest, most remembered non-fact of all the referendum campaign was the £350 million a week for the NHS that never was. Those who led the leave campaign not only know that that was wrong, but valued the fact that people were quoting that figure and that there was a debate. I was in rooms with people who said to me, “Yes, we know the fact is wrong. It’s not a fact. It’s a gross figure, rather than a net figure,” but they were prepared to keep saying it. Many of those people now sit on the Front Bench. It is quite extraordinary.

We must consider the big picture and the extent to which people were misled knowingly and deliberately during the referendum campaign. We must consider the very real evidence that has emerged in every area of the degree of harm. We must be honest about the fact that there were many different versions of Brexit. I am a former clinician—I have said this before—and it would be ridiculous to take someone into an operating theatre more than 1,000 days after they had signed a vague consent form for an operation of some sort. The surgeon would be struck off. The surgeon in this case, I am afraid, is our Prime Minister. Now that we know all the circumstances of Brexit, she has a duty, once we have settled on a version, to allow people to go back and weigh up the risks and benefits of a known deal. That is what is required to give consent.

That is particularly true for young people. We are taking people into the operating theatre kicking and screaming with a consent form signed by their grandparents. We owe it to the British people to check that we have their valid consent before we carry out this extraordinary act of constitutional, social and economic surgery on the population. We have time to do so. We should take that time, and revocation is one way we could do that. We should revoke and reflect. As the hon. Member for East Lothian (Martin Whitfield) said, that does not cancel Brexit altogether; it just gives us the chance to pause. This is a significant decision, and we should take the time to ensure we get it right.

There are many good reasons to change one’s mind, but there are some that are less honourable, such as changing one’s mind because it suits one’s leadership ambition or because this has all become about the unity of the Conservative party. The country is looking on in horror; it does not see those as reasons to change one’s mind or to stick rigidly to a point of view when all the evidence to the contrary is compelling. Many of my constituents have said to me over and over again, “Why is it that all of you get to change your mind so many times but none of us does?” They just want the ability to reflect the fact that many of them have changed their mind.

Last weekend, I was with the million people—an extraordinary, positive outpouring from all around the country, walking past the Prime Minister’s door peacefully and asking her to put this to the people. I contrast that with the crowds that were outside the gate when I cycled out last Friday, screaming at me, “Traitor!” and “Bitch!”, and referring to other parts of my anatomy in a disgusting outpouring of hostility.

I hear the Prime Minister and others say that we cannot put this back to the people because it will unleash dark forces and division in our society, but those dark forces and division are already out there. We counter the far right not by appeasing them but by standing firm. Since when did this country not have a democratic process because we were afraid of the far right? I and many colleagues in this House have had to face that blast full on. I will not be quiet; I will keep saying loud and clear that it is time we put this back to the people.

6.36 pm

Neil Coyle (Bermondsey and Old Southwark) (Lab): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne North (Catherine McKinnell) on her brilliant opening speech and on being a brilliant MP for my dad. I want to make four brief points, although there are some sub-points—things that might be a bit short.

[Neil Coyle]

It is three years since 37% of the eligible electorate voted to leave, and two years since the Prime Minister triggered article 50. Someone earlier described that as premature, but that is an understatement—it was reckless in the extreme. I voted against triggering article 50 and am proud to have done so. Everything we have seen since justifies the decision that I and all those who voted against took at that time.

I speak in support of the petitions in favour of a new people's vote and revoking article 50 on behalf of an inner-London constituency with a more significant economic cushion. Other hon. Members have spoken about the harm, or the potential speed and depth of the harm, to their constituencies that comes from Brexit. I also want to challenge the idea that there is a north-south divide here, or that this debate is more affluent versus more disadvantaged communities, because that is simply not true.

In my constituency, some wards have 43% child poverty, there are hundreds of working people reliant on food banks under this Government, and there is a very significant homeless and rough-sleeping population. We should all be speaking about the additional damage that Brexit will do to our constituencies. No constituency will be better off as a result of any form of Brexit.

We would be doing people a disservice if we ignored the demographics of the 2016 referendum or the change that we have seen since. It should surprise no one that the vast majority of our black and minority ethnic voters chose to vote remain. They are sick of the foul press narrative, emboldened by this Government, on immigration. Immigrants make a positive net contribution to this country, and we should not be ashamed of making that case. More women, a majority of every group of employed people—full time, part time, self-employed, you name it—and overwhelming numbers of young people, where they voted, voted to remain. The two significant groups that voted to leave were older people and unemployed people. The Government ignore the change since 2016 at their own peril. Where will their voters come from in the future? The demographic change helps to explain why they are scared of going back to the people for a new vote.

I want to highlight some of the damage I have seen, even in an inner-London constituency. I have talked to employers and businesses from across my dynamic and vibrant constituency. Hospitality, construction and the public sector are struggling to recruit already, even before we get to any potential deal or crash out with no deal. I have seen two financial sector firms move to Frankfurt, and I have seen investment from different businesses go instead to Amsterdam when it would otherwise have gone to Elephant and Castle.

We have also seen damage in terms of democracy and the rise in hate. I echo the points made by the hon. Member for Totnes (Dr Wollaston), who spoke about events we saw on Friday. I think it deeply shameful that a neo-fascist was allowed to speak anywhere near the Cenotaph in our capital city.

We have also seen hate grow elsewhere. We now know more than we did before about Putin's influence and about the depth of lawbreaking, overspending and criminality. Although some of us knew that those were lies on the side of that bus, we had no idea of the depth of the lying and criminality that was going on inside the bus just three years ago.

Voters are now being treated as though they are stupid. It fools no one that the person who, as Home Secretary in 2016, told voters that leaving the European Union would damage our national security and our economy is now, as Prime Minister, pretending that her deal, or any other offering, does anything different. Voters are not stupid and should not be treated as such. It is absurd to have made one claim then and to make a complete counter-claim now.

Those are some of the reasons that the revoke petition in particular has grown so fast and so furiously since it was launched. In my constituency of Southwark, 25,000 people have signed the petition and, in the borough as a whole—across two and a half constituencies—some 75,000 people have signed the petition to revoke article 50. That is more than double the number of people in our borough who voted leave back in 2016.

The Prime Minister claims that she has the support of the people for her pitiful offering, but there is no petition for her deal. That petition does not exist, simply because the public support for it does not exist. I would wager that, even were public support for any such petition to increase, it would still have fewer signatories than there were members of the Cabinet, given what we have seen over the past few weeks.

Finally, even in Bermondsey and Old Southwark—a heavily remain constituency—I have spoken to multiple people whose views have shifted since 2016, as well as many more who still support leave but do not support the Prime Minister's deal and do support a public vote. Voters whose views have shifted include a prison officer, a banker and a teacher. On Friday, I met a man and his best friend, who is Portuguese and is worried about her future rights in the UK. They recognise the crisis that we are in and the damage that we have seen. They want to revoke article 50 and they want a say on whatever course this country chooses to take. For those reasons, I will be voting today with those people in mind.

6.42 pm

Deidre Brock (Edinburgh North and Leith) (SNP): It is a great pleasure to serve under your chairship, Mr McCabe. There have been some terrific contributions in the debate. I particularly appreciated that of the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne North (Catherine McKinnell), which was wide ranging and covered a great many points that I very much agreed with. Something that really stuck out was what she said about the very different visions of what Brexit meant and how no one was trying to pull those visions together into some sort of whole. I will address that further in my speech.

The hon. Member for Nottingham East (Mr Leslie) spoke of a mirage of Brexit, which I thought was a terrific term. It really describes the nonsense, in some cases, that we were told by those who supported Brexit and which was offered to those who would eventually vote for it. Describing that as a mirage is particularly apt. The hon. Member for York Central (Rachael Maskell) spoke of the country never forgiving and mentioned citizens' assemblies, which are certainly something that should be considered more closely.

