

Monday
8 April 2019

Volume 658
No. 285



HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT

PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES

(HANSARD)

Monday 8 April 2019

HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT

MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

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

PRIME MINISTER, FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY AND MINISTER FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE—The Rt Hon. Theresa May, MP
CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER AND MINISTER FOR THE CABINET OFFICE—The Rt Hon. David Lidington, MP
CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER—The Rt Hon. Philip Hammond, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT—The Rt Hon. Sajid Javid, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS—The Rt. Hon Jeremy Hunt, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION—The Rt Hon. Stephen Barclay, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE—The Rt Hon. Gavin Williamson, MP
LORD CHANCELLOR AND SECRETARY OF STATE FOR JUSTICE—The Rt Hon. David Gauke, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE—The Rt Hon. Matt Hancock, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY—The Rt Hon. Greg Clark, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE—The Rt Hon. Liam Fox, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WORK AND PENSIONS—The Rt Hon. Amber Rudd, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EDUCATION—The Rt Hon. Damian Hinds, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS—The Rt Hon. Michael Gove, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT—The Rt Hon. James Brokenshire, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT—The Rt Hon. Chris Grayling, MP
LORD PRIVY SEAL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS—The Rt Hon. Baroness Evans of Bowes Park
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND—The Rt Hon. David Mundell, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WALES—The Rt Hon. Alun Cairns, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND—The Rt Hon. Karen Bradley, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND MINISTER FOR WOMEN AND EQUALITIES—The Rt Hon. Penny Mordaunt, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT—The Rt Hon. Jeremy Wright, QC, MP
MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO—The Rt Hon. Brandon Lewis, MP

DEPARTMENTS OF STATE AND MINISTERS

Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Greg Clark, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

Rt Hon. Claire Perry, MP (Minister for Energy and Clean Growth)

Chris Skidmore, MP (Minister for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation) §

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Kelly Tolhurst, MP

Andrew Stephenson, MP

The Rt Hon. Lord Henley

Cabinet Office—

CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER AND MINISTER FOR THE CABINET OFFICE—The Rt Hon. David Lidington, MP

PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIES—

Oliver Dowden, MP

Chloe Smith, MP

Defence—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Gavin Williamson, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

The Rt Hon. Earl Howe §

The Rt Hon. Mark Lancaster, MP (Minister for the Armed Forces)

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

The Rt Hon. Tobias Ellwood, MP

Stuart Andrew, MP

Digital, Culture, Media and Sport—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Jeremy Wright, QC, MP

MINISTER OF STATE—Margot James, MP (Minister for Digital and the Creative Industries)

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Lord Ashton of Hyde

Michael Ellis, MP

Mims Davies, MP

Education—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Damian Hinds, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

The Rt Hon. Nick Gibb, MP (Minister for School Standards)

The Rt Hon. Anne Milton, MP (Minister for Apprenticeships and Skills)

Chris Skidmore, MP (Minister for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation) §

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Lord Agnew of Oulton

Nadhim Zahawi, MP

Environment, Food and Rural Affairs—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Michael Gove, MP

MINISTER OF STATE—Robert Goodwill, MP (Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food)

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Thérèse Coffey, MP

Lord Gardiner of Kimble

David Rutley, MP §

Exiting the European Union —

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Stephen Barclay, MP

MINISTER OF STATE—Lord Callanan

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Robin Walker, MP

James Cleverly, MP

Kwasi Kwarteng, MP

Foreign and Commonwealth Office—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Jeremy Hunt, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

The Rt Hon. Sir Alan Duncan, MP (Minister for Europe and the Americas)

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon (Minister for the Commonwealth and the UN)

The Rt Hon. Mark Field, MP (Minister for Asia and the Pacific)

Harriett Baldwin, MP (Minister for Africa) §

Health and Social Care—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Matt Hancock, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

Stephen Hammond, MP (Minister for Health)

Caroline Dinenage, MP (Minister for Care)

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Seema Kennedy, MP

Jackie Doyle-Price, MP

Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford

Home Office—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Sajid Javid, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

The Rt Hon. Caroline Nokes, MP (Minister for Immigration)

The Rt Hon. Ben Wallace, MP (Minister for Security and Economic Crime)

The Rt Hon. Nick Hurd, MP (Minister for Policing and the Fire Service and Minister for London)

Baroness Williams of Trafford (Minister for Countering Extremism and Minister for Equalities) §

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Victoria Atkins, MP §

Housing, Communities and Local Government—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. James Brokenshire, MP

MINISTER OF STATE—Kit Malthouse, MP (Minister for Housing)

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Jake Berry, MP

Heather Wheeler, MP

Rishi Sunak, MP

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth §

International Development—

SECRETARY OF STATE AND MINISTER FOR WOMEN AND EQUALITIES—The Rt Hon. Penny Mordaunt, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

Harriett Baldwin, MP §

The Rt Hon. Lord Bates

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Victoria Atkins, MP §

Baroness Williams of Trafford §

International Trade—

SECRETARY OF STATE AND PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE—The Rt Hon. Liam Fox, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

George Hollingbery, MP (Minister for Trade Policy)
Baroness Fairhead (Minister for Trade and Export Promotion)

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Graham Stuart, MP

Justice—

LORD CHANCELLOR AND SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. David Gauke, MP

MINISTER OF STATE—Rory Stewart, MP

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Lucy Frazer, QC, MP
Edward Argar, MP

ADVOCATE GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND—The Rt Hon. Lord Keen of Elie, QC

Law Officers—

ATTORNEY GENERAL—The Rt. Hon. Geoffrey Cox, QC, MP

SOLICITOR GENERAL—Robert Buckland, QC, MP

ADVOCATE GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND—The Rt Hon. Lord Keen of Elie, QC

Leader of the House of Commons—

LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS AND LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL—The Rt Hon. Andrea Leadsom, MP

Northern Ireland Office—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Karen Bradley, MP

MINISTER OF STATE—John Penrose, MP

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Lord Duncan of Springbank §

Scotland Office —

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. David Mundell, MP

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Lord Duncan of Springbank §

Transport—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Chris Grayling, MP

MINISTER OF STATE—Jesse Norman, MP

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Andrew Jones, MP
Baroness Sugg, CBE §
Nusrat Ghani, MP §

Treasury—

PRIME MINISTER, FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY AND MINISTER FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE—The Rt Hon. Theresa May, MP

CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER—The Rt Hon. Philip Hammond, MP

CHIEF SECRETARY—The Rt Hon. Elizabeth Truss, MP

FINANCIAL SECRETARY—The Rt Hon. Mel Stride, MP

EXCHEQUER SECRETARY—Robert Jenrick, MP

ECONOMIC SECRETARY—John Glen, MP

PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY—The Rt Hon. Julian Smith, MP

LORDS COMMISSIONERS—

Mike Freer, MP
Paul Maynard, MP
Craig Whittaker, MP
Rebecca Harris, MP
David Rutley, MP §
Jeremy Quin, MP

ASSISTANT WHIPS—

Nusrat Ghani, MP §
Iain Stewart, MP
Jo Churchill, MP
Amanda Milling, MP
Michelle Donelan, MP
Alister Jack, MP
Wendy Morton, MP

UK Export Finance—

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE—The Rt Hon. Liam Fox, MP
 MINISTER FOR TRADE AND EXPORT PROMOTION—Baroness Fairhead

Wales Office—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Alun Cairns, MP

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth §

Kevin Foster, MP §

Work and Pensions

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Amber Rudd, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

Alok Sharma, MP (Minister for Employment)

Justin Tomlinson, MP (Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work)

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Guy Opperman, MP

Baroness Buscombe

Will Quince, MP

Office of the Leader of the House of Lords

LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS AND LORD PRIVY SEAL—The Rt. Hon. Baroness Evans of Bowes Park

DEPUTY LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS—The Rt Hon. Earl Howe §

Her Majesty's Household—

LORD CHAMBERLAIN—The Rt Hon. Earl Peel GCVO, DL

LORD STEWARD—The Earl of Dalhousie

MASTER OF THE HORSE—Lord Vestey KCVO

TREASURER—Christopher Pincher, MP

COMPTROLLER—Mark Spencer, MP

VICE-CHAMBERLAIN—Andrew Stephenson, MP

CAPTAIN OF THE HONOURABLE CORPS OF GENTLEMEN-AT-ARMS—The Rt Hon. Lord Taylor of Holbeach CBE

CAPTAIN OF THE QUEEN'S BODYGUARD OF THE YEOMEN OF THE GUARD—Earl of Courtown

BARONESSES IN WAITING— Baroness Vere of Norbiton, Baroness Sugg CBE §, Baroness Goldie DL, Baroness Stedman-Scott DL, Baroness Manzoor CBE

LORDS IN WAITING—Viscount Younger of Leckie, The Rt Hon. Lord Young of Cookham CH

§ *Members of the Government listed under more than one Department*

SECOND CHURCH ESTATES COMMISSIONER, REPRESENTING CHURCH COMMISSIONERS—The Rt. Hon. Dame Caroline Spelman, MP

REPRESENTING THE SPEAKER'S COMMITTEE ON THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION—Bridget Phillipson, MP

REPRESENTING THE SPEAKER'S COMMITTEE FOR THE INDEPENDENT PARLIAMENTARY STANDARDS AUTHORITY—Mr Charles Walker, MP

REPRESENTING THE HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION—The Rt Hon. Tom Brake, MP

CHAIRMAN OF THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMISSION—The Rt Hon. Sir Edward Leigh, MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

THE SPEAKER—The Rt Hon. John Bercow, MP

CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—The Rt Hon. Sir Lindsay Hoyle, MP

FIRST DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—The Rt Hon. Dame Eleanor Laing, MP

SECOND DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—The Rt Hon. Dame Rosie Winterton, MP

PANEL OF CHAIRS

Sir David Amess, Ian Austin, Mr Adrian Bailey, Sir Henry Bellingham, Mr Clive Betts, Mr Peter Bone, Sir Graham Brady, Ms Karen Buck, Sir Christopher Chope, Sir David Crausby, Geraint Davies, Philip Davies, Ms Nadine Dorries, Mr Nigel Evans, Sir Roger Gale, Mike Gapes, The Rt Hon. Dame Cheryl Gillan, James Gray, The Rt Hon. David Hanson, Mr Philip Hollobone, Stewart Hosie, The Rt Hon. Mr George Howarth, Sir Edward Leigh, Mrs Anne Main, Steve McCabe, Siobhain McDonagh, Mrs Madeleine Moon, Albert Owen, Ian Paisley, Mark Pritchard, Mr Laurence Robertson, Andrew Rosindell, The Rt Hon. Joan Ryan, Mr Virendra Sharma, Mr Gary Streeter, Graham Stringer, Mr Charles Walker, Phil Wilson

SECRETARY—Colin Lee

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

The Rt Hon. The Speaker (Chairman), Ian Ailles (Director General of the House of Commons), Dr John Benger (Clerk of the House and Head of the House of Commons Service), Sir Paul Beresford, MP, The Rt Hon. Tom Brake, MP, Stewart Hosie, MP, The Rt Hon. Andrea Leadsom, MP (Leader of the House), Dr Rima Makarem (External Member), Jane McCall (External Member), Valerie Vaz, MP, The Rt Hon. Dame Rosie Winterton, MP

SECRETARY OF THE COMMISSION—Marianne Cwynarski

ASSISTANT SECRETARY—Robert Cope

ADMINISTRATION ESTIMATE AUDIT AND RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE AND MEMBERS ESTIMATE AUDIT COMMITTEE

Dr Rima Makarem (Chair), Sir Paul Beresford, MP, Mr Clive Betts, MP, The Rt Hon. Tom Brake, MP, Jane McCall, Bob Scruton

SECRETARY—John-Paul Flaherty

COMMONS EXECUTIVE BOARD

Ian Ailles (Director General of the House of Commons), Carlos Bamford (Managing Director, In-House Services), Myfanwy Barrett (Managing Director, Corporate Services and Finance Director), Dr John Benger (Clerk of the House and Head of the House of Commons Service), Paul Evans (Acting Managing Director, Chamber and Committees), David Hemming (Managing Director, Strategic Estates), Eric Hepburn (Director of Security for Parliament), Tracey Jessup (Director of the Parliamentary Digital Service), Penny Young (Librarian and Managing Director, Research and Information, and Managing Director, Participation)

SECRETARY OF THE BOARD—Rhiannon Hollis

SPEAKER'S SECRETARY—Peter Barratt

SPEAKER'S COUNSEL—Saira Salimi

SPEAKER'S CHAPLAIN—Rev. Rose Hudson-Wilkin

PARLIAMENTARY COMMISSIONER FOR STANDARDS—Kathryn Stone

THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

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

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

SIXTH SERIES

VOLUME 658

THIRTY-THIRD VOLUME OF SESSION 2017-2019

House of Commons

Monday 8 April 2019

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The Secretary of State was asked—

Leaving the EU: Local Authority Funding

1. **Tom Brake** (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD): What financial support the Government are allocating to local authorities to help them prepare for the UK leaving the EU. [910260]

The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (James Brokenshire): We have made £58 million available to support local authorities' preparations for Brexit, and £20 million has already been distributed to all local authorities in England to undertake preparatory work, with another £20 million to follow. Also, £3.14 million has been allocated to 19 local authorities facing immediate impacts from ports.

Tom Brake: The Secretary of State will be aware of the Select Committee report published last week that highlighted that local authorities should have new burdens funded in full. It also highlighted the fact that port authorities such as Portsmouth needed substantially

more than the average of £136,000 that is being granted to ports. Portsmouth would need £4 million in the case of a no-deal scenario. Will the Secretary of State undertake to provide that funding and to reimburse any costs that have been spent on no deal that have proved to be unnecessary?

James Brokenshire: I note the right hon. Gentleman's approach, and I am interested in the fact that he is perhaps now interested in delivering Brexit, even though everything he has said thus far suggests that his party is trying to stop it. I take on board what he has said. This is why we have made funding available to ports such as Portsmouth, and discussions have taken place between Portsmouth and the Department for Transport. He also raised the broader issue of support for local authorities, and this is why we remain in close contact with local government and why we still have £10 million available for any immediate pressures that may emerge in the forthcoming year.

James Gray (North Wiltshire) (Con): What is all this money for?

James Brokenshire: Councils have been preparing for a range of issues. As we leave the European Union, changes to regulations might be required and training and support might be needed, as well as contingency planning so that we have a smooth transition from where we are today to leaving the European Union.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member for North Wiltshire (James Gray) is another mentee of the right hon. Member for New Forest West (Sir Desmond Swayne).

19. [910280] **Patrick Grady** (Glasgow North) (SNP): What discussions has the Secretary of State had with his colleagues in the Cabinet Office about supporting local authorities that are facing the prospect of running European parliamentary elections? Is it not the case that the best way to avoid all these contingencies is to have as long an extension as possible in order to have a people's vote and put the deal back to the people?