The hon. Member for Streatham (Chuka Umunna) quite rightly reminded us of the younger generation, of the importance of these decisions for their lives and of how we, as those who are in power now—and of a certain generation, in my case—must remember and

consider them at all times. We in this place are creating their future and, frankly, if we pursue this Brexit, it will be a very poor future—I include my own children in that consideration.

My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow and East Falkirk (Martyn Day) gave a terrific speech, for which I thank him. It was very measured and considered and I agreed with everything that he said. The hon. Member for East Lothian (Martin Whitfield) reminded us that, ultimately, Brexit is a political choice. That must be remembered during our votes tonight and in all our consideration of this incredibly important issue.

I must highlight in particular the contribution from the hon. Member for Totnes (Dr Wollaston), which was extremely frank. She, too, spoke of the many different versions of Brexit, and her condemnation of the hostility that has arisen in recent weeks hit the nail right on the head. She spoke of the whole Brexit debate unleashing dark forces and division. We must stand up to the far right rather than appease it.

The call rings out from Brexiters that we must respect the will of the people in the 2016 referendum. The question that keeps occurring to me is, “What was the will that was expressed?” For some, it was perhaps the £350 million a week for the NHS, and they may be very disappointed when that does not arrive. For others, it may have been the higher wages that were promised during the leave campaign, which is a benefit that does not seem to be appearing any time soon. Some may have been wooed by the promise to scrap VAT, about which we have heard almost nothing since, or perhaps by the easy-as-pie trade deals, of which we were supposed to have dozens by now. Alternatively, was it the UK-EU trade deal or the new immigration system that we were supposed to have by May next year?

One thing that we still have is the pledge that there will be no change to the operation of the Irish border, as promised in a Vote Leave news release of 1 June 2016 by the right hon. Members for Surrey Heath (Michael Gove), for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Boris Johnson) and for Witham (Priti Patel). The one promise left standing is the one that seems to be causing all the problems between the Tories and the DUP.

Despite all the fluff and flannel since 2016, it is fairly clear that leave never meant leave and Brexit never meant Brexit. In the blizzard of reasons for voting one way or another, there was never a manifesto; there was never a plan for what happens afterwards; and there was never any vision of the future. No one was selling truth or honesty, but there was plenty of prejudice and imagined slight on offer, and plenty of gung-ho hot-headed invective, but very little sober reflection.

Since then, however, we have all had a chance to take stock. From hearing other hon. Members today, I know that they, like me, have spent time talking to constituents and have received a range of different responses. I have met people who wanted to leave so that our laws would be made at home, but who still wanted to keep freedom of movement. I spoke to one lady who did not like the control that she thought the EU had over our lives, but thought we should have common standards for goods across Europe. There was no settled will of the people, no single movement, and no collective decision-making. There was no plan to vote for, no manifesto to be held to, and no vision of a new constitution. Any politician

who says that they are simply respecting the will of the people is actually just hijacking an advisory plebiscite for their own personal or political advantage.

My constituency of Edinburgh North and Leith is decidedly in favour of the EU. More than a quarter of the population signed the online petitions to revoke article 50. That reflects what is said to me across the constituency on a regular basis. People are worried about whether their doctor will still be here in future. They are concerned about whether their neighbours and friends will face pressure to leave. Concerned constituents have made countless representations to me about how the community will be affected if we no longer have the flow of fresh faces and if we cannot hang on to the new Edinburgh North and Leithers that we have currently.

The wife of the regius keeper of the Royal Botanical Gardens in Edinburgh contacted me because she was concerned about her right to stay. She did not work much while she was bringing up their children, but her husband served with distinction in the Marines, and was invalided out at the rank of lieutenant colonel. He is also a member of Her Majesty’s Body Guard of the Honourable Corps of Gentlemen at Arms, but that cuts no ice. A constituent who does not want to be named because she fears the repercussions came to me in fear of being deported to the EU country that she left as a toddler to come to the UK even before that country joined the Common Market. She raised her family here and looks after her grandchildren while her children work, but her status here is now uncertain.

Catherine West: Does the hon. Lady agree that there is a real risk of another Windrush situation developing if the Government do not get a handle on this?

Deidre Brock: The hon. Lady is absolutely right. I hope that the Minister is hearing this, because it greatly concerns many people in my constituency and hers, and across the United Kingdom. The situation needs to be taken a grip of right now, so that those people can be reassured.

Martin Whitfield: I will be swift. I am sure that the hon. Lady will confirm that the substantial majority of those in her constituency are indeed EU nationals, as she said, but does not their angst about article 50 and this situation show their commitment to wanting to stay here to contribute to our society?

Deidre Brock: Absolutely. I completely associate myself with that comment. My constituency is particularly multi-dimensional, with a number of ethnicities across the board. That is something I relish the most about my constituency, and it goes back hundreds of years, because Leith is a dock area. The embracing of new people on our shores is particularly obvious in Edinburgh North and Leith, and I am proud to be associated with that.

The sentiment repeated to me regularly by my constituents, with very few exceptions, is that they want to keep our links with the EU, preferably remaining a full member state. That might be because we understand the benefits of the EU, freedom of movement in particular. As I am about to elaborate, just under 10% of the population are non-UK citizens of the EU—we have more than twice the UK average concentration—and we understand the benefits of immigration and the

[Deidre Brock]

added cultural and economic value that immigrants bring. We understand how damaging Brexit will be—a chaotic one in particular. Parliament should heed such voices and we in this place have a duty to look out for their best interests.

We know that the deal negotiated by successive, legendary Brexit Secretaries, who all seem to have resigned in disgust at their own failures, has been disowned three times—and the cock has not yet crowed. There will be no rehabilitation and there is yet time for another denial if the deal is brought back a fourth time. I hope that the Prime Minister is willing to listen to the advice of the Lord Chancellor at the weekend and to acknowledge that the deal has no chance of passing and that she should be looking at other options. I certainly recommend heartily to her the revocation of the article 50 notification letter, a judicial inquiry into the conduct of the 2016 referendum and whatever follows from that. We could top it all off, as I said, by copying Ireland's citizens' assembly model to determine a way forward.

We should certainly make certain that no future referendum on such an important matter is allowed to proceed on the basis of hearsay, speculation, fevered invention and blatant prejudice. A proper position based on things such as facts and expert testimony should be set out by anyone advocating major change—there are precedents for that. In any case, revoking article 50 seems to be the most sensible course of action. There is no point trying to carry this nonsense any further forward.

6.53 pm

Jenny Chapman (Darlington) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr McCabe.

I thank all the Members who have contributed and made such excellent speeches with great passion and insight. It is great to be in a debate in which MPs are so at one with their constituents over an issue—but I must correct myself: I called it a “debate”, but clearly we have not had a debate. Our sharing of perspectives has been among people who broadly agree with one another, and the counter-arguments have not been heard because those who came initially to put them decided to leave. I am sad about that.

I am particularly sad for the 175,000 people, I think, who signed another of the petitions that we are also meant to be discussing—the one on leaving with or without a deal—because their champions walked away today. They need to reach their own conclusions about that, but I certainly regret that this has not been the opportunity that it might have been for the kind of discussion that is possible in this space but sometimes not possible in the main Chamber. That can often be the beauty of these events in Westminster Hall, as opposed to those in the main Chamber of the House of Commons. I regret that.

Nevertheless, we have had outstanding speeches. I particularly thank my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne North (Catherine McKinnell) on introducing the debate so well and comprehensively. Her constituents will be very proud of her for the job that she did today. Many people present have heard her speak on this issue in the past, and she maintained her high standard of contribution this afternoon.

We heard excellent speeches, too, from my hon. Friends the Members for Dulwich and West Norwood (Helen Hayes), for York Central (Rachael Maskell), for Swansea West (Geraint Davies), for Hornsey and Wood Green (Catherine West), for East Lothian (Martin Whitfield) and for Bermondsey and Old Southwark (Neil Coyle), and from the hon. Members for Bath (Wera Hobhouse), for Streatham (Chuka Umunna), for Linlithgow and East Falkirk (Martyn Day), for Stockport (Ann Coffey), for Totnes (Dr Wollaston) and for Edinburgh North and Leith (Deidre Brock).

Without doubt, the three petitions that we are here to discuss represent a range of views from across the country: from those who want to revoke article 50 immediately and to stay in the EU, to those who want to have left already, last week, with or without a deal. There are also those who want to hold another referendum between the Prime Minister's deal and remain. I also recognise, of course, that one of those petitions has received astronomical and unprecedented support. We cannot deal with each of the petitions equally in the debate, because of the overwhelming support received by one of them—something that we have never seen before.

I hope that that is a trend that continues. It is great to see so many people take part in a process that, until Brexit came about, was not gaining much traction with the public. But my goodness people seem to know about it now. The strength of feeling shown by so many people about this cannot be dismissed—6 million signatures is an enormous amount. Even if we accepted that not everyone who signed it did so with exactly the same motive as one another, a clear message comes from such a large number of people taking time to sign a petition.

Dr Wollaston: Will the hon. Lady clarify what Labour's position is tonight on voting in favour of the revoke motion?

Jenny Chapman: Yes. We are treating tonight as the opportunity to vote for something—a way to find whether there is a majority in the House of Commons for a particular deal as a way forward. We do not necessarily disagree with the proposition made by the hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh South West (Joanna Cherry), but we will abstain on it this evening, while acknowledging that it is something that we might need to confront in the future.

Dr Wollaston: Is that a whipped abstention or advisory?

Jenny Chapman: Gosh, the hon. Lady invites me to make comments way above my station. I am sure she will understand that what happens with whipping is a matter for my Chief Whip. I do not know the exact position on how we will enforce it. But I will abstain on that motion this evening, as a shadow Minister, but I hope that she accepts in good faith what I am explaining: that I recognise—as, I am sure, do my colleagues—that that decision point might be something that we need to confront in future. It is not something that we need to do tonight, because for us tonight is about trying to find a majority for a way forward. I hope we arrive at that this evening.

Chris Heaton-Harris: I can confirm that my party has a free vote on that, apart from members of the Cabinet, who seem to be abstaining—something I do not quite understand myself, I have to say. Is the hon. Lady saying

that her party is abstaining while trying to talk up a petition of 6 million people who wanted something else?

Jenny Chapman: I am admiring and respectful of the petition, and I understand the reasons for it. I also do not discount the proposition put this evening. The Minister should not read too much into the fact that I am not voting for it. I would add that the Labour party will whip its Members this evening, unlike the Government, who dare not whip even their own Cabinet. If I were the Minister, I am not sure I would bob up and down quite as much on this particular issue.

Neil Coyle: Perhaps some clarification would help: my understanding is that there is no Whip for Labour MPs on this particular vote. Many of us will join colleagues from across the House—and, I am sure, the Minister—in supporting revoking article 50.

Jenny Chapman: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's advice, which I am sure he would have given regardless of advice from his colleagues in the Whips Office.

What I interpret from the fact that 6 million people—thousands of them in my constituency—have signed the petition is how concerned, angry and frustrated people are with how the Brexit process has been mishandled by the Government. I do not think there has been the same amount of public support and cut-through for a petition at any other stage in the Brexit process.

Catherine West: In the last two weeks, figures have come out showing that Brexit is costing £600 million to £800 million a week. Does my hon. Friend think that might have influenced some people to sign the petition?

Jenny Chapman: There is definitely more of a sense of urgency. People feel that if they are to have their voice heard to make their case, they need to do it now, perhaps in a way that they did not feel previously.

Sandy Martin: My hon. Friend talked about the anger of some of those out there. Does she agree that there is a lot of anger from some people who voted leave as well? If we believe in democracy and we want to ensure that we can deal with the anger on both sides from people who feel they are ignored, the only way to do that is to have another vote, to enable people to vote on fixed propositions rather than simply nebulous concepts.

Jenny Chapman: I agree that there is anger on both sides. We have not always heard it, but in this debate colleagues have been at pains to make sure that when they talk about the far right, or the scenes outside Parliament last Friday, in no way do they characterise all leave supporters in that way. That has happened in the past, and it is a good thing that we have not seen that this afternoon. I credit hon. Members for making sure they have not in any way allowed that perception to be taken away from this debate.

The number of people who have signed this petition and others, and who have gone on marches and protests in recent weeks, shows how many people feel left out or ignored in this process. That has to be because, after the referendum, the Prime Minister was quick to say, "I will stand up for one side of the argument alone. The 52% will get what they want and to hell with everybody else." That is a dreadful way to attempt to lead a country. In that situation, a Prime Minister ought to have tried

to work through a way that is respectful to the outcome but listens to and bears in mind the concerns and anxieties of the 48%. I am elected but I do not represent just the people who voted Labour. I do not check how people voted before I work on their behalf. We are here to serve the whole country, however they vote at elections and in the referendum.

From what people are seeing, they think that Westminster is not working. They see a Prime Minister who, rather than listening to different views, keeps putting the same deal back to Parliament, hoping for a different result. I hope the Minister reflects on that and will set out how the Government plan to go forward. The Minister and I have been in a few of these petition debates, so I will not get my hopes up, but who knows.

On the first petition, to revoke article 50, we recognise the huge amount of public support and why it has touched a nerve with so many people. Any discussion about revoking article 50 would have to be considered in the context of a final choice between that and leaving without a deal. We recognise that, given the Government's intransigence, we could get to that point, which was almost inconceivable a year ago. In particular, I have in mind the contribution made by the right hon. Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin) in a recent debate, when he said that he used to think that the Prime Minister would not take us out without a deal but no longer holds that view. He knows her far better than any hon. Member here does, and his assessment is that she would consider taking us out without a deal. For that reason, as a final choice, revoking article 50 would be preferable to leaving without a deal, but we are not there yet. I am glad we are not, and I hope we never get to that point.

Our clear preference is for Parliament to have the time and the opportunity to debate credible alternatives that can command a majority in Parliament. The next stage of that begins today in the Chamber. I wish it had begun earlier, and I hope progress will be made. I do not think that Back Benchers should have had to initiate it; the Government should have initiated it or a similar process two years ago, to find a mandate on which they could have negotiated, while being obliged to engage with Parliament if the Prime Minister had managed to successfully negotiate. That is not what happened, and unfortunately we have had to take control as parliamentarians. I hope we produce a positive outcome today from this exercise. We will see at about 10 o'clock this evening.

Revoking article 50 at this stage without consulting the public in either a general election or a referendum, which is what the petition asks for, would not bring the country back together. I can understand why people are so frustrated that they reach that conclusion, but without having some kind of democratic process, that would not achieve the reunification that we should all desire. It is not the preferred approach at the moment, but I recognise it is an issue that we might need to return to in future. That will not be enough for some colleagues, but it is the most straightforward explanation of Labour's position that I can manage.

The second petition calls for a referendum on the Prime Minister's deal. Labour would support a public vote, which we would call a confirmatory ballot, to prevent a damaging Tory Brexit or no deal. Labour colleagues here will have had several discussions over the months about the desirability or otherwise of another referendum.

Ann Coffey: Can the hon. Lady confirm that the confirmatory vote would have remain on the ballot paper?

Jenny Chapman: I do not see any point in going through another exercise such as that without having remain on the ballot paper. Everybody seems to have their own view on exactly what ought to be on any such ballot paper—whether two or three options, a single stage or multiple stages—but the principle of engaging the public further in that decision is gaining support. I do not know if it has a majority yet—perhaps we will find out later today—but the specifics of what goes on a ballot paper would need to be quickly resolved. There would need to be a process in Parliament to help inform that, but yes, if remain is not on the ballot paper, it is difficult to see the benefit of the exercise.

We have spent two years making the case for a Brexit approach that we believe could have commanded support in the Commons, but I have to recognise that, at this late stage, if the Prime Minister forced through her deal, probably after multiple meaningful votes, that would need further confirmation from the public, as would any deal that came at the 11th hour from the indicative votes process. We have also said that we would include remain as the default option against a credible leave option, so we sympathise with the petition—especially the part that states:

“Whether you voted leave or remain, you didn’t vote for us to leave the EU in disarray, with no deal, putting many peoples livelihoods and living situations at risk.”