James Brokenshire: I am interested to hear that response from the Scottish National party. I hope that it will be able to guarantee that all moneys that have been given to Scotland are actually being spent on Brexit preparations. As I understand it, no guarantees on funding have been given to councils. The hon. Gentleman will know that the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has been in contact with the Electoral Commission in relation to those preparations, but I hope that we will be able to avoid holding European elections.

Daniel Zeichner (Cambridge) (Lab): I hear what the Secretary of State says, but when I talk to my local councils, they seem to have an endless stream of directives coming from the centre but very little guidance as to what to do if significant numbers of their staff suddenly decide to go. What contingency preparations are the Government making to support local councils in the care sector, for instance, if those people suddenly are not here next week?

James Brokenshire: I hope I can give the hon. Gentleman an assurance in relation to the regular and detailed contact we have had with local councils through the ministerial delivery board, which I chair, and through representatives of local government. We also have regular contact with the nine chief executives around the country. We are giving clear advice to assure EU workers of their ability to stay and information on the settled status scheme that the Home Office has put together.

Alison Thewliss (Glasgow Central) (SNP): Cabinet Secretary Michael Russell MSP has confirmed that moneys allocated to Scotland through Barnett consequentials have been distributed primarily to meet the costs of work already being done by local government in Scotland. The Chair of the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee has said that the UK Government are not giving sufficient support to local government for Brexit. As the chaos of Brexit unfolds and local government continues to identify need, can the Secretary of State confirm whether Westminster will bring forward new moneys to meet that need, because the £10 million that he has mentioned is but a drop in the ocean? Local government and the Scottish Government should not be left out of pocket by the UK Tory Government's incompetence.

James Brokenshire: I am sorry—the hon. Lady has I think set out a request for further funding, but my understanding is only £27 million of the initial £37 million allocated to Scotland was spent, and that none was given to councils. Perhaps she can clarify the priority and intent of the SNP in Scotland to ensure that Scotland is well prepared.

Andrew Gwynne (Denton and Reddish) (Lab): Can the Secretary of State not understand the scepticism about his comments, not just from the Select Committee but from many Members on both sides of the House? After all, it was his Department that left bidding for Brexit contingency funding to the very last minute, it was his Department that diverted council funding away from some of the most deprived communities in England, and it was his botched announcement on the Stronger Towns fund that has left many of those communities feeling left behind. Can he now, without any spin or

bluster, confirm to the House whether the most deprived communities in England will see a share of the shared prosperity fund that, pound for pound, is less than, equal to or greater than the share of the European structural development fund it replaces?

James Brokenshire: Before responding to the hon. Gentleman's question, may I say how pleased I am to hear that his grandson is now recovering and returning to full health? I am sure that the whole House will cherish and treasure the fact that that young child is back on the road to recovery.

The hon. Gentleman highlights broader issues on preparation. I have already underlined the extensive work that we have done with local government. I look forward to consulting on the UK's shared prosperity fund in detail. Those allocations will be allocated and set out through the spending review. I hope even now that his community will apply for funding through the Stronger Towns fund so that it gets the support it requires.

Homes for Social Rent

2. **Vicky Foxcroft (Lewisham, Deptford) (Lab):** What recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the Government's target on building homes for social rent. [910261]

The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (James Brokenshire): Through the affordable homes programme, Homes England will deliver at least 12,500 social rented homes in areas of affordability pressure by March 2022. That is part of our £9 billion affordable homes programme, which will deliver approximately 250,000 additional affordable homes by March 2022.

Vicky Foxcroft: In Lewisham, 625 families are currently housed in temporary accommodation outside the borough, and many are at breaking point, due to having to travel for hours to get to work or school. Having had its budget cut by 60% since 2010, how does the Secretary of State expect Lewisham Council to build the housing we so desperately need?

James Brokenshire: By ensuring that the Mayor of London delivers on the £4.8 billion that has been provided to him to build 116,000 affordable homes in London. We have given the Mayor significant funding to deliver on London's housing agenda. I want to support him and see that happen. Clearly, the responsibility to do so lies with the Mayor.

17. [910278] **Theresa Villiers (Chipping Barnet) (Con):** Does the Secretary of State agree that Barnet Council's plan to deliver 22,000 new homes by regenerating land that has already been developed is a good way of delivering the homes we need without encroaching on the green belt or green spaces?

James Brokenshire: I certainly agree with my right hon. Friend. Focusing on land that has already been developed, and indeed on brownfield land, rather than green-belt land, will allow us to cherish our green spaces and the natural environment around us.

Mr Clive Betts (Sheffield South East) (Lab): The Secretary of State will have noted that the question is specifically about social rented housing. If we are to achieve an overall target of 300,000 homes a year, does he accept that it is imperative that more than 100,000 of those have to be social rented houses, built by housing associations and councils? Lifting the housing revenue account cap is welcome, but does he accept that if we are to deliver that number of homes, the Government will have to give more financial support to councils and housing associations?

James Brokenshire: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will recognise the £9 billion affordable homes programme, and equally the extra £2 billion that has been provided on long-term funding. He will have noted in the recent spring statement that we now have £3 billion to enable housing associations to have funding guaranteed for the delivery of those homes. I hope that he also recognises that the flexibility of the affordable homes programme allows more homes for every pound of Government investment. Clearly, I want to see more homes built, and I want to see more council homes built for social rent too.

Mr Mark Prisk (Hertford and Stortford) (Con): Three years ago the Mayor of London clearly promised to build 14,000 more low-cost homes every single year, but he has never touched that target. What has gone wrong and what needs to change?

James Brokenshire: My hon. Friend highlights the need for the Mayor to step up to the mark and ensure that he delivers on the housing agenda in London. I recognise that delivery has increased in recent years, but the latest net additions data for 2017-18 are worrying; London demonstrates a 20% drop, compared with a 2% rise nationwide. I hope that the Mayor will focus broadly on the housing agenda. We are providing support on infrastructure and other aspects to see that London does deliver.

Sir Vince Cable (Twickenham) (LD): Does not the evidence suggest that the viability assessment system is suppressing social house building and that it is unnecessary given the high profitability in the development sector?

James Brokenshire: The right hon. Gentleman makes an interesting point about viability assessments, which we addressed through the national planning policy framework—effectively the high-level planning guidebook—to provide greater certainty for councils and developers. Such assessments can slow the delivery of housing, which is why we took steps within the NPPF.

John Healey (Wentworth and Dearne) (Lab): Two years ago, the Prime Minister at long last admitted that “we simply have not given enough attention to social housing”.—[*Official Report*, 22 June 2017; Vol. 626, c. 169.]

Will the Secretary of State confirm that, since the Prime Minister’s admission, his Government have recorded the two worst years for social house building in the 74 years since the second world war?

James Brokenshire: What I can confirm is that we have delivered more affordable homes over the past eight years of this Government when compared with

the last eight years of the previous Labour Government. Indeed, 407,000 affordable homes have been delivered since 2010, which is 40,000 more than the comparable period under the previous Labour Government.

John Healey: What the Secretary of State is doing is not working, which is why we have a housing crisis. One thing that he did not confirm is the hard fact that social house building has hit a record low under this Government’s watch. He told me recently that he has committed to funding only 12,500 new social rented homes over the six years to 2022, which will not even replace the homes lost through sales in the last year alone. This Government are failing on all fronts; we have a crisis with Brexit and a crisis with housing. When will the Government get serious about building the social rented homes that this country needs?

James Brokenshire: I can say categorically that this Government are serious about building the homes our country needs. Indeed, that is why we have committed funding to housing associations and given councils the flexibility to borrow to build. I challenge the right hon. Gentleman when he seeks to compare this Government’s ambition with that of the previous Labour Government. This Government have lifted the cap on council borrowing, and the number of local authority dwellings built under eight years of a Conservative-led Government is over four times the number built under the 13 years of the Labour Government.

Council Tax Increases

3. **Mr Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): What steps he is taking to help ensure that increases in council tax lead to improved local services. [910262]

The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (James Brokenshire): Local authorities decide council tax levels and are responsible for managing resources to deliver services. The Government set referendum thresholds to protect voters from excessive increases in council taxes without their authorisation. Overall, this year’s settlement gives local authorities access to £46.4 billion.

Mr Sheerman: When will this ministerial team wake up to the fact that we do not all live in Maidenhead or the New Forest? The fact is that the central Government grant has been cut and cut again, and we cannot keep on getting more for less. Only this morning, Shabir Pandor, the leader of Kirklees Council, said, “Why doesn’t this Government see local government as an ally, not the enemy?”

James Brokenshire: I do not recognise the hon. Gentleman’s characterisation of the situation. I absolutely see local government as an ally, which is why I have championed its work and what it delivers for local people. I should hope that he notes that Kirklees Council will have access to £302 million in 2019-20. It is also worth highlighting that average spending power per dwelling for the 10% most deprived authorities in 2019-20 will be around 22% more than for the least deprived. It is not right to say that this Government focus on one area over another. We want local government to perform for communities across the country.

Mr Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con): I declare an interest as a member of Kettering Borough Council. Despite cuts to central Government funding, Kettering council has now frozen its share of council tax all the way through to April 2020—it has been frozen since 2010—while enhancing the delivery of local public services. Does that not show that we do not need to increase council tax to improve the delivery of local public services?

James Brokenshire: I commend Kettering Borough Council for the work it is doing, and indeed Conservative councils up and down this country. It is worth highlighting that, on average, Labour councils in England impose bigger council tax increases than Conservative councils, reminding us that you always end up paying more under Labour.

Jim McMahon (Oldham West and Royton) (Lab/Co-op): Council tax has increased by a whopping 18% over the past five years, hitting families on lower incomes the hardest, taking 8% of their income compared with just 2% for higher earners. As people are asked to pay more and more for less and less, they will quite rightly look at the likes of Google with its £1.5 billion tax gap—which, by the way, is roughly the equivalent of what the current council tax increase will generate. Whose side are this Government on—hard-working families or the very, very few?

James Brokenshire: The Government are on the side of hard-working families. I remind the hon. Gentleman that under the last Labour Government band D council tax more than doubled. It is also worth highlighting that council tax in England is down 6% in real terms since the last Labour Government.

Robert Courts (Witney) (Con): Conservative-controlled West Oxfordshire District Council has one of the lowest council tax rates in the country and some of the best services due to its innovative cost-saving measures. Does that not show that Conservative councils save money on back-office costs and provide better services for local residents?

James Brokenshire: I totally agree with my hon. Friend's message. I am sure that others outside this place will have heard it, too, as we look towards local council elections, with Conservative councils delivering more for their residents and better value for money.

Homes for Social Rent

4. **Faisal Rashid** (Warrington South) (Lab): What recent assessment he has made of trends in the level of new homes for social rent since 2010. [910263]

The Minister for Housing (Kit Malthouse): Since 2010 we have delivered more than 407,000 new affordable homes. That includes more than 293,000 affordable homes for rent, of which 135,000 are for social rent. There is always more to do and I look forward to hearing from the hon. Gentleman what that might be.

Faisal Rashid: Between 2016 and 2017 a total of 138 two-bedroom properties were let in my Warrington South constituency through the social rent scheme, and about

1,100 families bid for them. What is the Minister doing to meet those unsustainable levels of demand in my constituency?

Kit Malthouse: The hon. Gentleman is quite right to raise the fact that demand in all parts of the housing market outstrips supply—social, affordable and, indeed, all ownership models that we put out there. We are putting significant resources behind all parts of the country to build the homes that the next generation needs. We have managed to get net output up from 124,000 after the crash, to 222,000. Indicators for next year are looking pretty good, too, but as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, significant resources are being applied to this problem and we will do our best to try to address it.

Mark Pawsey (Rugby) (Con): The Minister will agree that every opportunity should be taken to increase the stock of social houses for rent, so will he acknowledge the great work of Rugby Borough Council, which is currently arranging for the replacement of old high-rise blocks with a greater number of houses on a conventional streetscape?

Kit Malthouse: I applaud any local authority that is putting its shoulder to the wheel of solving the housing crisis. A great sadness of my time as a borough councillor—I was a councillor for eight years—was the fact that the then Labour Government put an end to council house building. We were all induced, effectively, out of that business with decent homes money. We had to get rid of our housing and transfer it to housing associations or other formats. Fortunately, some councils did manage to hang on and I am very pleased that they are now doing their bit.

Emma Reynolds (Wolverhampton North East) (Lab): Some 66,000 council homes have been sold through right to buy since 2012, and just shy of 18,000 have been started—that is one replacement home started for every four sold, and they are not like for like, either. Are the Government ditching their promise for one-to-one replacement, and when are they going to come clean about that?

Kit Malthouse: The hon. Lady is quite right to point out that we have not hit our one-to-one target. That is correct—it would be foolish to deny it—but at the same time those 66,000 homes that have been sold have satisfied a legitimate aspiration among all those people to own their own home, and we are committed to that. The lifting of the housing revenue account cap was specifically designed to set councils free to build a new generation of council houses, so that in time a further generation of council house occupants can also experience home ownership.

Coastal Communities: Funding

5. **Mrs Sheryll Murray** (South East Cornwall) (Con): What recent progress his Department has made on the allocation of funding to coastal communities. [910264]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (Jake Berry): On 23 March we announced 70 grants, worth £36 million,

from our coastal communities fund and coastal revival fund. This will mean that, by 2020, we will have invested over £200 million in coastal communities across England.

Mrs Murray: Flooding is a real threat to our coastal communities. Will my hon. Friend ensure that construction of new infrastructure in Looe is fully funded to maintain the town's economic viability and future prosperity?

Jake Berry: First, I take the opportunity to congratulate my hon. Friend on her recent wedding to Bob.

The Government are aware of the impact of tidal flooding in Looe. The Environment Agency and Cornwall Council are working on an integrated flood defence scheme as part of the £20 million wider regeneration of the area.

Luke Pollard (Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport) (Lab/Co-op): The recent House of Lords Select Committee report on the funding of coastal communities shows that our coastal towns and communities are hardest hit by austerity. Will the Minister take the report's recommendations seriously and look at how we can redistribute wealth and power from the centre and into coastal communities, especially those in the far south-west such as Plymouth?

Jake Berry: I saw the Select Committee's report with interest—in fact, I had the privilege of giving evidence to the Select Committee—and it well identifies the fact that coastal communities across the country face shared challenges. That is, of course, why we have our coastal communities fund, which is looking at individual projects that can drive jobs, growth and prosperity in coastal communities, including those of Plymouth.

Martin Vickers (Cleethorpes) (Con): Cleethorpes is benefiting considerably from the coastal communities fund and has great potential for regeneration through the Greater Grimsby town deal. Can the Minister give my constituents an assurance that he will continue to look generously towards Cleethorpes?

Jake Berry: I congratulate my hon. Friend, who is a redoubtable campaigner for his constituency. No Question Time passes without him talking about Cleethorpes, and I can say that, when considering investment in our coastal communities, I always have the biggest fish and chip shop in Britain at the forefront of my mind.

Mr Speaker: Yes, but we must not forget Bexhill and Battle either.

Huw Merriman (Bexhill and Battle) (Con): Thank you, Mr Speaker. It is always sunny on the south coast.