That brings me to the final petition, which calls for the UK to leave “deal or no deal”. I represent a seat that voted 56% to leave, and many of my friends and members of my close family voted to leave, so I know how strongly many people feel about that. However, I do not believe that leaving without a deal is what voters were promised in 2016, and I do not think it would be in the best interests of our country, or of my constituents or anyone else’s. It would cause huge damage to jobs, the economy and trade, and create enormous difficulties in Northern Ireland. That is why Labour has always said that we will not countenance no deal, and why we will be putting forward options to prevent it.

I thank everyone again for taking part in the debate, but these debates are always primarily about the people who signed the petitions. We could not have these events if it were not for so many people taking part and putting their names to petitions. It is great to see that people made time to attend the debate as well; I know some people may have travelled a long way to be here today. It is sometimes hard to find an upside of the last two years, but if there has been one, it is that people are more engaged than ever and keener to participate in what happens in this place. I am very pleased that their voices have been heard today.

7.12 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Chris Heaton-Harris): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr McCabe, which is a first for me. I shall try to be as well behaved as I like to think I normally am. I hope you will pass on my thanks—and I think everyone else’s—to Mr Gray, who chaired the first part of the debate. It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Darlington (Jenny Chapman).

I thank the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne North (Catherine McKinnell) for opening the debate on behalf of the Petitions Committee. She did so amazingly courteously and politely, taking into account all the petitions appropriately. I am sure she, like me, is pleased that there have been a number of people in the Public Gallery for the debate. I thank them both for being here and for not stripping off to make a point, as people did in the Gallery of the main Chamber this afternoon. I very much appreciate their attendance and their clothes.

The hon. Lady spoke, as she always does—I admire her for it—in a very honest and brave way. She represents a seat that voted leave in quite some numbers—something like 56.8%, I believe, not that I check these figures.

Catherine McKinnell: I would be interested to know where the Minister got that figure. Officially, Newcastle as a city voted remain, and the votes were counted on a city-wide basis, so there is no breakdown for my constituency. I wonder whether he has been reading the *Daily Mail*.

Chris Heaton-Harris: I always read the paper that my mother reads; it is very important to know where she is going to come at me next time. I apologise if that is not the correct figure, but I maintain that the hon. Lady is an honest and brave parliamentarian.

Sandy Martin: I know the estimated percentage of my constituents who voted leave. It is 56.7%. However, I have told them that my role is to represent their best interests, and that is what I am trying to do. I am trying to represent the best interests of them all—not just the people who voted for me, but the people who did not vote for me; and not just the people who voted leave, but the people who voted remain.

Chris Heaton-Harris: I think that is a completely honourable position for the hon. Gentleman to take. The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne North, who has been straightforward throughout this process, is similarly honourable. As she said, she did not vote to activate article 50, and she has sometimes been quite outspoken, in a very polite way, about the process we have gone through in the House.

I hear the hon. Lady has had many conversations with people in her constituency, and many Members who contributed to the debate mentioned the many conversations they have had with leave voters. There are lots of reasons why people voted to leave, so we cannot say that everybody came behind one reason. Actually, there are lots of different reasons to vote to remain as well. People might have voted to leave because they wanted us to set our own laws—to have them set by this place, not by the European Commission—or to make our own choices about how to spend our money, or because they wanted to end freedom of movement. A number of people might vote for the Common Market 2.0 option today, knowing full well that means continuing freedom of movement, which their voters might well have been quite strongly opposed to. A number of people have said over the past couple of years that they voted to leave because they were concerned about how their wages had deflated against overall wage growth. People voted in the way they did for a huge number of reasons, and they are all legitimate. We must not debase the legitimacy of people’s actions.

I am very pleased that the hon. Lady was proud of the people who demonstrated last week, and I am quite sure she was proud to have the full and uncompromising support of her party leader at the front of the march. Oh, he wasn't there, was he? I think he was in Morecambe. Perhaps she was nearly led from the front by her party leader.

Nineteen Members intervened in the debate, which I think is the most interventions I have experienced. The hon. Member for Darlington talked about the many petitions debates we have had in the Chamber. It is nice to have a full house of people—even on one side—talking about the petition, because these are very important decisions that we are making on people's behalf.

I thank the hon. Member for Nottingham East (Mr Leslie) for his contribution. As long as he is on the other side from me, I feel—no, he is a very good gentleman, and I entirely understand his view on this subject. He said this debate should have taken place in the main Chamber. I have no disagreement with that whatsoever. Perhaps when so many people—more than a million, or whatever it might be—sign a petition, the Petitions Committee could consider whether the Floor of the House might be the best place for the debate. I am in agreement with him on that, but obviously it is a House matter, so it is up to the Petitions Committee how it goes about that.

Catherine McKinnell: On a point of fact, it is not up to the Petitions Committee where the debates are held. The Committee has an allocated slot on a Monday afternoon here in Westminster Hall. This is where we are allowed to hold the debates on petitions that we decide have passed the relevant thresholds. It would be for the House authorities to negotiate how that might be changed, but it is purely a matter of the procedure that the Committee has at its disposal that we have the debates here in Westminster Hall.

Chris Heaton-Harris: I hear what the hon. Lady says. We have a Speaker who believes in the evolution of parliamentary process at a very speedy rate, so I am sure there is a way that very popular petitions could get time on the Floor of the House. I do not think anybody would necessarily disagree with that. The process might be slightly more interesting behind the scenes, but that is one for those who deal with those matters.

I thank the hon. Members for York Central (Rachael Maskell), for Bath (Wera Hobhouse), and for Dulwich and West Norwood (Helen Hayes). I will spar one day with the hon. Member for Streatham (Chuka Umunna) on no-deal preparation. Actually, no-deal preparation has gone well—much better than he might care to make out.

Dr Wollaston: On no-deal preparation, one thing that has been quite frustrating is the use of non-disclosure agreements—gagging clauses. It is very difficult for the Health and Social Care Committee to assess the extent to which no-deal planning for medicines supplies has been a success, as people have had to sign those agreements. Is the Minister prepared to sweep those out of the way so that we can see whether there is adequate planning for supplies of vital medicines and medical equipment in the event of no deal?

Chris Heaton-Harris: Perhaps the hon. Lady missed the email update last week to 19,000 doctors by Professor Russell Viner, president of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, who said:

“I know that many of you will have been watching the news about Brexit...with feelings of uncertainty and increasing alarm...I have been considerably reassured by governments' preparations relating to medicines supplies...governments, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency and the NHS have been working hard behind the scenes...and we believe that our medicine supplies are very largely secured”.

His biggest concern was panic buying. As far as I am aware—I will happily take this up with the hon. Lady offline—NDAs have not been a practice of no-deal preparation for quite some time. I will happily correspond or have a conversation with her afterwards about that, because if she has concerns I would like to bring them into the open a tiny bit.

Dr Wollaston: Is the Minister saying that everybody who has been asked not to disclose any issues to do with the supply of medicines is now at liberty to disclose them?

Chris Heaton-Harris: I have said what I have said in public, and I will happily take that up with the hon. Lady after the debate.

I also thank the hon. Members for Swansea West (Geraint Davies), for Linlithgow and East Falkirk (Martyn Day), for Hornsey and Wood Green (Catherine West), for Stockport (Ann Coffey), for East Lothian (Martin Whitfield) and for Totnes (Dr Wollaston). The hon. Member for Totnes cited a whole host of reasons why she is allowed to change her mind. I will not go back and quote all the things she said to her electorate in the 2017 general election. I also thank the hon. Member for Bermondsey and Old Southwark (Neil Coyle), and the hon. Member for Edinburgh North and Leith (Deidre Brock), who missed the point that wages are rising ahead of inflation at this point in time, and obviously I thank the hon. Member for Darlington, who informed us about Labour's whipping.

More importantly, I thank the number of people who have expressed themselves to the Government in the three petitions we have debated, which ask us to reverse the 2016 referendum result, whether by revoking article 50 or holding a second referendum, as well as the exact opposite: that the Government ensure that we deliver the outcome of the 2016 referendum no matter what. The Government's position remains clear: we will not revoke article 50 and we will not hold a second referendum. We remain committed to leaving the European Union and implementing the result of the 2016 referendum.

Parliament's position is now also clear. In the series of indicative votes on 27 March, Parliament voted on the options of revoking article 50 and holding a second referendum. Neither option achieved a majority in the House. Indeed, the House voted, with a majority of more than 100, against revoking article 50.

The Government really do acknowledge the substantial number of signatures that these petitions have amassed. We also recognise the hundreds of thousands of people who marched in London on 23 March in favour of a second referendum. In particular—I do not think anyone has done this—I congratulate Margaret Anne Georgiadou, the creator of the revocation of article 50 petition, for

[Chris Heaton-Harris]

starting a petition that, at current count, has attracted more than 6 million signatures. That is a considerable achievement in anyone's terms.

I want to take a moment to note that I, the Government and, I am sure, everyone in the Chamber, were disgusted to hear the reports that Ms Georgiadou has received threats and abuse for starting a petition. That is utterly unacceptable. Everyone should feel and be able to express their opinions and participate in political discourse without fear of intimidation or abuse. That is integral to our democracy and it should be at the front and centre of our minds when we debate and discuss all issues, including Brexit. It is those democratic values that underpin the Government's commitment to uphold the result of the 2016 referendum.

Although I have elaborated on this process before, let me do so again, to reinforce exactly why it is that we must uphold the result. In 2015, Parliament voted overwhelmingly to give the British people a choice on whether to remain in or leave the European Union, allowing them to express a clear view to Government. Before we asked them to vote, the Government wrote to every household, committing to implement whatever decision they made.

On 23 June 2016, the British people expressed their view to Government. With nearly three quarters of the electorate taking part, 17.4 million people voted to leave the European Union. That is the highest number of votes cast for any single course of action in UK electoral history. More British people than ever before or since amassed in agreement on a single, clear outcome: they wanted the Government to deliver the UK's withdrawal from the European Union.

Of course, Parliament also made a commitment to uphold the result of the 2016 referendum. In the 2017 general election, the British people cast their votes again, and more than 80% of voters voted for parties who committed in their manifestos to uphold the result of the referendum.

Martin Whitfield *rose—*

Chuka Umunna *rose—*

Dr Wollaston *rose—*

Chris Heaton-Harris: I will happily give way to all three hon. Members, beginning with the hon. Member for East Lothian.

Martin Whitfield: I refrained from raising this in my speech, but the Conservatives also stood on a manifesto saying that they would not separate the withdrawal agreement from the political declaration. How can they keep to one bit of the manifesto but not the other bit further on in the same paragraph?

Chris Heaton-Harris: I give way to the hon. Member for Streatham.

Chuka Umunna: I thought the Minister might want to reply. The point he continues to ignore is the reason why he and his Government are in the mess they are in. Ultimately, the 2016 referendum gave a view on whether a majority of people participating in that referendum wanted to leave the European Union, but how to leave

was reserved to Parliament. His Government put a very hard Brexit to the British people and lost their majority. The clash of those two mandates is why we are going through all this chaos right now, and yet again he is sticking his head in the sand and ignoring that fact. It is all very well asserting the result of the referendum, but it did not tell us how the country wanted to leave the European Union. That has been the essential problem in this process.

Chris Heaton-Harris: Forgive me for not answering the point made by the hon. Member for East Lothian. I was going to take all three interventions first, but let me do what the hon. Member for Streatham would want. Our manifesto was quite clear, and Labour's manifesto was quite clear. My party wants to deliver on its manifesto commitment.

To respond to the hon. Member for Streatham, absolutely, things did move on between 2016 and 2017, and that is why his party—then—and my party made the commitments they did. People understood that we would be leaving the single market and the customs union.

Chuka Umunna: The Minister is also ignoring what his own Chief Whip will say on BBC 2 later this evening: the Government have refused to alter course and change their red lines in light of the fact that they lost their majority. They cannot get measures and propositions through the House of Commons. That is why they are in the mess they are in.

Chris Heaton-Harris: I tend to disagree. First, obviously I have not seen a programme that has yet to air.

Chuka Umunna: It is online!

Chris Heaton-Harris: Forgive me—it is a tiny bit busy at this moment in time. Obviously I will watch and read every word that the Government Chief Whip might say and put that in the context in which it might have been said.

The hon. Member for Streatham might not have enjoyed reading his former party's manifesto in 2017 at the general election, and I might not have enjoyed reading mine; but as well as spending a lot of time in my own seat, I canvassed across the country, from Bolsover to Coventry South, in Northampton and through swathes of south London, where people whose doors were knocked on rightly thought that Brexit was in the process of being delivered, because everybody agreed they were going to respect the result of the referendum. Yes, I do believe that there has been a bit of a democratic disconnect, but in a slightly different way from the way the hon. Gentleman believes it.

Wera Hobhouse: The one thing I struggle with is why, if the Prime Minister says with so much passion and conviction that her deal is what the people voted for in 2016, she is too worried to put it back to the people. If she believes it is what people voted for, she should proudly present her deal and just check that with the people.

Chris Heaton-Harris: I shall happily answer that point later in my speech.

Neil Coyle: The Minister seems to be struggling to split the hypothetical from what happened in the election. Perhaps he has the figures for the number of people who downloaded or bought the Conservative manifesto; however, as to the simplistic suggestion that the vast majority of voters read any party's manifesto, we all know it to be untrue. The practical reality in constituencies such as mine was that in every leaflet I put out—in every interview and article, and at the hustings—I said I would continue to oppose Brexit, full stop, so it is completely false to pretend that in the election voters only voted in the knowledge that Brexit would be delivered. It is nonsense.

Chris Heaton-Harris: In a way the hon. Gentleman is making the point that I was trying to make to the hon. Member for Streatham, because people did pay attention to what individual MPs were saying in their constituencies—at least, more people than ever before attended hustings in my constituency, and I should like to think that that was reflected elsewhere. The disconnect comes from the fact that in the end lots of people vote, as the hon. Gentleman knows, for a party rather than an individual. If a candidate's party, nationally, says something loud and clear, they are almost disrespecting their party's manifesto by saying something different locally.

Sandy Martin: Surely the point of a manifesto is to let the voters know what the party will do if and when it forms a Government. We wrote our manifesto in the hope and expectation that we would be able to form a Government and carry through the manifesto that we wrote. Unfortunately for the British people, we were not able to form that Government or to take control of the Brexit process. Clearly, over the past two years, the present Government have not been able to take control of it either, but we can hardly be blamed for that, and I do not think that the electorate should be able to blame us for the fact that the Government have not been able to control their own Members or bring forward a feasible, viable Brexit process.

Chris Heaton-Harris: I do not think that I was blaming hon. Members collectively. I was just making a point about what people might well have expected. It is not just the Government but many colleagues who stood on manifestos promising to uphold the result of the referendum who have an obligation and mandate to do so.

Dr Wollaston: Does the Minister agree that it was the publication of the manifesto that was the tipping point for the Conservatives, and it was all going quite well until then, when things fell off a cliff? That was my experience.

Chris Heaton-Harris: The problem is that people sometimes do not like it when politicians say one thing and do another. We all recognise that, and it is a difficulty that we all might have at some point in the future. What if a Member goes round during a general election campaign saying

“this constituency voted by 54% to leave. I think this is one of the things that annoys people, is telling them that they didn't know what they were voting for. That was the purpose of the referendum, we accept the result... We have to go into this, absolutely understanding that the principle here is that we respect the outcome of the referendum and I think it would be a huge mistake to go into this promising that I'd be prepared to vote to actually overturn the deal and send us back into Europe”?

That is what the hon. Lady said to her constituency.