May I ask the Minister to consider the fact that, when people retire, they tend to move to coastal communities, which impacts on our social care and council tax bills? Will he consider long-term funding that properly looks at the age range in coastal communities? And will he also look at the radical reform of social care to make sure we have social care insurance, which would bring more money into the system?

Jake Berry: I recently visited Bexhill and Battle for a brief jaunt to the seaside with my family, so I know my hon. Friend's constituency well. We have recently confirmed that we will invest an additional £650 million in support

and care in communities such as Bexhill and Battle, and I hope he will also look at the Government's new stronger towns fund, which may be able to support his area.

Social Housing

7. **Kevin Hollinrake** (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): What steps his Department is taking to support the building of social housing. [910266]

The Minister for Housing (Kit Malthouse): On top of our £9 billion affordable homes programme, we have reintroduced social rent, removed the housing revenue account borrowing cap and announced £2 billion of long-term funding, and we are setting a long-term rent deal for councils and housing associations.

Kevin Hollinrake: There is currently a prohibition on the inclusion of residential properties in personal pensions such as self-invested personal pensions, which leaves potential accommodation over shops empty or unconverted. Will my hon. Friend work with his colleagues in the Treasury to reform these rules, provided that the properties are let out at a social rent?

Kit Malthouse: No one, but no one, works as hard as my hon. Friend on housing policy. There is not a time when I appear at the Dispatch Box that he does not badger me with some new idea. He obviously takes his moral duty to the next generation to build the housing they need very seriously, and I would be more than happy to walk arm in arm with him down Downing Street to No. 11 to propose exactly that idea.

Graham P. Jones (Hyndburn) (Lab): It is disappointing that the Government have scrapped their one-for-one target. My local Labour-run council, Hyndburn Borough Council, wants to build some social houses on the Clayton triangle. What support can the Minister guarantee to make sure that those social homes are built on the Clayton triangle?

Kit Malthouse: Of course, one change we have made is to allow local authorities to bid into the affordable homes programme, specifically to support their house building aspirations. We have lifted the HRA borrowing cap, so the hon. Gentleman's local authority is free, in a way that it was not before, to borrow that money. I point out to Opposition Members that one of the most debilitating parts of the debate about housing is their inability to accept that this Government and the coalition Government before us were faced with a catastrophic financial framework within which to build the homes that the next generation needs. It has taken time to recover capacity in the house building industry and in local authorities to achieve the kind of aspiration he wants to see.

Mr Bob Seely (Isle of Wight) (Con): I congratulate the Government on their ambitious targets, but is the Minister aware that on the Isle of Wight there is deep concern about the housing targets and the lack of affordable housing? Fewer than 100 units were built between 2015 and 2018. I hope that my council will apply for exceptional circumstances to lower its targets in the interests of our tourism economy and quality of

life, but to ensure that a much higher proportion of that is built for social housing. Will he meet me to discuss this issue further?

Kit Malthouse: I think a feeling that everybody shares across the House is the desire to address what is undoubtedly a housing crisis. Governments of all stripes over the past 30 or 40 years have failed to build the houses that the country needs. We are applying significant resources to try to correct that problem.

My hon. Friend raises an important issue, in that local authorities also have a duty to put their shoulder to the wheel to deal with the housing problem. Through the national planning policy framework, we have put the power to do so in their hands. It is perfectly possible for his local authority to produce an authoritative and ambitious local plan that both satisfies the aspirations of local residents for the kind of housing they want and sends a signal to the development community about what it should be doing on the Isle of Wight.

Dr Roberta Blackman-Woods (City of Durham) (Lab): The Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee has advised the Government that they need to do more to support neighbourhood planning in deprived areas. Does the Minister agree that he should give additional powers to town and parish councils to facilitate that and to ensure that all areas, especially those with acute need, are able to plan for and deliver the homes, including the social housing, that they desperately need, while also improving their wider built and natural environment?

Kit Malthouse: The hon. Lady identifies a significant intention of ours on planning policy, which is to put local communities of all types and in all parts of the country in control of planning. It is the case, unfortunately, that over the past 30 or 40 years many neighbourhoods have felt that they are victims of the planning system rather than its masters. We are keen to promote the use of neighbourhood plans in all sorts of areas—urban, rural or wherever it might be—so that local people are in control of the disposition, size, place and type of housing they want, subject to their joining us in the general mission to satisfy what is undoubtedly a huge desire in the next generation for new homes.

Homeless People: Death Rates

8. **Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck** (South Shields) (Lab): What steps his Department is taking to reduce the death rate among homeless people. [910267]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (Mrs Heather Wheeler): Every death of someone who is homeless is one too many, and we have a moral duty to act. We are committed to ending rough sleeping for good and aim to halve it by 2022. Our strategy, which commits us to £100 million to tackle rough sleeping, is funding more than 1,750 bed spaces and 500 new staff through the rough sleeping initiative.

Mrs Lewell-Buck: I thank the Minister for that response. An estimated 120 homeless people in the north-east have died since 2013—a staggering increase of 71%. Those 120 lives mattered and they deserve some recognition.

The Government have said that local authorities need to investigate fully the circumstances of such deaths, yet have failed to provide any funding or support to ensure that those investigations happen. Is that because people dying on our streets are not really a priority for this Government?

Mrs Wheeler: Obviously, the figures that the hon. Lady reads out are desperate and sad news. We are working with the Department of Health and Social Care to ensure that when a homeless person dies, a safeguarding adult review takes place, where appropriate. The safeguarding adult review process was set up not to review every death of an adult considered to require safeguarding but as a process for learning lessons where the safeguarding adults board is of the view that local partners could have done more to prevent a death resulting from abuse or neglect.

21. [910282] **Bob Blackman** (Harrow East) (Con): I thank my hon. Friend for her answers so far. Clearly, to prevent people from dying on our streets because they are homeless, it is far better to provide them with a home, or to prevent them becoming homeless in the first place. Will she update the House on what is being done in the Housing First trials, so that we can see that innovative scheme rolled out across the country and end homelessness for good?

Mrs Wheeler: I thank my hon. Friend for that question. The Housing First pilots are in the Greater Manchester, Greater Birmingham and Greater Liverpool areas, and £38 million has been put aside to assist with them. The Mayor of the Greater Birmingham area, Andy Street, phones me regularly to tell me about the progress on the Housing First pilots in the west midlands. The pilot in Liverpool is going quite well too but, sadly, the one in Manchester is not going as well, but I like a bit of competition between the three Mayors and I am sure they will all step up.^{1 2}

Diana Johnson (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): The *Hull Daily Mail* reported that in Hull alone 35 homeless people died between 2013 and 2017, part of the 24% increase in rough sleeping deaths across England and Wales in five years. That has happened on the Government's watch. Why does the Minister think that has happened?

Mrs Wheeler: Again, I say that anyone dying is a tragedy. For the hon. Lady to give those numbers is a salutary lesson on how councils need to work very hard. The rough sleeping and homelessness reduction taskforce is driving forward the implementation of our cross-government strategy to achieve our commitment to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and to end it altogether. The latest figures, in 2018, show that the number of people sleeping rough on our streets has fallen for the first time in several years, and that the number sleeping rough in our specialist areas has reduced by 19%.

Sarah Newton (Truro and Falmouth) (Con): No one wants to see people sleeping rough on our streets. Will my hon. Friend join me in congratulating the huge teamwork going on in Cornwall across the public and private sectors? That has seen a reduction in rough sleepers by over 40% in the last year.

1. [Official Report, 9 April 2019, Vol. 658, c. 2MC.]

2. [Official Report, 11 April 2019, Vol. 658, c. 6MC.]

Mrs Wheeler: My hon. Friend is a true champion for her area. The statistics in Cornwall show how this matter can be dealt with successfully when partners come together—a reduction of 40% in rough sleeping in one year alone is a true testament to the reason why we need to tackle this. We will not let it rest.

Leigh: Local Authority Funding

10. **Jo Platt** (Leigh) (Lab/Co-op): What recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of local authority funding in Leigh constituency. [910270]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (Rishi Sunak): The local government finance settlement for 2019-20 confirmed a real-terms increase in resources available to local authorities. I am pleased to say that the hon. Lady's own local council, Wigan, will see its core spending power increase by £4.6 million in this financial year.

Jo Platt: Under this Government, Wigan Council has seen £160 million taken from its budget—that is £160 million less to spend every single year. With children's services as a top immediate pressure, how do the Government intend to respond to my local authority when it has to deliver services to some of our most vulnerable children without the funding that is so desperately needed?

Rishi Sunak: The recent Budget provided more than £400 million for children's services but, beyond money, it is important to note that it is quality of leadership that makes the difference in providing for vulnerable children. The hon. Lady's own council recently won a prestigious award for being the best council in the country, and its leader remarked that "we are still able to give residents first class care".

Vulnerable Children: Local Authority Support

11. **Emma Hardy** (Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle) (Lab): What discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Education on improving local authority support for vulnerable children. [910272]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (Rishi Sunak): I am working closely with colleagues at the Department for Education to ensure that local authorities can properly support vulnerable children. I recently gave evidence to the Communities and Local Government Committee together with the Children's Minister on that very topic.

Emma Hardy: As the Minister is aware, the Select Committee is doing an inquiry into children with special needs and disabilities. One of the things that comes back from all the evidence is the fact that support is often based on the resources available and not on the child's needs. Will the Minister ensure that funding for the high needs block is based on need and not on historical data?

Rishi Sunak: Responsibility for high needs funding rests with the Department for Education, but I would be more than happy to raise that point with my colleagues.

Priti Patel (Witham) (Con): Essex County Council is set to carry a £15 million deficit for special educational needs and vulnerable children. I hear what the Minister says about working with the Department for Education, but what are it and MHCLG doing collectively to ensure that the Treasury looks at the long-term needs of the many children who are currently not funded?

Rishi Sunak: I thank my right hon. Friend for that question. Her county council is a leader when it comes to dealing with vulnerable children; it is an example for others across the country to follow. I assure her that we are working very closely with the Department for Education. We are jointly undertaking a review to understand the exact drivers of the increased need that she mentioned, and we will make a compelling and evidence-based pitch to the Treasury come the spending review.

Gareth Snell (Stoke-on-Trent Central) (Lab/Co-op): I am sure the Minister will agree, as he said to my hon. Friend the Member for Leigh (Jo Platt), that political leadership is exactly what is needed when we look at children's services. He will therefore be as upset and aghast as me that Stoke-on-Trent City Council was rated "inadequate" in all four areas of its Ofsted inspection of children's services. The opening line of the Ofsted report said that children were not being kept safe from risk. A failure of political leadership has meant that children have been put into unnecessarily risky situations. On top of that, the leader of the Conservative group—the deputy leader of the council—has failed to attend any corporate parenting committee meetings in the past two years. Does the Minister agree that it is time for change at Stoke-on-Trent City Council? If they will not change, the electorate will do it for them.

Rishi Sunak: When we talk about vulnerable children, it is important that all councils take the precautions that are required. Of course I will listen very carefully to the findings of that Ofsted report. The Department for Education has recently made available £80 million in innovation funding. All councils can avail themselves of it to improve their practice and ensure that vulnerable children everywhere get the support and care they require.

Fiona Bruce (Congleton) (Con): Will Ministers support vulnerable children through to adulthood by enabling them to access integrated services through the roll-out of family hubs?

Rishi Sunak: I thank my hon. Friend for raising that issue. We all recognise the value of strong families, and she champions that cause especially well. I welcome the development of family hubs. I am pleased to tell her that our troubled families programme specifically enables a family-centric approach to supporting those in need. That often involves the use of family hubs, which we encourage.

Parish Councils

12. **Antoinette Sandbach** (Eddisbury) (Con): What steps his Department is taking to support parish councils. [910273]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (Jake Berry): We are absolutely committed to giving parish councils the tools they need to shape their communities' future.

Neighbourhood plans are giving them a real say in the future of the areas that they represent. Through the general power of competency, we have made it easier than ever for them to work on behalf of their communities. We are also making it easier for people to petition to create a local parish council if they so desire.

Antoinette Sandbach: Hankelow parish council in my constituency is facing developers seeking to avoid their responsibility to build affordable homes on the only brownfield site in the village. What powers can be given to parish councils to enable them to ensure that affordable housing development is met?

Jake Berry: My hon. Friend is an exceptional champion of the people of Eddisbury and has been extremely active on this very local issue. Local planning authorities must consult parish councils before deciding on an application. Parish councils can offer important insights, and are closely connected with the community. We have revised our approach to viability in national policy to strengthen that position.

Mr Speaker: I sincerely hope that the hon. Member for Eddisbury (Antoinette Sandbach) will have the Minister's tribute framed and displayed in an appropriate place in her home, for she is not merely a champion but an exceptional champion.

Housing Sector

13. **John Spellar** (Warley) (Lab): What assessment he has made of the adequacy of the (a) build quality, (b) leasehold practices and (c) other elements of the performance of the housing sector. [910274]

The Minister for Housing (Kit Malthouse): I hope that everybody in the House wants to see new build quality improve, and we will soon consult on the details of a new homes ombudsman to make it so. We are also cracking down on unfair leasehold practices. Most recently, on 28 March, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State unveiled an industry pledge to end the doubling of ground rents, and there have been more than 40 signatures from the sector so far.

John Spellar: But the Minister surely recognises that every week there are continuing reports of shoddy workmanship, long delays in putting them right, extortionate leases, which he mentioned, and unfinished roads, lights and pavements. On top of that, we have seen unaffordable housing and eye-watering profits and bonuses. He should not just hive this off to an ombudsman; we need direct action from his Department. This scandal has been going on for far too long.

Kit Malthouse: As a constituency MP with a large amount of house building in my patch, I regularly deal with exactly the sort of problems that the right hon. Gentleman raises, and I make my views known to the house building industry about its duty to produce a high-quality product for its customers, notwithstanding whatever the Government may do. He is quite right that other tools may well be available to us, and we are looking, for example, at what we could do with the Help to Buy scheme to encourage house builders to produce greater quality. I am pleased to note, however, that the

recent Home Builders Federation star rating system has shown a general improvement, particularly among the larger house builders, with three now in the five-star zone.

Eddie Hughes (Walsall North) (Con): I chaired the all-party group on excellence in the built environment, which recommended a new homes ombudsman, but it was October when the Government agreed to introduce one. Five months on, can I press the Minister to get a move on before he gets promoted to the Cabinet?

Kit Malthouse: My hon. Friend is quite right to point out that Housing Ministers do not last that long, and I am certainly pushing the envelope at nine months, but I will do my best in the time that remains to me to fulfil his desire, because it is an important one. If we are going to get to building 300,000 homes a year for the next generation—I know this is of particular importance to him given his background—these houses have to be fantastic, of great quality and of brilliant design, so that communities will continue to accept them in significant numbers.

Economic Growth: Midlands Engine

14. **Ben Bradley** (Mansfield) (Con): What steps the Government are taking to deliver economic growth through the midlands engine. [910275]

The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (James Brokenshire): We have confirmed up to £2 million to further the delivery of the east midlands HS2 growth strategy around Toton station. To increase business engagement, we are supporting the midlands engine's campaign to raise the region's profile nationally and internationally, and to highlight the economic potential of the midlands.