Jenny Chapman: I remind the Minister that we are being observed here by members of the public in the Gallery, and also by many people watching at home, because they have a certain level of engagement with this debate, perhaps more than others. What they do not want to see is an attempt to undermine, one by one, Members who have made a case on behalf of the petitioners today. They would like the Minister to address the substance of the petition.

Chris Heaton-Harris: That is what I had started to do. Failing to deliver on the commitments that we, as politicians, have made to the people we serve, would be hugely damaging.

Deidre Brock: The Minister talks of a commitment to people's original voting intentions but, at the very least, the accusations and, indeed, proof of illegal activity undertaken by the Vote Leave campaign, surely mean that a reconsideration of that vote by the Government is entirely appropriate?

Chris Heaton-Harris: I am afraid I completely disagree.

Let me be clear. To revoke article 50 or to hold a second referendum would be failing to deliver on the commitments we have made. Parliament once again rejected those motions last week. Second-guessing or otherwise reversing the outcome of the 2016 vote damages the trust that British people place in their Government. It gives cause for British people to lose faith in politics and politicians and in the most important democratic practice of all—voting. I recognise, in the midst of the uncertainty, that the petitioners question why the British people should not have a chance to have a second say—a second vote—on Brexit. However, I ask Members what guarantees we could give, if we cannot show that we can uphold and respect the results of one referendum, that we could respect and uphold the results of a second. Would we need a third, or the best of five? What would prevent a third referendum? When would the uncertainty and the back-and-forth asking of the question end? When could we consider ourselves to have settled the question?

The Government believe we have settled the question. It was settled by the British people in the 2016 referendum. To question that vote and try to undermine what was expressed in it is a harmful precedent to set, and one that the Government are firmly unwilling to set. However, people have expressed an important message to us through the petitions. Through them, we recognise the frustrations and concerns caused by the current uncertainty. It is our view, and Parliament's view as expressed in numerous votes last week in the indicative vote process, that the solution is not to revoke article 50 or hold a second referendum, thereby irreparably damaging the relationship between people and politics, but to try to move forward with certainty as we deliver on the instruction that was given to us. That is what the Government are trying to do.

7.37 pm

Catherine McKinnell: I thank the Minister for his reply. I was perhaps being a little unfair on him when I picked him up on his reference to Newcastle upon Tyne North being a leave constituency, because, as my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Sandy Martin) pointed out,

[*Catherine McKinnell*]

there are projected figures for demographic analysis, and I know from the conversations I had on many doorsteps during the referendum campaign that many of my constituents were voting leave.

The discussion and the level of debate from those on the Government Benches have been disappointing throughout this debate, in terms of engagement with the substance of the issue. The point that gets forgotten is a reality check on where we are, rather than going around in ever-decreasing circles, arguing tit for tat about how we got here. We know how we got here. There was a referendum question put to the country that did not specify in any way how it would be delivered, and we had a Government who went ahead and held a general election, and lost their majority. We have a Prime Minister who has completely failed to engage with anyone but those within her own party on this issue, and to reach out and form a consensus.

We know why we are where we are. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Jenny Chapman), I was disappointed that the few Conservative Members who initially attended the debate, to whom I gave many opportunities to intervene, got up and left before the end without making any substantive contribution. If I am perfectly honest, their contributions were like those in a school debating club—point scoring rather than engaging with the substance.

I marvel, horrified, when I find Conservative Members of Parliament dismissing out of hand the concerns expressed by the CBI and by chambers of commerce up and down the country that the facts around a no-deal Brexit put so many of our jobs and industries at risk, and that they are not ready, as they have said with absolute clarity. The Conservative party used to pride itself on being the party of business; now it dismisses the concerns of businesses and treats those businesses as though they, and their concerns about a no-deal Brexit, are of no relevance to the Brexit preparations.

That is how we have ended up with this petition. To try to dismiss it as some kind of assault on democracy, which we heard in some hon. Members' contributions, is not only deeply insulting to every single member of the public who took the trouble to go and sign up on the petitions website, but it ignores the deep, gnawing anxiety of so many people in our country who are terrified of the prospect of a no-deal Brexit and want to know that—as politicians, as Members of Parliament, as a Government—we will not stand by while that happens to our country, with all the consequences it would bring.

Anyone who stands there and says, “I have no fear of a no-deal Brexit; it'll be absolutely fine,” clearly has nothing to lose and is completely insulated, but I know that my constituents are not. I go back to the point that the Minister made about mine being a leave constituency: the honest answer is we do not know. The vote was calculated as a city, so we know that Newcastle voted remain very marginally. What I do know, as a Member of Parliament who represents, lives in and has children growing up in the constituency, is that I will not take any action if all the evidence, including the Government's own analysis, points to its damaging my constituency's prospects.

Even if it means not getting re-elected, the only basis on which I will make this decision is knowing that I have done the right thing in terms of all the evidence I am presented with. That is why this revoke petition has been so popular, but it is also the reason that the call for a confirmatory referendum on whatever Brexit deal the Government arrive at has gained so much support. I recognise, as do my colleagues, that there was a vote to leave the European Union, but how that would happen was not decided upon; that is something Parliament has to decide. We have seen the evidence. We have seen that every single Brexit option will make our constituents poorer, and the impact will be greatest on those in the north-east.

Therefore, my view and the view of many of my colleagues who will support the motion tonight is that we should allow Parliament to have that process, to pass it back through Parliament and give it back to the people to make the final decision. Given that they started the process in 2016, they can now make the final decision on how it ends. That is how I will find out whether this is a Brexit that my constituents support, because they will have the opportunity to vote for it in a referendum—a referendum that every single citizen of this country who can vote can take part in. That is a democratic resolution to the impasse that we find ourselves in here in Parliament.

We know how we got here; we know how to get out of it. It is about time that the Government stopped burying their head in the sand and going around in circles, engaging in a debate that is not taking us forward in any way, but only leaves us stuck in this Brexit chaos. I implore the Minister, rather than engaging in the tit-for-tat that is driving the country to distraction, to compromise and come to an agreement that Parliament cannot take this historic decision without the confidence that it is something the public support.

7.45 pm

Motion lapsed, and sitting adjourned without Question put (Standing Order No. 10(14)).

Written Statements

Monday 1 April 2019

TREASURY

Bilateral Loan to Ireland

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (John Glen):

HM Treasury has today provided a further report to Parliament in relation to the bilateral loan to Ireland as required under the Loans to Ireland Act 2010. The report relates to the period from 1 October 2018 to 31 March 2019.

A written ministerial statement on the previous statutory report regarding the loan to Ireland was issued to Parliament on 15 October 2018, *Official Report*, column 33WS.

In line with the agreed repayment schedule, the first repayment on the principal of the loan from Ireland falls due on 15 April 2019. HM Treasury will update Parliament when this payment has been received, and report on it fully in the next statutory report.

[HCWS1473]

Contingent Liability: Notification of Reduction

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr Philip Hammond):

The Term Funding Scheme (TFS) was introduced in August 2016 and indemnified by HM Treasury as part of the Bank of England's (Bank's) Asset Purchase Facility (APF), which also included the Corporate Bond Purchase Scheme (CBPS) (£10 billion) and gilt purchases (£435 billion). The TFS provided funding to banks and building societies at a rate close to bank rate for a term of up to four years. This supported the transmission of the August 2016 cut in bank rate to lending rates faced by households and businesses. The maximum authorised size of the TFS was £140 billion, and the actual size of the scheme when the drawdown window closed on 28 February 2018 was £127 billion.

In view of the scale of potential losses on TFS holdings relative to the Bank's level of loss-absorbing capital at the time, the HM Treasury indemnity over the APF was extended to include all assets held under the TFS. The increased indemnity was duly notified to the chairs of the Treasury Committee and Public Accounts Committee on 4 August 2016, and a full departmental minute was laid on 15 September 2016. The most recent increase in the APF indemnity, following the increase in the authorised limit for the TFS to £140 billion, was notified to Parliament by laying a full departmental minute on 20 November 2017.

Under the new Finance Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), which was agreed in June 2018 between the Bank and HM Treasury and notified to Parliament on 21 June 2018, it was agreed that HM Treasury would provide a £1.2 billion capital injection to the Bank, bringing its total loss-absorbing capital to £3.5 billion. This additional capital would allow the TFS to move from the Treasury-indemnified APF to the Bank's un-indemnified balance sheet, and would result in the end of the Treasury's £140 billion contingent liability with respect to potential losses in the TFS.

The Bank received the £1.2 billion capital injection on 22 March 2019 with the result that the TFS has now transferred to the Bank's un-indemnified balance sheet. At the moment the capital injection was transferred, HM Treasury also notified the Bank that the £140 billion contingent liability associated with the TFS portion of the APF had been extinguished. The risks associated with any gains or losses on TFS holdings will now be managed against the Bank's augmented loss-absorbing capital.

HM Treasury will continue to monitor risks to the Bank's overall capital and financial position (including the TFS) through regular meetings with the Bank as set out in the new Finance MoU. The enhanced risk control framework previously agreed with the Treasury with respect to the remaining Treasury-indemnified APF schemes (gilt purchases and the Corporate Bond Purchase Scheme) will remain in place.

A full departmental minute is laid in the House of Commons providing more detail on this contingent liability.

[HCWS1472]

DEFENCE

Modern Service Life

The Secretary of State for Defence (Gavin Williamson):

Three new initiatives, aimed at modernising the living and working arrangements for Armed Forces personnel will be launched today, 1 April. Our people are at the heart of Defence and these measures, including flexible working arrangements, expanded accommodation options and new cohabitation rules, are designed to modernise our Armed Forces and ensure they remain a competitive employer that meets the ever-changing needs and expectations of service personnel and their families.

First, from today, the Ministry of Defence is introducing flexible service to regular service personnel from all services. Personnel can apply to work part-time—reducing their normal working pattern by 20% or 40% and or request restricted separation—which limits the amount of time spent away from their normal home base to no more than 35 days per year. Pay and annual leave entitlements will be amended accordingly. Flexible service periods are subject to operational capability, limited to three years and individuals cannot exceed four years of flexible service in a 12-year period.

Secondly, current accommodation policy is being amended from today, to allow couples in long-term relationships, to live together in Service Family Accommodation (SFA) subject to availability. Service personnel who have more than four years' service in the Armed Forces and who are in a long-term relationship or have residential responsibility for a child and are able to provide appropriate evidence of this, will be eligible to apply to live together in surplus SFA at all UK bases where properties are available. They will retain their marital status category but will not become eligible for wider allowances. This important change in policy to allow cohabitation will benefit all services and all ranks.

Finally, the Future Accommodation Model (FAM) will be launched in September, at the first pilot site, Her Majesty's Naval Base Clyde. Two further pilot sites,

Aldershot Garrison and RAF Wittering, will be launched in 2020. The pilot will last approximately three years and evidence will be gathered over the pilot period to refine the policy as the pilot develops. FAM will provide more choice to service personnel regarding where and with whom they live, making use of the private rental sector (including housing associations), alongside existing options of single living accommodation, SFA and home ownership. Accommodation entitlement will change to reflect the size of the family, rather than one's rank as in current policy, promoting fairness and ensuring homes are fit for purpose. The FAM policy has been designed so that the cost to service personnel to rent property will be broadly the same as the equivalent type of SFA.

[HCWS1471]

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Clinical Negligence Indemnity Cover

The Minister for Care (Caroline Dinenage): I am today updating the House on recent developments regarding indemnity arrangements for NHS general practice in England.

The Government have today launched the Clinical Negligence Scheme for General Practice (CNSGP), operated by NHS resolution on behalf of the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. The regulations establishing the scheme are at:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2019/334/contents/made>. NHS resolution have published guidance covering the scope and operation of the scheme:

<https://resolution.nhs.uk/services/claims-management/clinical-claims/clinical-negligence-scheme-for-general-practice/>. The new scheme delivers a key component of the GP contract for 2019-20 and is expected to contribute to the recruitment and retention of GPs in the future. The scheme provides comprehensive cover to all GPs and their wider practice team for clinical negligence relating to NHS services occurring from 1 April 2019. All GPs and others providing primary medical services are automatically covered under the scheme. In addition, GPs and their practice staff providing other types of NHS services as part of their GP practice are also covered. There is no charge for this cover.

In parallel, to deliver on our commitment to put in place an existing liabilities scheme (ELS), we have agreed commercial terms with the Medical Protection Society covering claims for historic NHS clinical negligence incidents of their GP members occurring at any time before 1 April 2019. NHS resolution will have oversight of the arrangements for the new scheme and for an interim period claims handling will be retained by the MPS. Discussions are ongoing with other Medical Defence Organisations.

The Department will keep the operation of both CNSGP and the ELS arrangements under close scrutiny to ensure an effective service for GPs and the value for money of both schemes.

[HCWS1470]

HOME DEPARTMENT

Serious Violence: Prevention

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Sajid Javid): Tackling serious violence is a top priority for the Government. In April 2018, we published the "Serious Violence Strategy" that set out the need for a multi-agency approach to effective action against serious violence. The Government are today announcing the publication of a consultation on a new legal duty to support a multi-agency approach to preventing and tackling serious violence.

We know that different risk factors can impact on an individual's vulnerability and susceptibility to becoming a victim or perpetrator of serious violence. These risk factors include domestic abuse, truancy, school exclusions and substance abuse. Evidence suggests that targeted interventions that can help mitigate and protect children and young people against these factors. It is with this in mind that a duty to prevent and tackle serious violence should reinforce an emphasis on early intervention and prevention with young people.

Our vision for a duty is to ensure agencies are focused on and accountable for preventing and tackling serious violence through a multi-agency preventive or 'public health' approach. This would include:

- different organisations working together through partnerships to prevent and tackle serious violence as a priority;
- involving and consulting communities and young people;
- regular sharing between agencies of data and intelligence and identify those most at risk of becoming affected by serious violence;
- using that information to develop a programme of early interventions;
- partnerships that are not constrained by organisational, professional or geographical boundaries;
- partners working together to agree joint funding for services;
- using evidence including relevant evaluations to inform decision-making; and
- organisations being held accountable for their work on serious violence, including being subject to inspections.

The Government welcome responses to the consultation document from the public, those with expertise in working with young people at risk of criminal involvement and or re-offending or victimisation, those involved in law enforcement and, more generally, the communities affected by serious violence including the voluntary and community sector. This includes relevant professionals, such as those working in social care, education, law enforcement, local government, community safety, youth services, offender management, public health and healthcare; and, in recognition of multi-agency approaches outside England and Wales, we would also welcome responses from across the UK.

The consultation, which launches today, 1 April, will run for a period of eight weeks, closing on 28 May and can be found on the gov.uk website at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications?departments%5B%5D=home-office&publication_filter_option=consultations.

This consultation fulfils the commitment for the intention to consult on a new legal duty made by the Home Secretary on 2 October. The other measures announced included the £200 million youth endowment fund and the review of drug misuse.

These measures build on the Government's Serious Violence Strategy published on 9 April 2018. The strategy represents a step change in the way we think and respond to serious violence. The approach establishes a new balance between prevention and rigorous law enforcement activity. It shifts our approach towards steering young people away from crime in the first place and put in place measures to tackle the root causes. We believe that the approach set out in the strategy, with a greater emphasis on early intervention, will address violent crime and help young people to develop the skills and resilience to live happy and productive lives away from violence.

More recently, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced on 13 March that an additional £100 million funding in 2019-20 will help in the police's immediate response to the rise in serious knife crime, enabling priority forces to immediately begin planning to put in place the additional capacity they need. The funding will also be invested in violence reduction units, bringing together a range of agencies including health, education, social services and others, to develop a multi-agency approach in preventing knife crime altogether.