Ben Bradley: I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer, but local authorities in Mansfield are hoping to secure funding through the future high streets fund to help reinvigorate what was once a thriving town centre. That support would be very welcome, as would the opportunity to access the recently announced stronger towns funding. What will the criteria be for that funding, and will my right hon. Friend commit to working with our local council to give Mansfield the best possible chance of accessing it?

James Brokenshire: My hon. Friend rightly champions Mansfield, and we will look very closely at the expression of interest that has been expressed in relation to the future high streets fund. The stronger towns fund will support towns to grow and prosper, and we will obviously be working with communities. I can certainly give a commitment to work with him and with Mansfield as we continue to shape that, and get the right feedback to ensure that that money delivers what we want it to.

Rebecca Pow (Taunton Deane) (Con) *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Last time I looked, Taunton Deane was a considerable distance away from the midlands, but I am in a generous mood, so we must hear the hon. Lady.

18. [910279] **Rebecca Pow:** Thank you for being so generous, Mr Speaker. Although it is not the midlands engine but the great south west, this question is about economic growth. Some £600 million of economic growth could be delivered from the £95 million forward funding, with a bid just submitted by Somerset County Council that represents great value for money in delivering 10,000 houses. Does the Secretary of State agree that this is indeed a good place for the Government to invest their money and will make a great contribution to our housing targets?

James Brokenshire: I acknowledge my hon. Friend's ingenuity in putting her question. Her council has submitted a £14 million bid to the housing infrastructure fund, which we obviously want to see delivering more homes and building the homes our country needs. I can assure my hon. Friend that we will look carefully at this bid. It is a competitive process, but I am encouraged by what she says.

Housing: Newcastle

15. **Chi Onwurah** (Newcastle upon Tyne Central) (Lab): What steps he is taking to increase the provision of housing in Newcastle. [910276]

The Minister for Housing (Kit Malthouse): Since 2010, over 21,850 new homes have been delivered in Tyne and Wear. In March, we announced over £16 million from the housing infrastructure fund, which will help to unlock a further 5,000 homes.

Chi Onwurah: I publish my constituency casework on my website, and every month since I was first elected in 2010, housing has been one of the top three issues constituents bring to me. Does the Minister agree that to deliver choice and affordability for my constituents, the right resources and powers need to be devolved to the region as part of the North of Tyne deal? We know what our housing need is.

Kit Malthouse: Given that Newcastle is one of the two mighty northern cities that made me the person I am, the hon. Lady will understand that I am keen to see that wonderful city, where I spent three fantastic years at university, achieve its aspirations. I know that the local authority has constituted a housing delivery board, and we are doing our best to give it the resources it needs to deliver housing from Ousemouth to Kenton Bank Foot to the Helix development in central Newcastle. I am certainly more than happy to help her in chivvying it on to fulfil the aspirations of the Geordies who need homes.

Homelessness: Former Armed Services Personnel

16. **Andrew Rosindell** (Romford) (Con): What steps the Government are taking to reduce the number of former armed services personnel who are homeless. [910277]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (Mrs Heather Wheeler): This Government are committed to ensuring that armed services personnel do not become homeless or end up rough sleeping. We have recently allocated an additional

£1 million to support ex-members of the armed forces who are, or are at risk of becoming, homeless. That additional funding goes hand in hand with the £1.2 billion that has been set aside to tackle all forms of homelessness.

Andrew Rosindell: The Minister will be aware that too many of our brave veterans, who have served this country, have been failed in post-service life. What discussions has the Department had with the Ministry of Defence, so that clear pathways are set out to prevent homelessness in the first place? Will she give a cast-iron guarantee that the military covenant will be upheld?

Mrs Wheeler: My hon. Friend is quite right. A joined-up response is essential to ensuring that veterans can access the prevention and relief services available to them. I am pleased to say that the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, which was introduced by our hon. Friend the Member for Harrow East (Bob Blackman), places a statutory duty on the Secretary of State for Defence to refer members of the armed forces to local authority services for tailored support, including a personalised housing plan, to prevent them from becoming homeless. Where veterans are homeless and vulnerable as a result of having served in the armed forces, local authorities have a duty to house them. I sit on the Veterans Board, and it is my pleasure to do so.

Gareth Thomas (Harrow West) (Lab/Co-op): In the United States, many former armed services personnel are housed in dedicated veterans communities run as housing co-operatives, giving them control over the cost of the housing provided to them and enabling them to live their lives in the way they want to. Will the Minister undertake to look at the potential for using housing co-operatives to house armed forces personnel here in the UK?

Mrs Wheeler: I thank the hon. Gentleman for that innovative idea. We have already agreed some money for ports down on the south coast, where there is a predominance of naval people, who have come together to build a number of units as one group. I think this idea has legs—if not sea legs, then Army legs.

Home Ownership

22. **Rosie Duffield** (Canterbury) (Lab): What assessment he has made of trends in the level of home ownership among under-45-year-olds since 2010. [910284]

The Minister for Housing (Kit Malthouse): The proportion of under-45-year-olds owning their own home was 50% in 2010-11. That fell to 42% in 2016-17, in the aftermath of the crash, but happily it has since risen to 45% in 2017-18. Supported by Government schemes including Help to Buy and right to buy, the number of first-time buyers rose to more than 370,000 in 2018, an 86% increase since 2010.

Rosie Duffield: Many of my constituents are simply priced out of the housing market. Rental properties and mortgages are out of reach to all but the wealthiest, meaning that families who have lived for generations in villages such as Bridge, Chartham and Sturry, where their parents and grandparents grew up, are now simply

unable to afford a property. Will the Minister acknowledge that we urgently need realistically priced affordable homes for the next generation, especially in rural areas?

Kit Malthouse: Yes.

Mr Speaker: Well done.

Topical Questions

T1. [910285] **John Grogan** (Keighley) (Lab): If he will make a statement on his departmental responsibilities.

The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (James Brokenshire): Last Wednesday, I joined the New Zealand high commissioner and other hon. Members to remember victims of the Christchurch mosque attack, reaffirming our solidarity with our Muslim brothers and sisters. As in New Zealand, our diverse communities make us stronger. That is why we will always stand up against hatred, bigotry and extremism. It is also why I have reaffirmed the Government's commitment to the holocaust memorial and learning centre next door to Parliament. I met holocaust survivors last week to set out more details of the plan for that.

On a very different note, the issue of tree netting on development sites and its impact on wild birds has caused concern across the House. That is why I have written to developers today to underline their responsibilities to protect wildlife and to ensure that netting is kept to an absolute minimum.

John Grogan: May I associate myself with the Secretary of State's remarks about New Zealand? We had a similar remembrance event in Keighley only yesterday.

Will the Secretary of State carefully consider the compromise proposals for Yorkshire devolution, as put forward by the mayor of South Yorkshire, for the period to 2022? Will he also consider the request from the councils in the Leeds city region to extend their devolution deals for that period?

James Brokenshire: I will look and am looking carefully at the submissions that have been made. I want to see greater devolution across Yorkshire. I recognise Yorkshire's ambition to have those powers transferred down and I look forward to continuing discussions with the hon. Gentleman and others on how best that can be advanced.

T3. [910287] **Robert Halfon** (Harlow) (Con): I thank my right hon. Friend for meeting me to discuss permitted development rights, but does he not agree that the policy has not worked? It has allowed landlords to build ghettos and London councillors to socially cleanse their most vulnerable families to places such as Harlow, yet we have not been given the resources to deal with the extra burden. Will he look at that and change the rules?

James Brokenshire: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for highlighting this issue, which he and I met and discussed directly. He knows that we made a commitment in the recent spring statement to examine permitted development rights in relation to the conversion of office to residential property, but I am content to look more broadly at where the burden lies with some of these transfers, because it is important that we get this right.

Alison Thewliss (Glasgow Central) (SNP): First, may I say that my thoughts are with those affected by the Clutha helicopter crash? The fatal accident inquiry is starting in Glasgow today.

The UK Government's shared prosperity fund is still something of a mystery box. We do not know how much will be in it, who is going to administer it or what its priorities will be. Will the Secretary of State commit today that the Scottish Government will get to control the fund and that Scotland will not get one penny less than we would have received under EU funding?

James Brokenshire: I certainly agree with the hon. Lady about the need to ensure that the UK shared prosperity fund works for all parts of our United Kingdom, and we will certainly work with the Scottish Government and other devolved Administrations on the preparation for that and in advance of the spending review.

T4. [910288] **Vicky Ford** (Chelmsford) (Con): New homes need new infrastructure. The housing infrastructure fund bid for Chelmsford's second railway station and bypass will unlock over 10,000 new homes, so may I urge my right hon. Friend to back the bid? Otherwise I will keep on nagging him until he does.

The Minister for Housing (Kit Malthouse): We have already invested £10 million in the Chelmer Waterside development in my hon. Friend's constituency, but she is still insatiable for more Government funding for her fast-growing constituency. As she knows, HIF bids are a competitive process, but I will look carefully at the proposals put in by Chelmsford; and, given her support, let us be hopeful of success.

Sarah Jones (Croydon Central) (Lab): New figures today show that 40,000 people are still trapped in privately owned blocks wrapped in Grenfell-style aluminium composite material cladding. That is 40,000 lives on hold—weddings cancelled, mental ill-health rife—because people are trapped in properties that cannot be sold. The Prime Minister repeatedly said that she rules nothing out, so when will the Government finally say, "Enough is enough," set up a loan fund for private blocks and get the job done?

James Brokenshire: I firmly recognise the stress, strain and anguish that so many people continue to live with as a consequence of ACM cladding on the outside of a number of these blocks. A growing list of companies, such as Barratt, Mace and Legal & General, are doing the right thing and taking responsibility. In addition, warranty providers have accepted claims on a number of buildings. I urge all owners and developers to follow the lead of those companies and step up to make sure this work is done. This is a priority for me; I know the work needs to be advanced more quickly, and I am considering all other options if it is not.

T5. [910289] **Mr Philip Hollobone** (Kettering) (Con): Mr Speaker, I declare my interest as a member of Kettering Borough Council. When will the Secretary of State lay the structural changes order for new unitary councils in Northamptonshire?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (Rishi Sunak): I thank my hon. Friend for his engagement with the process of reorganising local government in Northamptonshire. I am pleased to tell him that the Department's consultation

on this matter has now closed. The Secretary of State is considering the responses and he intends to announce his decision to the House as soon as is practical.

T2. [910286] **Grahame Morris** (Easington) (Lab): What steps will the Secretary of State take to support housing renewal in older industrial areas, particularly coalfields?

Kit Malthouse: As I hope the hon. Gentleman knows, we are putting enormous emphasis on the regeneration of brownfield land. It should be a first call for all local authorities trying to deliver new homes. As I recall, 56% of all new homes last year were delivered on brownfield land. Through Homes England, we are putting significant money behind remediation required in areas such as coalfields and other sites that might be contaminated. I am happy to write to the hon. Gentleman with details of how his area could access that funding.

T6. [910290] **Theresa Villiers** (Chipping Barnet) (Con): May I urge the Government to support local authorities in getting tough on littering and making sure that more fines are levied for this antisocial habit?

Rishi Sunak: I wholeheartedly agree with my right hon. Friend. We very much back the recent *Daily Mail* campaign to keep our country tidy. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is responsible for increasing fines for fly-tippers. We will do our bit to ensure funding for our parks and green spaces.

Rachael Maskell (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): New developments have to meet the needs of local people, not developers. Will the Secretary of State meet me to discuss the plans for York Central, which fail on transport, housing and climate credentials?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (Jake Berry): Having visited the York Central site, I know how key it is in delivering the northern powerhouse. That is why it is with the greatest pleasure that I will meet the hon. Lady.

T7. [910293] **Mrs Sheryll Murray** (South East Cornwall) (Con): The south-west has fantastic economic potential and further ambitions for growth. Does the Minister recognise that the great south west is on a par with the northern powerhouse? Will he ensure we receive the same high-profile support from his Department?

Jake Berry: The application from my hon. Friend to be the high-profile supporter of the new south-western powerhouse is now complete. I look forward to working with her to ensure we provide support for her ambitions and those of the people she represents.

Melanie Onn (Great Grimsby) (Lab): Online agent Rightmove continues to allow discrimination against low earners, single parents and the disabled by declaring “No DSS” on its portals. Will the Minister please take action to end this potentially unlawful practice?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (Mrs Heather Wheeler): First, I thank the hon. Lady for all the hard work she put in when she was on the Opposition Front Bench and for the principled stand she has taken. It has been a pleasure working with her. Secondly, we have declared that we want all sites to take off “No DSS”-type adverts.

I have been very encouraged by what has happened with Zoopla and National Westminster bank. This work is ongoing, but I would be delighted to meet the hon. Lady to see what we can do to spread it further.

T8. [910294] **Rebecca Pow** (Taunton Deane) (Con): Many of our precious historic parks and gardens have been restored with vital grants from the national Heritage Lottery Fund. As a part of that, conservation management plans have had to be prepared. Unfortunately, despite Hestercombe Gardens in my constituency offering to curate the archive, the national Heritage Lottery Fund has apparently just destroyed the entire archive, apart from a few documents it thought it should keep for legal reasons. Does the Minister agree that this is a scandal that should never be allowed to happen again?

Rishi Sunak: I agree with my hon. Friend that maintaining records of the UK’s landscape heritage is important. I would be delighted to raise her point with colleagues at the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to ensure that in future we can surmount any bureaucratic hurdles and that vital archives are preserved.

Kate Green (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab): Further to earlier answers about the housing ombudsman scheme, there is considerable consumer scepticism that the scheme will not end up being industry-driven and will favour house developers rather than buyers. What assurances can Ministers give us that it will be consumer-led and that consumers will have input into the consultation?

James Brokenshire: I firmly recognise the consumer interest. That is what motivated me to put an ombudsman in place. I want the ombudsman to first be established in a shadow format, leading into the statutory ombudsman scheme I want to create, so we create some momentum and give a sense of confidence to consumers.

Tom Pursglove (Corby) (Con): Lack of knowledge of the armed forces covenant and of joined-up working in some cases is one of the key barriers to veterans getting the help that they need. What more can we do to increase joined-up working and awareness?

Mrs Wheeler: My hon. Friend will have to excuse me for turning my back—there are not too many daggers in it today. We have been asking councils to nominate a senior councillor in every single council to be a veterans’ champion. I will audit that and ensure that it happens. The Veterans Board—the inter-ministerial Government board—meets regularly; in fact, we have our next meeting in only about three weeks’ time.¹

Justin Madders (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab): Do the Government consider it fair and reasonable for devolved local authority areas to charge people living outside those areas more for exactly the same services?

Jake Berry: No, and if the hon. Gentleman writes and gives me details I will look into that.

Kevin Hollinrake (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): Citizens Advice reports that local authority debt collection practices are a growing factor in those approaching it seeking help on problem debt. What can the Minister do to roll out best practice to local authorities?

1. [Official Report, 14 May 2019, Vol. 660, c. 2MC.]

Rishi Sunak: I thank my hon. Friend for making me aware of that point and the new advice from Citizens Advice. I have enjoyed my meetings with him, and I am pleased to tell him that we are looking at his proposals and hope to make an announcement when we reasonably can.

Martin Whitfield (East Lothian) (Lab): The Housing Minister has a make-it-so attitude. Will he therefore meet with me, as chair of the all-party parliamentary group for the timber industries, and the group to discuss timber's role in hitting the future carbon target as well as the housing target?

Kit Malthouse: Given the emphasis the Government are putting on new and innovative construction techniques in building the homes that the next generation needs, I am more than happy to meet the hon. Gentleman. Notwithstanding the problems we had with timber-framed buildings back in the 1980s, there is significant potential for its use in future house building.

Eddie Hughes (Walsall North) (Con) *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Yes, young Hughes—Eddie Hughes.

Eddie Hughes: Thank you again, Mr Speaker. Will the Minister consider allowing local authority licensing committees to authorise the use of digital ID for the purchase of alcohol?

Rishi Sunak: We are always keen to embrace whatever technology we can to improve service to our constituents. I would be delighted to meet my hon. Friend and look at his suggestion.

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

Mr Speaker: Another new young Member requiring cultivation: Mr Barry Sheerman.

Mr Sheerman: Thank you, Mr Speaker—very ageist, but welcome anyway. One of the worst things for people who have a house is the house next door being empty, derelict and lost. What progress are we making to identify empty, unused houses given there is such great scarcity? Is it compulsory purchases? How can we unlock these houses as a resource?

James Brokenshire: I hope to reassure the hon. Gentleman. The number of long-term empty homes is down by nearly a third since 2010, but it is important that we take further action. That is why we introduced the empty homes premium in 2013, which gives councils the option to increase the premium from 50% to 100% of nominal council tax, and we are seeing that increase this month. We acknowledge the important point he makes about empty homes.

NEW MEMBER

The following Member took and subscribed the Oath required by law:

Ruth Lorraine Jones, for Newport West.

Access to Medical Cannabis

3.39 pm

Sir Mike Penning (Hemel Hempstead) (Con) (*Urgent Question*): To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care if he will make a statement on the return of medical cannabis that was seized from Emma Appleby at Southend airport on Saturday 6 April and which is needed to treat her very ill daughter Teagan's extreme epilepsy, and to take steps to make sure that medical cannabis is available for prescription around this great country.

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Matt Hancock): My sympathies go out to the patients and their families who are desperately seeking to alleviate their symptoms with medicinal cannabis. We are working hard to get the right approach. The law was changed on 1 November last year to ensure that it is now legal for doctors on the specialist register of the General Medical Council to prescribe cannabis-based products for medicinal use in the UK.

Whether to prescribe must remain a clinical decision to be made with the patients and their families, taking into account the best available international clinical evidence and the circumstances of each individual patient. Indeed, prescriptions have been written for the products that the family attempted to bring into the country and these have been supplied to patients. Without clinical authorisation, it is of course not possible to import controlled drugs, which is why the products were seized by Border Force on Saturday. However, we have made available the opportunity for a second opinion and the products have been held but not destroyed, as would normally be the case.

In relation to childhood epilepsy, the British Paediatric Neurology Association has issued interim clinical guidance. NHS England and the chief medical officer have made it clear that cannabis-based products can be prescribed for medicinal use in appropriate cases, but it must be for doctors to make clinical decisions in the best interest of patients, to balance the risks and benefits of any proposed treatment—including cannabis-based products—and to make a decision with patients and their families on whether or not to prescribe.

To date, research has centred on two major cannabinoids, tetrahydrocannabinol and cannabidiol. There is evidence that CBD may be beneficial in the treatment of intractable epilepsy, and over 80 children have already been supplied with CBD products in the UK on the basis of a specialist doctor's prescription. I entirely understand how important this issue is to patients and I have met and listened to families. I know just how frustrated they are. Therefore, after meeting parents, I have taken the following actions.

First, I have asked NHS England rapidly to initiate a process evaluation to address barriers to clinically appropriate prescribing. Secondly, to improve the evidence base and to get medicinal cannabis to patients in need, I have asked the National Institute for Health Research and the industry to take action to produce that evidence in a form that will support decisions about public funding. The NIHR has issued two calls for research proposals on medicinal cannabis and I look forward to the responses to those consultations. That is in addition to the training package being developed by Health Education England to provide support to clinicians to enable them to make the best decisions with their patients.

[*Matt Hancock*]

This is a very difficult area, with some heart-rending cases. I look forward to working with all Members of this House to ensure that patients get the best possible care.

Sir Mike Penning: I thank you for granting this urgent question, Mr Speaker, on behalf of constituents around the country who need help from medical-prescribed cannabis, and I thank the Secretary of State for coming to meet the families and their loved ones who feel that medical cannabis on prescription may help.

Some of these young children—though we are not talking only about children—have 300 seizures a day. They are given drugs that do not seem to work at all. There is not a cure, but these medical oils can and often do reduce the number of seizures. Many colleagues in the House will know of the case of Alfie Dingley—the only young boy that has an NHS prescription for the medical use of cannabis oil. He is now a relatively naughty boy. He has learned to ride a bike. His sister has a brother she has never really experienced before.

This is not a cure, but these parents are absolutely desperate. When the Government did the right thing and changed the law, they thought the situation was going to get better. In my capacity as joint chair of the all-party parliamentary group on medical cannabis under prescription, I warned them that this was just the start of the journey, and that it would be a long one.

Anyone who saw the footage from Southend airport at the weekend—any father, any parent, anyone who has a loved one in their family who suffers—would understand what that family were trying to do. Cannabis had been prescribed by a consultant abroad because it could not be obtained in this country. Many families are relying on charity to raise the money—in some cases, £1,500 a month—to obtain it on prescription. As the Secretary of State knows, prescriptions are being issued by the relevant experts, but the clinical commissioning groups and the trusts are refusing to honour those prescriptions. It is a disgrace that that should happen in this country, and we should all be ashamed.

I welcome the trials and I welcome the review, but, sadly, people need these medicines now. Can we unlock the door? The Border Force staff at Southend airport were very polite and very helpful. They thought they were doing their duty. We should do our duty, and get that medical cannabis back to Teagan.

Matt Hancock: I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend and the all-party parliamentary group for their work in bringing this issue to the attention of the House and the country, and in supporting the parents involved. My right hon. Friend has been characteristically emphatic and reasonable in providing that support, and I entirely understand his concern. Meeting some of the parents as part of the APPG delegation was a very emotional experience.

Of course the Border Force staff were doing the right thing—and I am glad that they were doing it in a reasonable way—according to the existing rules, under which if a controlled drug is to be imported it needs a licence, and the import of an unlicensed controlled drug therefore requires a prescription from a specialist doctor. There are just over 95,000 registered specialist doctors

in the UK. Any one of them who has the relevant experience can prescribe the drug, and it will be then allowed in. That can happen now. The guidance is not a barrier, and it is not a barrier to prescription. However, it is clear to me that this process is not working. I have therefore initiated a process evaluation, which is NHS language for looking at exactly why it is not working and what we need to do about it.

Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney North and Stoke Newington) (Lab): It is shameful that we saw those scenes at Southend airport, and that families continue to suffer because the arrangements are so slow. It is, however, appropriate that we are discussing this issue on the day on which my hon. Friend the new Member for Newport West (Ruth Jones) has taken her seat, because her predecessor, my friend Paul Flynn, was an indefatigable campaigner for many important causes, including the legalisation of cannabis for medical use.

Last year Charlotte Caldwell, the mother of another sick child, Billy Caldwell, said:

“It’s absolutely incredible, it’s amazing. The compassion and speed that the Home Secretary has moved with is just incredible.”

That is the impression that Ministers sought to give, but it was a misleading impression, as the plight of the Applebys revealed this weekend.

Is the Secretary of State aware that cannabis oil is not the same as cannabis, and that it has no psychoactive or addictive effects? Is he aware that in other jurisdictions a range of conditions qualify for treatment with cannabis oil and related products, including cancer, AIDS, muscular dystrophy, Crohn’s disease, epilepsy, Parkinson’s disease and arthritis? Is he aware that the Home Secretary has previously commissioned Sally Davies to examine the scheduling of cannabis as a whole? She reported as long ago as June 2018. Is the Secretary of State aware that Ms Davies’s report has been with the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs since that time? Is the House to understand that the Home Secretary has just been sitting on it?

What is the Secretary of State going to do to speed up the processes around this issue? Parents will not be impressed to hear of further reports or further enquiries. We need to resolve the Appleby case quickly, but we also need to make sure that no other families of sick children have to suffer in the way the Appleby family is suffering.

Matt Hancock: I did set out the answers to those questions in my initial response. There are a number of smaller active agents in medicinal cannabis, but there are two major ones: THC and CBD. The vast majority of those who now have access to medicinal cannabis have access to CBD, and that is different as an active agent. Clinicians have to make a judgment according to the personal circumstances and needs of the patient, and I am trying to remove all the barriers to those clinical decisions.

We have taken action. I absolutely understand the history here, because the Home Secretary and I signed off on the decision to allow medicinal cannabis to be available at all on 1 December, following the chief medical officer’s report. What we need to do now is ensure that there are no further barriers to prescription where a clinician judges that that is the right thing to do.

James Cartlidge (South Suffolk) (Con): My right hon. Friend will be aware of the case of my constituent Indie-Rose Clarry. She is a four-year-old girl who suffers from Dravet syndrome, a very severe form of epilepsy. Her parents, Anthony and Tannine, are also crowdfunding on the internet to raise thousands of pounds to buy drugs from Holland. That is not because they are criminals, but because they love her, they want to ease her pain and they are desperate.

On Friday, as it happens, I met Indie-Rose's consultant—not only her consultant but one of the leading specialists in the country in severe forms of child epilepsy. He made the point that there is a barrier to prescribing cannabinoids that include THC, because there is insufficient evidence in that case. Will the Secretary of State confirm that there is evidence on CBD but not THC, which Indie-Rose's parents have found has the greatest impact in reducing seizures?

Matt Hancock: Characteristically, my hon. Friend makes an excellent point. The clinicians consider that there is a much less evidence on THC, as opposed to CBD. I have therefore instructed the National Institute for Health Research to do the research. Doing the research will of course require some cases where the drugs can be legally tested. I had already put that in place, and I am telling the House about it today.

Dr Philippa Whitford (Central Ayrshire) (SNP): I am glad this urgent question has moved from the Home Office to Health, where it should be, but one has to ask why drugs are being seized when they are no longer illegal—that is what changed in November.

In medicine, we use many controlled drugs, such as heroin, morphine, ketamine and diazepam which have a street value, but that has never stopped them being used in medicine. The problem is that the way cannabis was treated for 50 years means we have had almost no research and almost no experience.

The problem is also that expectations were raised in November, as if every GP would be able simply to write a prescription, but a prescription for what? We have to have a pharmaceutical quality of drug so that we know exactly how much CBD and how much THC we would be prescribing. That is not yet generally available. It is important that we look, through the Government, to get that pharmaceutical grade licensed, with reliable formulations.

This issue is under inquiry in the Health Committee, and we have heard from patients who were advised to go to Holland to get drugs, costing them £30,000 per visit. That is unacceptable. The Government will have to stimulate research, and I am grateful that calls for research are going to go out. However, we need specialist centres in paediatric neurology for children with epilepsy, we need adult neurology for multiple sclerosis, and we need pain specialists for chronic pain.

These preparations are unlicensed; that means there has been no testing on their efficacy—whether they work—and on whether they are safe. That is quite scary for doctors, particularly as if it is an unlicensed drug, they have to sign a form to say that they accept personal liability. I can tell the House that that is quite intimidating, as I have done it myself. The Government need to push for centres of excellence to help to stimulate the research they say they are calling for. That is the only way we will

get randomised controlled trials, and get the answers that will lead to these drugs being licensed, rather than our just having a temporary fix for now.

Matt Hancock: In an outbreak of cross-party unity, I agree entirely with the hon. Lady. The approach she has taken is incredibly sensible; it is also the one that has been recommended to me by my clinical advisers. We need to ensure that we take an evidence-based, pharmaceutical-grade approach to prescription. I will take away her idea about centres of excellence, because I entirely see the point there. In the case of most drugs, it is the pharmaceutical industry that pushes for, and pays for, the randomised controlled trials. In this case, because the industry is in a different shape for other reasons, it is we who are making this happen, and we are pushing it as fast as we can.

Richard Harrington (Watford) (Con): I would like to thank my right hon. Friend the Member for Hemel Hempstead (Sir Mike Penning) for bringing this question forward, and I thank the Secretary of State for his answer. My constituents the Levys came to see me about their daughter, Fallon, who has LGS epilepsy. Her consultant neurologist has told the family that “the actual logistics of the prescribing has not yet been worked out”.

Why is this the case, and what can be done to ensure that Fallon has access to the necessary medication as soon as possible?

Matt Hancock: I should like my hon. Friend to write to me with the exact details of that case. The process for prescription by someone on the specialist register is well trodden; it is used for all sorts of unlicensed drugs, and it should be available. We are making a second opinion available to ensure that it can be brought to bear in cases such as these. I am interested in hearing about specific cases—this applies to everyone, not just to my hon. Friend—so that we can ensure that the appropriate clinical decisions can be made.

Mr Speaker: There was I thinking that the Secretary of State would be the first to congratulate the hon. Member for Watford (Richard Harrington) on his prodigious efforts and output as a Minister, but I am sure that that will come ere long.

Dr Sarah Wollaston (Totnes) (Ind): I warmly welcome the measures announced by the Secretary of State today, but will he go further in discussing the importance of clinical trials and answer some of the many questions about striking the right balance between THC and CBD? We have heard in the Select Committee that some pharmaceutical companies are refusing to make their products available for clinical trials. Will he look specifically at that point? We need to ensure that safe and consistent products are regularly available and that they are of a predictable pharmaceutical grade, as we have heard.

Matt Hancock: If I may, Mr Speaker, I would like to add to my previous answer by congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Watford, the former Business Minister, on all that he did to support business, enterprise and the case for capitalism while he was in his former job. I regret his departing from the Government, because he was a brilliant Minister.

[*Matt Hancock*]

On the question ahead of me, so to speak, the Chair of the Select Committee, the hon. Member for Totnes (Dr Wollaston), is right to say that it is vital to bring forward these clinical trials, and that the pharmaceutical companies that provide the oils have not pushed forward the trials in the way that would normally happen. We have therefore stepped in to try to make them happen, but we do need the calls to be answered.

Mr Ben Bradshaw (Exeter) (Lab): The Secretary of State talks about removing barriers, but it is clear to me that the main barrier is the British Paediatric Neurology Association itself. When its president came to give evidence to the Health and Social Care Committee a couple of weeks ago, he was arrogant, he was dismissive of the families' experience, and he misled our Committee by denying that Members of this House had sought a dialogue with him, which he had refused. What is the Secretary of State going to do to remove the obstacle of the BPNA?