The consultation will be placed in the Library of both Houses and an online version will be made available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications?departments%5B%5D=home-office&publication_filter_option=consultations.

To help analyse the responses please submit your response using the following online form: <https://www.homeofficesurveys.homeoffice.gov.uk/s/N1VZW/>.

Stop and Search: Section 60 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994

The Government are also announcing greater powers for the police to use stop and search to help tackle violent crime. The Government have lifted two conditions set out in the Best Use of Stop and Search Scheme (BUSSS) regarding use of Section 60 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act (CJPOA) 1994 powers in seven force areas particularly affected by serious violence.

We have been clear that we support the necessary and proportionate use of stop and search powers to tackle serious violence and are determined to work with the police to crack down on serious violent crime.

Therefore, we are making it simpler for police to use section 60 (s60) of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act (CJPOA) 1994. Section 60 powers allow all individuals, within a specific area and for a limited amount of time, to be searched for weapons in anticipation of serious violence without suspicion. Such searches, when used correctly, are an important operational tool that enable forces to dissipate potential violent situations or recover offending items, for example, in anticipation of retaliatory or escalating levels of gang violence.

The Home Secretary chaired a meeting with senior police chiefs from Merseyside, the Metropolitan Police, Greater Manchester, South Wales, West Midlands, South Yorkshire, and West Yorkshire on 6 March. The officers cited the potential benefits of lifting conditions placed on the use of s60 powers by the Government's Best Use of Stop and Search scheme. Introduced in 2014, the Best Use scheme is signed up to by all forces in England and Wales.

The police must be supported to help protect the people, and therefore as of 31 March 2019 we have lifted the conditions placed in these seven force areas particularly affected by knife crime, so as to:

- reduce the level of authorisation required for a section 60 from senior officer to inspector;

- lower the degree of certainty required by the authorising officer so they must reasonably believe an incident involving serious violence 'may', rather than 'will', occur.

This will mean there are 3,000 more officers able to authorise the use of these powers, and forces will feel more confident using them where appropriate—as judgments as to where violence definitely "will" take place can be hard to make.

These changes will be reviewed after six months, and a year—at which point we will decide whether to make these changes permanent and national. The College of Policing will also work alongside forces to create new guidelines on how best the police can engage with communities on the use of stop and search. We will also continue to support the use of stop and search where fair and effective, by all other forces.

[HCWS1469]

Petitions

Monday 1 April 2019

PRESENTED PETITION

Petition presented to the House but not read on the Floor

The future of maintained nursery schools

The petition of the parents, carers and staff of Freshfield Nursery School in Heaton Mersey, Stockport.

Declares that we are concerned about the future of maintained nursery schools in England after March 2020 as no guarantee has been given by government that adequate funding will continue when supplementary funding ends.

The petitions therefore request the House of Commons to urge the Government to take action to ensure maintained nursery schools are financial sustainable for the future.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Ann Coffey.]

[P002443]

OBSERVATIONS

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Byfleet and West Byfleet's remaining Green Belt

The petition of residents of Woking

Declares that no land should be removed from the Green Belt for development unless there are very special circumstances and all other options including brownfield sites have been exhausted; further that it is also imperative that no major developments are approved in Byfleet until the proposed Flood Alleviation Plan is implemented; further that the Office for National Statistics has recently revised its household projection to show that less new housing is needed than previously thought; and further that this petition refers to the Site Allocations Development Plan document, approved by Woking Borough Council on 18 October 2018, which has questionable long-term forecasts and does not include recent developments.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government not to remove any land from the Green Belt for development unless there are very special circumstances and all other options including brownfield sites have been exhausted.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Mr Jonathan Lord, Official Report, 13 March 2019; Vol. 656, c. 8P.]

[P002441]

Observations from the Minister for Housing (Kit Malthouse):

The Government remain committed to strong protection of the Green Belt. Our National Planning Policy Framework makes it clear that most new building is inappropriate on Green Belt land, and should be refused planning permission except in very special circumstances.

Green Belts are established and protected by local, not central, government. Only in exceptional circumstances may a local authority alter a Green Belt boundary, after consulting local people and submitting the revised Local Plan to examination. We clarify in the revised Framework that a local authority can propose to alter a Green Belt boundary only in exceptional circumstances and only if it can show evidenced justification that it has examined all other reasonable options for meeting its identified development needs. That means the authority should:

- make as much use as possible of suitable brownfield and under-used land;
 - optimise density of development; and
 - discuss with neighbouring authorities whether they could take some of the necessary development,
- as agreed in a Statement of Common Ground.

The examination by planning inspector of a revised development plan or strategy, including any Green Belt review, is a formal procedure. The inspector acts on behalf of the Secretary of State, and this imposes a strict duty of impartiality across Government. The validity of any local housing need figure would be considered in that context, as part of the supporting evidence. A plan will be found sound only if it is properly prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy in the Framework.

With reference to household projections produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), it should be noted that projections are not a measure of how many homes are needed to meet demand, they simply show what would happen if past trends continue. As confirmed by the ONS, lower household projections do not mean that fewer homes are needed. If more homes are not supplied, then households cannot form as there would be nowhere for them to live. More homes are still needed in the least affordable areas to inhibit soaring house prices. As a general rule, we would expect an increase in housing provision to improve the overall affordability of new homes.

It is for local authorities to consider the extent of flood risk and what effect it should have on development plans or planning decisions.

ORAL ANSWERS

Monday 1 April 2019

	<i>Col. No.</i>		<i>Col. No.</i>
HOME DEPARTMENT	779	HOME DEPARTMENT—continued	
Air Weapons Regulations.....	785	Local Authorities: Children of EU Nationals	795
Countering Extremist Views	781	Police Funding: Rural Areas	789
Counter-terrorism: Resources	794	Right-wing Extremism	782
EU Settlement Scheme.....	784	Serious Violent Crime: Police Investigation.....	790
Fire Risk: Commercial and Residential Buildings..	793	Topical Questions	796
Leaving the EU: NHS and Careworkers	792	Violent Crime: Young People	786
Leaving the EU: Recruitment.....	779		

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

Monday 1 April 2019

	<i>Col. No.</i>		<i>Col. No.</i>
DEFENCE	30WS	HOME DEPARTMENT	32WS
Modern Service Life.....	30WS	Serious Violence: Prevention.....	32WS
HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	31WS	TREASURY	29WS
Clinical Negligence Indemnity Cover	31WS	Bilateral Loan to Ireland.....	29WS
		Contingent Liability: Notification of Reduction....	29WS

PETITIONS

Monday 1 April 2019

	<i>Col. No.</i>		<i>Col. No.</i>
PRESENTED PETITION	5P	HOUSING COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL	
The future of maintained nursery schools.....	5P	GOVERNMENT	5P
		Byfleet and West Byfleet's remaining Green Belt....	5P

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CONTENTS

Monday 1 April 2019

Oral Answers to Questions [Col. 779] [see index inside back page]
Secretary of State for the Home Department

Prime Minister (Confidence) [Col. 802]
Bill presented, and read the First time

Business of the House [Col. 803]
Motion—(Sir Oliver Letwin)—on a Division, agreed to

EU: Withdrawal and Future Relationship (Motions) [Col. 825]

EU: Withdrawal and Future Relationship (Votes) [Col. 879]

Blaydon Quarry Landfill Site [Col. 886]
Debate on motion for Adjournment

EU: Withdrawal and Future Relationship (Votes) [Col. 893]
Motion (C)—Customs union—(Mr Kenneth Clarke)—on a Division, negated
Motion (D)—Common Market 2.0—(Nick Boles)—on a Division, negated
Motion (E)—Confirmatory public vote—(Peter Kyle)—on a Division, negated
Motion (G)—Parliamentary Supremacy—(Joanna Cherry)—on a Division, negated

Westminster Hall
Leaving the European Union [Col. 243WH]
e-Petition Debate

Written Statements [Col. 29WS]

Petitions [Col. 5P]
Not presented on the Floor
Observations

Written Answers to Questions [The written answers can now be found at <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers>]