Matt Hancock: I am sure that the BPNA will have heard that testimony from the right hon. Gentleman. Of course, the BPNA is independent of Government, and we have to follow the clinical judgments made by the relevant organisations, whether a royal college or, as in this case, an association. What I have done is ensure that a second opinion is available, because the BPNA guidance is merely guidance; it is not absolute. A clinician on the specialist register can make a decision according to what they think is best for the patient in front of them.

Rachel Maclean (Redditch) (Con): Can the Secretary of State give some more detail on the time line for this very welcome review? I am sure that we all sympathise with parents such as Mrs Appleby, who is doing everything she can for her daughter.

Matt Hancock: Yes, the call for randomised control trials and the process evaluation are both being conducted very urgently by NHS England.

Ronnie Cowan (Inverclyde) (SNP): There are lots of warm words circulating here today. My question relates to the point that was just made. We have this problem today, but clinical trials will take six months, nine months or a year. What can we reasonably do legally to get certified products that we know will work into the hands of parents with children who desperately need them today?

Matt Hancock: I entirely understand the hon. Gentleman's point, and I feel the same way as he does about the urgency of these cases. The need to get a second opinion can be actioned immediately, and it will be, because the crucial point is that unlicensed medicines cannot be prescribed without a clinician. There are just over 95,000 clinicians on the specialist register, and any of those who have expertise in this area can, if their clinical judgment allows, make these prescriptions. That can happen right now.

Tim Loughton (East Worthing and Shoreham) (Con): I was very supportive of the case of Alfie Dingley and the change in the law. The Secretary of State is absolutely right that this must be based on clinical decisions.

However, given that there are several hundred children suffering from severe intractable epilepsy, is not the problem that the guidance from NHS medical bodies is just too stringent? Is it true that only two NHS prescriptions have actually been issued to date? Given that Teagan Appleby has had at least a dozen prescribed drugs—I will not list them, to avoid stressing *Hansard*—as well as a nerve stimulator, what would be the downside of allowing her access to medical cannabis now?

Matt Hancock: My hon. Friend makes a good point. More than 80 prescriptions have been made, but that is for both THC and CBD. Of course, THC brings risks—the active elements within cannabis do bring risks. There are also benefits, as I have seen very clearly. It must be for a clinician to decide the balance of those risks. I have enormous sympathy for the families, having heard their personal testimony about the massive benefits for their children, who sometimes, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Hemel Hempstead (Sir Mike Penning) said, have 300 seizures a day. Having seen that and looked them in the eye, I understand the benefits. However, it has to be a clinician who makes that judgment. I am not medically qualified and cannot overrule a clinician, but there are clinicians available who can provide a second opinion, and that is what I can ensure.

Thangam Debbonaire (Bristol West) (Lab): I am grateful to the Secretary of State for what he has said so far, but I have spoken with a neurosurgeon in my constituency who says that one of his anxieties is not being able to give good advice to parents whom he suspects might be trying to access medical cannabis through not wholly legal routes, because he is unsure what the law is. I agree with the Secretary of State on the need for clinical evidence, so what more information can he give us on the timescale? When will we see the health education research that he talks about? In the meantime, why can we not use the evidence of clinical trials conducted elsewhere?

Matt Hancock: The evidence of clinical trials from elsewhere can and should be used. All international clinical evidence should be brought to bear on such decisions and has been in the case of CBD. As for how quickly things will happen, the answer is, as the hon. Lady would imagine, as soon as possible.

Michael Fabricant (Lichfield) (Con): The SNP spokesman was spot on. This is about not just drugs such as ketamine and diazepam, but beta blockers, which can also be extremely dangerous in the wrong hands. Will my right hon. Friend speak to the Home Secretary and say, "Look. This is a medical treatment. It shouldn't be a controlled drug as such"? This treatment should not be stopped at our borders, particularly when it appears that not enough people are prepared to prescribe it.

Matt Hancock: I spoke to the Home Secretary this morning about the issue, and we proposed to see it as a health matter, not a borders matter. The Border Force officers were merely following the rules, and the question is about whether the drug is licensed. If it is not licensed, but it is controlled, the question is about whether it has clinical sign-off. The truth is that the compound does have negative effects, so it must be a controlled drug. I do not support the legalisation of all cannabis. Unless

one supports the legalisation of cannabis in all cases, it has to be a controlled drug, which leads us to where we are. We must get the evidence of the medical and clinical benefits that the families have emphatically explained, and I want to see this situation dealt with properly.

Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): Some reports suggest that even Alfie Dingley, whose case gave rise to the new legislation, probably would not be eligible for medicinal cannabis under the new regulations because they are so strict. The Health and Social Care Secretary says that 95,000 clinicians are ready and waiting to sign off prescriptions, but can he explain why they are not doing so? If it is as easy as that, surely they would be doing it, so what else will he do to look at the barriers?

Matt Hancock: We have ensured that all the patients who received access to medicinal cannabis on an exceptional basis before the law changed on 1 November can continue to access it. If that is not the case in any instance, I want to know about that so that we can fix it. Alfie Dingley would be eligible for these drugs if a clinician were prepared to sign off the benefits for Alfie, and such decisions must be led by clinicians. I am doing everything I can to get the evidence and second opinions in place and to ensure that the process works as well as possible. That is what I can do. What I cannot do—it would be unreasonable for any Health Secretary to do so—is overrule clinical decision making in individual cases. That would be wrong, and I do not think that any Member of this House would propose that I should do it.

Chris Heaton-Harris (Daventry) (Con): A number of us have been written to by constituents about such cases, and I have corresponded with the Secretary of State about Julie and Stuart Young, the parents of Lloyd, for example. Clinical trials have been mentioned across the House, but a piece of legislation is already in place. The Access to Medical Treatments (Innovation) Act 2016, which was sponsored by me in the Commons and by Lord Saatchi in the other place, seems ideally suited to help us through this sticky situation.

Matt Hancock: Yes, we are looking carefully at how we can use that legislation as effectively as possible. Understanding the medical consequences of any use of a drug is incredibly helpful evidence for where it should be prescribed further, and that is the thrust of the 2016 Act.

Tim Loughton: My hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Chris Heaton-Harris) was a good Minister, too.

Mr Speaker: Another ex-Minister to compliment. I am bit surprised by the Secretary of State. He is slipping from his usual standard. I thought that he would be busily cultivating his hon. Friend. *[Laughter.]*

Tonia Antoniazzi (Gower) (Lab): I congratulate the right hon. Member for Hemel Hempstead (Sir Mike Penning), my co-chair of the APPG on medical cannabis under prescription. The situation is, frankly, intolerable. I have spoken with all of the families requesting medicinal cannabis with THC—let us not forget the THC. I am

sure that Teagan will get a second opinion and that she is another child who will get access to medical cannabis, but what about all the others? They cannot wait. My right hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr Bradshaw) spoke truthfully about the inquiry and the evidence it has taken. The BPNA has not spoken as it should have and it has not done enough to support the families.

Mr Bradshaw: It lied.

Tonia Antoniazzi: I will not use that word, but I totally agree with my right hon. Friend. I say to the Secretary of State that this has got to stop. We cannot wait for clinical trials. There is medicine out there—get it to the children who need it.

Matt Hancock: The BPNA is going to have to answer for itself about the way in which its representatives conducted themselves in front of the Select Committee. It is independent. Understandably, in medicine the bodies that make clinical guidance do not direct the answer for that clinical guidance to the Secretary of State. I understand the hon. Lady's strength of feeling and that of others. I also understand the strength of feeling of the parents. I understand what a desperate situation they are in, and I am trying to make sure that it can be resolved and that they can get the drugs. I make one point to the hon. Lady: the very exercise of a clinical trial requires us to get the drugs to some children. I very much hope, therefore, that the start of a clinical trial can help to get the drugs to the people who need them. We do not have to wait for the results.

Vicky Ford (Chelmsford) (Con): Although medicinal cannabis can have great benefits for some epileptic children, we should not forget the devastating impact that cannabis can have and its long-term impact on psychosis and schizophrenia. *[Interruption.]* I speak from personal experience of living with an affected family member. It is right that this is dealt with on a case-by-case basis. How soon will updated training be available for our health professionals?

Matt Hancock: The updated training will be available imminently. There are risks as well as upsides, and it is absolutely right that it is clinicians who make the judgment in respect of every decision and based on the individual patient. That, I am afraid, is the way in which medicine always has been—and, I imagine, always will be—practised in this country.

Sir Edward Davey (Kingston and Surbiton) (LD): Will the Secretary of State confirm whether it is true that if a Dutch mother brought the same medicine to the United Kingdom, she could administer it to her own Dutch child without the import licence that Emma Appleby is saying that she must have? If that is true, is this not just another example of how shambolically this policy is being implemented?

Matt Hancock: I do not know whether that is true—that is a question of Home Office policy on controlled drugs—but all in all that does not change the fact of the matter, which is that we need to resolve this issue as soon as possible.

Sir Desmond Swayne (New Forest West) (Con): If the principal issue is that doctors will not prescribe, is there a secondary problem when there is a prescription but the bureaucracy is failing to honour it?

Matt Hancock: I have heard that accusation being made by a couple of the parents. I am advised that that is not the case, but I am very much looking into it because in these circumstances I always think we need to listen to the people who are trying to resolve the issue. I am looking into that very point.

Stephen Twigg (Liverpool, West Derby) (Lab/Co-op): I have previously raised the case of my constituent, 11-month-old Nathaniel Leahy, who, owing to his extremely rare form of epilepsy, lives in great pain. His mum told me today:

“I am living in fear each day that Nathaniel will not make it to the next day. We were promised in November of last year that this medicine would be available.”

Does the Secretary of State understand the powerful sense of frustration felt by families such as Nathaniel’s, and will he address the question of the guidelines so that we can have fewer stringent guidelines, to benefit patients?

Matt Hancock: I entirely understand that sense of frustration. I went to meet some of the parents to hear directly from them the pain and suffering that they and their children are feeling, which I entirely understand. That is one of the reasons why we are pushing so hard to try to resolve this. Resolving the questions around the guidelines is also important but, as the hon. Gentleman knows, those guidelines are written independently of Ministers.

Charlie Elphicke (Dover) (Con): My constituent Teagan Appleby suffers horrendously with one of the worst cases of child epilepsy in the United Kingdom. It has been heartrending to go round to her house to see her suffering. To see how her mother, Emma, copes with the challenge is inspiring.

Legal heroin, morphine, has been prescribed in this country for many decades. Why can we not have legal cannabis, too? Is it not high time that the NHS got on with changing the guidelines to make sure that medicinal cannabis is available, rather than wasting time arresting Emma at Southend airport, which is quite the wrong thing to see?

Matt Hancock: My hon. Friend represents Teagan Appleby, her family and her parents, and he speaks for the whole House in what he says. He has captured the essence of this debate. I am trying to resolve it to his satisfaction and to the family’s satisfaction as soon as possible. There are barriers to that resolution, and I am happy to work with him, with the APPG and with all others who have constituency cases to try to resolve this significant problem.

Dr Lisa Cameron (East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow) (SNP): The Secretary of State will be aware of the case of my constituent Cole Thomson, aged six, who has battled repeated epileptic seizures every night and has had terrible periods of deterioration. In order to gain the prescription, we have had to battle

the system as well as the illness. Parents do not have the energy, when they are looking after a sick child, to battle the system, so can the Secretary of State ensure the streamlining of this process to make sure that specialist training is available? In the meantime, will he make available to parents a register of the specialists who can prescribe medicinal cannabis? The postcode lottery cannot go on.

Matt Hancock: Yes, I would be very happy to do both those things.

Mr Simon Clarke (Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland) (Con): I commend the Secretary of State for his statement. I, like many others in this House, have had constituents visit me to make powerful, personal cases on the impact they think cannabis oil could have for their children. Will he join me in praising the work of the campaign group End Our Pain, which has done such a good job of highlighting this issue and making sure that we in this House are aware of the situation and of the benefits it can bring?

Matt Hancock: I have already paid tribute to the APPG, and today’s urgent question has demonstrated the breadth of concern in this House. Those who are independent of Government need to make sure that they listen to this level of concern. I am certainly determined to do everything I can to try to resolve this issue.

Paula Sherriff (Dewsbury) (Lab): It has always been the case that the Home Secretary could issue a special licence to allow the medical use of cannabis oil. I understand that the Health Secretary may be seeing him this evening, and I wondered whether he will ask him to consider this course of action.

Matt Hancock: One of the great frustrations for me, for the Home Secretary and, of course, for the families is that, before the law was changed on 1 November, that course of action was open. For a few dozen cases, the Home Secretary made those special licences to allow for the use of medicinal cannabis. He and I changed the law together to try to make sure that medicinal cannabis is available on a mainstream basis. Now it is available on a mainstream basis, as a normal drug, it therefore needs clinical sign-off. The problem is there are so many cases where that clinical sign-off has not been forthcoming. That is a source of immense frustration to me, as I hope the hon. Lady can imagine, and it is what we are trying to resolve.

Luke Graham (Ochil and South Perthshire) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that we should be led by evidence? As our scientific knowledge continues to progress, so should the views and the laws made in this House. Will he provide more clarity, not just in this instance but as new and more radical drugs become available in the near future, on how our constituents and this House could benefit and push through laws more quickly?

Matt Hancock: My hon. Friend makes a very important point. To ensure that the use of medical cannabis becomes mainstream, we need to ensure that the evidence base is there. Essentially, doctors think there is a much deeper

evidence base for CBD than for THC. There is a broader point, which is that the medical profession and this House need to keep up to speed with the evidence as it is developed. In this case, that means going out of our way to develop the evidence and to have clinical trials in which some of the patients who want the drug can participate. That will provide the evidence base that allows the vast array of specialists to prescribe it.

Diana Johnson (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): It was clear from the evidence given to the Health and Social Care Committee that the Government raised public expectations when they rescheduled medical cannabis. I wonder whether it is time for the Secretary of State to ensure that there is a public awareness campaign, with full information about what the Government are trying to do.

Matt Hancock: I will look at that idea and discuss it with the NHS. The training programme that we are putting in place is intended to raise awareness of the evidence and the change in rules among the profession—among doctors and the specialist prescribing doctors on the register. Ultimately, it is only with clinical sign-off that we allow any drug to be prescribed. That is where the training needs to be in the first instance, but I will look at the hon. Lady's suggestion of doing it more broadly.

Rebecca Pow (Taunton Deane) (Con): Anyone who goes through the heart-rending experience of seeing a very sick family member suffer will know that they would do anything to help that person, often reaching the point of desperation. People need to be confident that they can get hold of cannabis-based medicines if it is appropriate and that those medicines are safe. In this instance, there is a lot riding on the shoulders of our doctors. Will my right hon. Friend assure us that doctors are being given the right guidance to do what is right for patients, but also that they will not be blamed if something goes wrong?

Matt Hancock: Yes, I think that is exactly the right approach and it is what we are working towards.

Christine Jardine (Edinburgh West) (LD): I thank the right hon. Member for Hemel Hempstead (Sir Mike Penning) for raising this important issue, which affects one of my constituents, Murray Gray, directly. His mother is one of those parents who is now desperate, having been given hope.

Does the Secretary of State agree that we have the evidence from abroad that these medicines can work and we have the willingness of everybody in this House to make it work, but somehow there is a gap between our willingness and our ability to make it happen? Will he assure the House that he will speak to the Home Secretary and to the devolved Administrations who have NHS responsibility to try to get some kind of action through co-operation to reassure the parents who are desperate not just because their children will suffer but because they may not survive?

Matt Hancock: Yes, of course; I am very happy to do that. Perhaps I should take this opportunity to welcome the new public health Minister, the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, my hon. Friend the

Member for South Ribble (Seema Kennedy) to her post. She will, no doubt, have listened to all the questions today. She and I will be working on making this happen.

I would add to the hon. Lady's list, because this is not just about the Home Office and the Department of Health and Social Care; it is about making sure that the independent medical establishment has confidence in the evidence that is presented. It is not enough for her and I to have confidence as lay politicians; it is important that the professionals who put their signature on the line have confidence in the evidence as well.

Mr Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con): Does the Secretary of State appreciate the public's concern that, at a time when several police forces have openly admitted that they will not take action against those involved in recreational cannabis use, the full weight of the Home Office's Border Force is deployed to intercept medication for a seriously ill young child? Surely getting medication to a seriously ill young girl should never be a crime.

Matt Hancock: My hon. Friend makes an important point. The Border Force should not be criticised in this case, because it was following the rules: if a clinician has not signed something off it cannot come in. It is incumbent on us on the health side to sort out this problem. He makes a broader point, however, that this is a completely separate issue to the recreational use of cannabis. I do not support a change in the rules on the recreational use of cannabis; this is about the specialist provision of drugs to some children who are the most vulnerable people in society, and the need to ensure that the medical benefits of such drugs can be brought to bear on people who really need them.

Alex Norris (Nottingham North) (Lab/Co-op): Like many colleagues, I have spoken with parents of children who have profound challenges that could be ameliorated by medicinal cannabis. They are at their wits' end, and it is no surprise to find that some in this country resort to desperate measures. I have listened for 45 minutes now and I cannot tell the answer to this question: is the Secretary of State really saying that we have a clear, universal, safe and compassionate approach to this issue and, if we do not, when will we?

Matt Hancock: I am saying that if a patient needs medicinal cannabis, and if a clinician will sign off on that need, the prescription can happen. The guidance from the association does not override the individual judgment of that clinician. That can happen but, because it has not been happening in many cases that have been brought to light, some privately and some very publically, I am putting in place a system of second opinions to ensure that we can get that clinical decision right, at the same time as developing a stronger evidence base for the future.

Tommy Sheppard (Edinburgh East) (SNP): Reuben Young is an 11-year-old boy in my constituency who suffers from myoclonic astatic epilepsy, which is a severe and rare form of epilepsy. His mother, Emma, is at her wits' end. Conventional medicines do not work and she has tried to get a prescription for Epidiolex, which is a cannabis-derived medicine. She tells me that she is unable to get it because the physicians involved say that the guidelines prevent them from prescribing it. I do not

[Tommy Sheppard]

know why, but for some reason the change in policy last November is not leading to a change in practice. I ask the Secretary of State to speak with the Home Secretary and to have an urgent—I mean in days or weeks—review to see how the existing guidelines can do better.

Matt Hancock: Those guidelines are not a matter for the Home Secretary; they are guidelines in the health space, although the association that writes them does not report directly to me but is independent. Those guidelines do not prevent a physician who is on the specialist register of the General Medical Council from prescribing. If anybody has been told that they do, they do not; it is up to the individual professional judgment of a specialist clinician on the register to prescribe or not.

Mary Glindon (North Tyneside) (Lab): Lara Smith, my constituent, is really upset about what happened to Teagan and her family at the weekend. Lara travels to Holland every three months to get a schedule 2 drug, Bedrocan, for her seriously debilitating illness. It could be imported but, if it was, unfortunately, she would have to bear the licence fee. Will the Minister say whether anything can be done for her?

Matt Hancock: Yes. My heart goes out to the hon. Lady's constituent and her family. One of the purposes of the evidence gathering that we are doing, and of the calls of the national institute for trials, is to provide the evidence on which the NHS could routinely provide those medicines. At the moment, we have the ability for specialists to prescribe in the interim, but I want to get the evidence base in place for the longer term.

Alison Thewliss (Glasgow Central) (SNP): One of my constituents—one of many who has been in touch with me about this issue—has multiple sclerosis and found previously that cannabis helped his symptoms immensely, but he does not want to break the law and he cannot get a prescription. What would the Secretary of State advise him to do?

Matt Hancock: If the hon. Lady will write to me with the case, we will get a second opinion from a clinician who may be able to make that prescription.

Jeff Smith (Manchester, Withington) (Lab): I agree that we need to remove the barriers for clinicians. We need evidence, but the problem with randomised control trials is the nature of cannabis. The fact that it contains many different compounds that interact makes it difficult to isolate the compounds that work for individuals. Cannabis is a unique treatment, and should really be in a licensing and scheduling category of its own to allow different approaches. I urge the Secretary of State to encourage observational trials so that we can allow patients to get access to the medical cannabis that will work for them.

Matt Hancock: We looked at observational trials, but the problem is that they do not build the evidence base that a full RCT does. A full RCT also allows some patients to get access while the trial is ongoing, so it is in fact a better proposal. It means that some patients can

get the treatment now for the purposes of the trial, and then we can get a full evidence base for the long term, as was mentioned previously.

Kevin Brennan (Cardiff West) (Lab): The law may be an ass, but it does not have to be applied in an asinine way, as it was in the case of Emma Appleby. Will the Secretary of State have words with the Home Secretary to make sure that it is not repeated? My constituent, Bailey Williams, is 16 years of age and suffers from the most severe form of epilepsy. He has multiple seizures every day. His parents, Rachel and Craig, are absolutely convinced that we need observational trials and more immediate action. I accept that this was unintended, but sadly the change in the law has made things worse, not better, for those parents. What will the Secretary of State do to turn that around quickly?

Matt Hancock: It is a source of deep frustration to me that the change in the law to normalise the use of medicinal cannabis has, exactly as the hon. Gentleman says, meant that, because a clinical decision is needed for a prescription, and because in many cases clinical decisions are not forthcoming, many parents who entirely understandably think that their child would benefit from medicinal cannabis now find that they cannot get a clinician to sign it off. That is at the root of the problems that we are trying to tackle today.

Alan Brown (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): Although the Secretary of State is adamant that the guidelines are not a problem, it is clear that they and the associated liability are an issue. Let us hope that the review will pick that up. Four-year-old Logan Chafey in my constituency is the only child in the whole of Europe who has chromosome 7p duplication syndrome. One of the current rules is that there needs to be a proven benefit before a clinician can prescribe medicinal cannabis. How can we get to a position where Logan can get medicinal cannabis?

Matt Hancock: He will be able to get it now if a clinician is prepared to sign off on it being the right thing for him. If that is not forthcoming now, I have announced today a system of second opinions to allow people to get the clinical sign-off that they need.

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

Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP) *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Order. It is in the interest of the hon. Member for Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East (Stuart C. McDonald) that I call his Chief Whip before him.

Patrick Grady: The expectations of too many families have been raised by the Government's previous announcements. It really is time that they get a move on. I will write to the Secretary of State about my young constituent who has Aicardi syndrome. Her parents firmly believe that medical cannabis would help her symptoms and seizures. What steps is he taking to ensure that those kinds of rare syndromes are taken into account at trial stage?

Matt Hancock: They must be taken into account. It comes down to the question of the complexity of cannabis and the many dozens of active agents in it; CBD and THC, which we have mostly been discussing today, are the main ones. Many drugs have similarly complex interactions. Modern science and medicine are capable, in a controlled environment, of getting to the bottom of which ones have the effect. That is why it is better to do a full RCT with the full scientific structure around it, rather than an observational trial. That will get the drugs to the people who need them quickly, and will provide the evidence base. I hope that that satisfies the hon. Gentleman that, in that space, we are doing as much as we can. On the timing, I want it to happen as quickly as possible.

Stuart C. McDonald: It was a very wise decision. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I, too, have constituents who have been exiled to the Netherlands to secure medicinal cannabis for a severely epileptic child, and others who are spending a fortune importing cannabis oil from Canada to help slow the progression of a terminal brain tumour. Will families such as these soon be able to take part in proper clinical trials, as they would be able to elsewhere, so that they can have some hope and we can all benefit from the evidence that will be gained?

Matt Hancock: Yes, absolutely. If the hon. Gentleman will write to me about the specific case, I will ensure it is dealt with appropriately.

Libya

4.35 pm

Stephen Gethins (North East Fife) (SNP) (*Urgent Question*): To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the situation in Libya.

The Minister for Asia and the Pacific (Mark Field): Yet again, this is a dangerous moment for Libya. The UK has wholeheartedly supported the UN's tireless work under its own action plan to prepare the ground for the national conference due to take place in Libya on 14 April. The UK has warned that any Libyan national army advance on Tripoli would be catastrophic for this political and diplomatic process and risks a descent into more widespread violence. I am afraid I have to tell the House that this scenario appears to be developing, following the LNA advances towards the west and south of Tripoli and the subsequent mobilisation of forces loyal to the internationally recognised Government of National Accord, headed by the Libyan Prime Minister Fayez al-Serraj, to oppose that advance.

General Haftar, who is the leader of the Libyan national army, and his aligned forces retain control of Gharyan, which is only 75 km from Tripoli, and have taken the international airport to the south of the capital. I should say that that is not the central Mitiga airport, which is more usually used by those travelling to the city. It was reported only yesterday that some 21 people were killed, and I understand there is ongoing fire almost as we speak.

General Haftar appears to show no sign of stalling his advance, despite urgent diplomatic efforts to urge de-escalation, including a meeting with UN Secretary-General Guterres last week in Tripoli. We continue to focus our diplomatic lobbying on key international partners, and I know that the Foreign Secretary—he is at the Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels today—has worked together with the other G7 nations, which have come out with a notice on this matter. We therefore call on regional counterparts, in particular in Egypt and the United Arab Emirates, to have an eye on the peace plan that has been proposed.

There of course remains a severe risk of escalation between pro-LNA and anti-LNA armed groups. For our purposes, political staff in post have been withdrawn for some time to the Libya office in Tunis in neighbouring Tunisia. The House will appreciate, I hope, that we will not go into great specific detail about exactly what remaining diplomatic staff we have in that country. Obviously, we are keeping these matters under review.

All Libyan parties need urgently to pursue de-escalation to avoid further miscalculation and to recommit unashamedly to the UN-led initiative and political process. There is still time to prevent further violence and to find a political solution. Any party whose actions precipitate violence and bloodshed should now be held accountable by the international community. I call on all our international partners to send the strongest possible message to the LNA commander, Haftar, to back down and to re-engage with the UN process. Indeed, it was at the instigation of the UK, as the penholder at the UN Security Council, that a special session was held at the Security Council in New York on Friday.

[Mark Field]

The UN reports that the violence has caused the displacement of more than 2,800 people in recent months, which has meant that emergency aid cannot reach casualties, including civilians. It is imperative that all parties respect international humanitarian and human rights law. The UK will continue its concerted diplomatic efforts to urge de-escalation in Libya. We will work in the UN Security Council, the European Union and all other international forums to urge all parties in Libya to re-engage with the political process.

Stephen Gethins: I thank the Minister for his answer, and I thank officials in his Department in particular for their ongoing work.

Despite everything else that is going on in Government, I am sure the Minister agrees that the UK has a special responsibility to Libya after the military intervention under the coalition Government. In the aftermath of that conflict and the overthrow of Colonel Gaddafi, Libya has indeed joined the list of failed and fragile states around the world, and, as during the current violence, it is the people of Libya who have suffered the most.

Back in 2011, before the military action, Mr Cameron warned at the Scottish Conservative party conference that if we did not take action,

“Libya will become once again a pariah state, festering on Europe’s border, a source of instability, exporting strife beyond her borders”.

My concern is that the lessons of Iraq clearly were not learned in Libya, with spending on military action far outstripping spending on rebuilding. One UN official described the UK’s efforts as

“paltry bone-throwing from a European country whose bombers reaped so much destruction”.

What lessons have been learned from Iraq, and from Libya previously, as we respond to this latest crisis? More specifically, What bilateral support are the UK Government providing for the UN peace process, good governance in Libya, and internal and external security measures in that country?

Mark Field: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his contribution. I think the whole House recognises, as he does, that despite all the other excitement there are a number of areas where the Foreign Office and other elements of Government still have a very active role to play. I think we can be very proud of the work we do. He will know that we are also a penholder at the UN in relation to Yemen, and of course I answered an urgent question on that matter in the House only 10 days ago.

The hon. Gentleman is pretty robust in his views about what happened in 2011. He will remember that, although the intervention was international—it was called for by the Arab League and authorised by the UN Security Council—this Parliament voted in support of UK involvement to prevent attacks on civilians. However, he is correct that after that intervention, although the UK played a role in trying to ensure that there was further planning for a Libyan-owned, UN co-ordinated stabilisation effort, that did not come to pass in the way we would have liked.

There were clear early successes in the immediate aftermath of 2011 that were not sustained. As the hon. Gentleman will be aware, General Haftar, who was himself in exile for some 20 years, having fallen out with

the Gaddafi regime at the beginning of the 1990s, returned and was regarded as an international operator, with close connections with the US Administration. Obviously, he was not able to make as much progress as he would have liked immediately in 2011, and then, when the civil war broke out in 2014, he had a part to play.

The concern one has about the Haftar regime is whether another strongman is what Libya requires. I think Libya requires democracy. It requires the sort of work the UN will continue steadfastly to do and try to bring about. My biggest concern is that it is very evident that General Haftar does not regard democracy as an important way forward for Libya. Clearly, a number of other groups associated with him are working in a rather negative way, not least given their religious connotations, whether they are from Egypt, the UAE or elsewhere. As a result, I do not think that is the right way forward.

I wanted to give a full answer to the hon. Gentleman, who requested this urgent question. Please be assured that the UK continues to work with international partners in this regard. We take very seriously our responsibilities in that part of the world. As the hon. Gentleman is well aware, the implications of Libya becoming a failed state in terms of migration flows, which have already been fairly substantial over the last three or four years since the civil war broke out, are obviously very worrying. It is evident that the international contingent will need to work together for quite some time to try to bring stability to that country.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr Speaker: I observe that there is considerable competition between cerebral colleagues—very challenging for the Chair. I call Andrew Mitchell.

Mr Andrew Mitchell (Sutton Coldfield) (Con): Thank you, Mr Speaker. The Minister is surely right that all members of the international community should line up behind the proposals put forward by António Guterres, the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The Minister is equally right to underline the point that the earlier British intervention was a humanitarian intervention, approved by the United Nations, to stop a terrible massacre of people in Benghazi, which would have taken place had we not intervened.

Mark Field: I thank my right hon. Friend for what he has said. We were exchanging notes earlier—we were both abroad this weekend and rushed back, from Rwanda in his case and Bangladesh in mine, for this statement.

Let me say a little about the broader aid work that has been done. As part of the Department for International Development’s £75 million migration programme, working along the whole route from west Africa via the Sahel to Libya, up to £5 million has been allocated for humanitarian assistance and protection for migrants and refugees in Libya, including targeted healthcare. We will continue to do that important work into the future, with humanitarian measures in mind.

Emily Thornberry (Islington South and Finsbury) (Lab): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for granting this urgent question. I also thank the hon. Member for North East

Fife (Stephen Gethins) for securing it. I can only echo what he and the Minister said about the latest disastrous turn of events in Libya and what must be done to address it. As things stand, Libya faces the worst possible choice, between a return to autocratic military rule and permanent civil war. I join others in urging the Government not just to put pressure on Egypt and the UAE, as the Minister mentioned, but to put pressure on France to cease its support for Haftar's assault on Tripoli and to get the UN peace process back on track.

In the short time that I have, I want to ask the Minister of State, as the hon. Member for North East Fife did, whether he agrees that what we are seeing today shows that the lessons of our intervention in Iraq have not been learned—not truly, not really—and also shows how wrong David Cameron was to suggest that they had been when he published the Chilcot report in 2016. As I said back then, so many of the same disastrous mistakes made by the Governments of the UK and the US over Libya were made by their predecessors over Iraq, most importantly the total and inexcusable failure to prepare for the aftermath of intervention and regime change and to prevent the descent into civil war and instability that Libya still faces today.

How ironic that, a week after he published the Chilcot report, David Cameron left office having created another total mess, with no planning for the aftermath and leaving it to others to face the consequences. As well as everything that must be done now to deal with the situation in Libya today, does the Minister of State agree that it is time for the Government to revisit the recommendations of the Chilcot report to ensure not just that there are no more Iraqs, but that there are no more Libyas?

Mark Field: The recommendations of the Chilcot report were accepted by the Government of the time and I am sure play an active day-to-day part in all the work done in places such as Libya and will continue to do so.

The right hon. Lady asks about the message that we might have for the French Government, who, as she rightly points out, have a stronger relationship with General Haftar and his group. We are working together, as she will be aware, both at the UN Security Council and in the EU, and the G7 have issued a joint statement to bring everyone to the table.

Many hon. Members in all parts of the House would not disagree with much of what the right hon. Lady says. Our engagement and involvement in Iraq and Libya have turned out to have calamitous outcomes. Some progress has been made—one looks to Iraq, where Islamic State has been taken out of the picture. The concern that many rightly have now is about an escalating conflict in Libya. One reason for the urgency behind trying to get everyone round the table to secure a peaceful and diplomatic solution is the concern that Libya could again become a recruiting partner for Islamic State and strengthen Islamic State, which has been wiped out in Iraq and Syria.

We all recognise how interconnected all these issues are. It is important to try to work together constructively. I would like to think that there have been lessons learned, and I think that Chilcot provides an important blueprint and template to ensure that we learn those lessons in future.

Tom Tugendhat (Tonbridge and Malling) (Con): I very much welcome the Minister's comments on the UK's actions and potential actions in Libya in coming days, but will he touch on the actions of other nations? We have already heard France mentioned and perhaps the United States should be asked whether it has a view, but surely the most important thing is to ask the Kremlin what it is doing. It has troops on the ground, provides military assistance and is already playing a very important role in destabilising the country. Perhaps he could ask his Russian opposite number what Russia is doing to try to bring peace to the country.

Mark Field: My hon. Friend is absolutely right: Russia has clearly been supportive of the Haftar initiative. It is therefore all the more important that it is kept on board. There is no doubt that the US has a major interest. General Haftar spent 20 years in the US, so is clearly well-connected in that Administration. We are trying to do as much work as we can within the UN framework. As my hon. Friend will be aware, António Guterres was literally in Libya at the end of last week for the preliminary stage of trying to work through the conference that we still hope will take place at the end of next week. The UN is clearly the right way to do this. I very much hope that my line manager, the Foreign Secretary, will, in the course of the next few days, have options to speak with various counterparts, including those from Russia.

Hilary Benn (Leeds Central) (Lab): The lesson from Libya and many other countries is that after a long period of brutal dictatorship it is not uncommon to see different factions fighting for power to see who will take over. As the Minister said, we must do everything we can to support Prime Minister al-Serraj's Government. The question I want to ask the Minister is on humanitarian assistance. I welcome his announcement about the money DFID will provide, but given the proximity of General Haftar's forces to Tripoli, who will actually be able to provide that humanitarian assistance on the ground if, heaven forbid, there is even more fighting in the suburbs of Tripoli, given that we hear reports that many people from the international community are in the process of being, if they have not already been, evacuated from Tripoli?

Mark Field: The right hon. Gentleman makes a very good point, which I alluded to in my reply to the hon. Member for North East Fife (Stephen Gethins). It is a concern that some humanitarian aid, which is so desperately required for the most recent incidents, cannot reach people. We will work with the international community. Through our aid efforts we already work with a number of NGOs with long-standing connections on the ground, but this is a fluid situation that will require a long and concerted international effort. We are watching what is happening on a day-by-day basis. It is in everyone's interests that all parties get around the table at the earliest possible opportunity for the reasons the right hon. Gentleman points out. The worst of all options for the humanitarian situation is that there are ungoverned spaces in Libya where terrible atrocities have taken place and will continue to take place.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: The proud author and owner of a doctorate in strategic studies, Dr Julian Lewis.

Dr Julian Lewis (New Forest East) (Con): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for that introduction. Which side are our sworn Islamist enemies backing in Libya?

Mark Field: My right hon. Friend, I know, feels strongly about these matters. They are backing different sides. All sides have, in a quite disparate way, elements of Islamic State or other extremist Islamist groups. This is the nub of the problem. Faustian bargains have been made by most of those who would either be warlords or would run Libya. They are building very unstable coalitions, which I think are very destructive for the reasons he alludes to.

Mr Alistair Carmichael (Orkney and Shetland) (LD): There is significant evidence that the United Arab Emirates is supporting Haftar's efforts in east Libya. Surely we, as candid friends of the Emiratis, should make it clear to them that that is unacceptable. Does that take us to a point where, as candid friends, we may need to be a bit more candid and a bit less friendly?

Mark Field: There is little doubt that the influence of the United States only last year in the Benghazi region was profound. At that point, when it looked as though Haftar was going to move forward, it was made clear that the US would not just be unsupportive but would prevent such efforts. As I have said, the situation is now very fluid. We will make strong representations to those from the United Arab Emirates, Egypt and Russia who have essentially backed the Haftar efforts in east and south Libya. We also very much hope that they use whatever diplomatic efforts they can to bring him to the negotiating table.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr Speaker: Not a doctor, but a former Minister, no less: Sir Henry Bellingham.

Sir Henry Bellingham (North West Norfolk) (Con): Thank you, Mr Speaker. First, I declare my interest as the Prime Minister's trade envoy to Libya. I congratulate the Minister and the UK on the role they played in helping to secure the recent UN Security Council resolution condemning the military advance. Does he agree that it is extremely disappointing that Haftar ignored the recent EU delegation at Benghazi that urged him to allow the forthcoming national conference to go ahead? He has mentioned this already, but will he give more details about those countries—the UAE, Egypt and Russia in particular—that have actively supported General Haftar? What more can we do to ensure that they play a constructive role?

Mark Field: I thank my hon. Friend, who was the Minister for Africa and is our trade envoy to Libya. As he said to me earlier, there is understandably not a lot of trade going on between the countries at the moment, but I know he has a strong interest in and love of Libya and that he wishes that country all the best.

We are doing all that we can within the international community. There is a united UN front to try to ensure that we move ahead and that the conference takes place next week. It is the only game in town to ensure a better life for all Libyans going forward.

Catherine West (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab): With tensions escalating, what concrete action are the Government taking to deal with the terrible conditions in the camps on the coast of Libya where people are being trafficked?

Mark Field: As I pointed out to the right hon. Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn), the difficulty is that, as conflict starts, suddenly other parts of Libya become difficult to reach for many involved in humanitarian aid-giving. As the hon. Lady will know, we are doing all that we can within those camps. I touched on the substantial amount of money we have put in through our DFID budget in years gone by, and we will continue to do so in as accurate a way as possible. She rightly points out that issues such as people trafficking and sexual violence in conflict are at the forefront of our mind. We recognise that there are major issues in Libya as it stands.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr Speaker: The Lincolnshire knight: Sir Edward Leigh.

Sir Edward Leigh (Gainsborough): Here we go again, making the same mistakes as we made in Iraq and Syria. I agree with everything the shadow Foreign Secretary said. The Government of national accord is actually a Government of national chaos, deeply infiltrated by jihadism. Does the Minister think that Egypt is safer, and the people happier, with the Government of General Sisi or the Government of the Muslim Brotherhood?

Mark Field: As a relatively new boy to this brief, I will not speculate on that issue. On the point my right hon. Friend alluded to, which came up earlier, I am afraid the truth is jihadists are playing a part in almost all of these organisations. Things are much more factionalised than meets the eye, so compromises are always being made in supporting one side or another. There is an elected Government in Syria headed by the Prime Minister, Fayez al-Serraj, and we are rightly doing our best to support that Government.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr Speaker: I call the president of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, Mrs Madeleine Moon.

Mrs Madeleine Moon (Bridgend) (Lab): Is it in fact time to look at events in Libya as a wake-up call in relation to Russia's increasing involvement in Africa? It is looking for bases for its troops and access to Libyan ports. It already has naval logistics centres in Eritrea and Sudan, military co-operation agreements with Burkina Faso, Burundi, Mali and Madagascar, and contracts for its mercenaries in the Central African Republic, Sudan, Niger, Chad and Mauritania, all of whom, coincidentally, give it support at the United Nations. Is it not time to look at the bigger picture?

Mark Field: I thank the hon. Lady for her question. I like to think that we do try to look at the bigger picture, but she is right. Increasingly, for economic and other reasons, including diplomatic reasons, as she rightly says—having support at the United Nations is important

to both Russia and China, for example—we do need to look at the bigger picture. The opportunities that are there because of the rising population of Africa mean that it will receive more and more attention, which is sometimes paid, I am afraid, in a rather nefarious way, as she pointed out.

Tim Loughton (East Worthing and Shoreham) (Con): Recent developments in Libya are very worrying for the Libyan population, but in recent years Libya has been a route for many economic migrants, asylum seekers and those fleeing war in other parts of Africa. What assessment has the Minister made of the likely impact on migrants seeking to come across in very perilous conditions to places such as Lampedusa in the Mediterranean, and what discussions has he had with our still EU partners about the precautions that can be taken to deal with a potential flood of further refugees?

Mark Field: I am afraid that my hon. Friend is absolutely right: the porous borders in other parts of Africa and the fact that Libya is on the seafront of the Mediterranean make it an attractive proposition. The British Government have allocated some £12 million in this financial year for Libya through the conflict, stability and security fund, which is designed to boost not only political participation but economic development, which is key to providing opportunities to generations of Libyans as well as, hopefully, in other parts of Africa. We are trying to support the delivery of greater security, stability and resilience in the entirety of this region.

Mr Kevan Jones (North Durham) (Lab): It is simplistic to draw analogies between Libya and Iraq, but does the Minister agree that the intervention in Libya was to stop a potential massacre in Benghazi, as the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr Mitchell) said? The Minister also made the point in his statement that 260,000 people have been displaced. What assessment have the Government made about further displacement and the effect on migration and refugees travelling across the Mediterranean?

Mark Field: There is an ongoing assessment of migrant flows, and clearly we work closely with many of our EU partners—not least Italy, which is often the recipient of large numbers coming through. Just to touch on the issue of detention centres, there are appalling conditions in many of them. While we do not fund Libyan detention centres—they are the responsibility of Libyan authorities—we recognise that that becomes the starting point for many of the migrant journeys to which the right hon. Gentleman refers.

Rachel Maclean (Redditch) (Con): I thank the Minister for the update and I am glad to hear that he is encouraging restraint on all sides to avoid bloodshed and violence. Does he have a message for the Government of France, who have a close relationship with General Haftar?

Mark Field: My hon. Friend is absolutely right about the French, and as I pointed out, the United States, or aspects of the US Administration, also has a close relationship. We are calling on all international partners to use whatever influence they have to implore General Haftar to back down and to promote the peace process, which is obviously handled at the UN. I know that my

right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has spoken to his French counterpart only today in Brussels and has made that case.

Mike Gapes (Ilford South) (Ind): Would it be correct to say that this recent move is driven by a 75-year-old general in a hurry, who wants to create facts on the ground, supported by a coalition of anti-Muslim Brotherhood countries from the Arab world, including Egypt and the United Arab Emirates, and others who wish to exploit the oil if General Haftar takes control of it?

Mark Field: The hon. Gentleman knows much about this subject, and has obviously kept an eye on Libyan affairs for quite some time. General Haftar may not be the only old man in a hurry, in certain ways.

I think that the hon. Gentleman is broadly right, although I fear that the situation is less linear than he suggests. There may be groups who do not like the Muslim Brotherhood, but I think that some Faustian bargains are being made when it comes to the coalitions that are being formed. As the hon. Gentleman says, given that the strength of General Haftar's work has tended to be in the Benghazi region, oil is clearly very much at the forefront of his mind.

Mark Pritchard (The Wrekin) (Con): The Secretary General of the United Nations said that he was leaving Libya with a heavy heart, and that he was deeply concerned about the escalation of the conflict there. However, a diplomatic and political conflict is going on behind the scenes between France and Italy. Given that both those countries are members of the European Union and of NATO, what more can the UK Government do to bring about political and diplomatic consensus, especially in view of the fact that the Russians are now very close to the new Italian Government?

Mark Field: I think that there is consensus among our European Union neighbours, and, as I have said, the G7 have issued a statement. It was greatly to be regretted that, for safety reasons, the Secretary General of the United Nations had to flee literally 10 days before we were hoping to get the conference under way. However, I think that a lot of diplomatic work is going on. There is a great deal of concern in the international community, which recognises that if Libya were to become a failed state, all the migration issues—as well as, obviously, the massive humanitarian issues—that we have seen in recent years would only worsen. However, we are working very closely with all our international partners, and will continue to do so.

Yasmin Qureshi (Bolton South East) (Lab): It pains me to say that in 2011, in a speech that I made during a debate about the military intervention in Libya, I predicted everything that has been happening there since that intervention. Members are welcome to read the speech in *Hansard*. It is also disturbing—and has been confirmed by a report from the Foreign Affairs Committee—that there was no immediate humanitarian need requiring a military intervention. What practical assistance are we providing for the refugees—especially children—who have been caught in Tripoli?

Mark Field: I think it a little unfair of the hon. Lady to suggest that there was no humanitarian issue in 2011. We went in because of what was happening in Benghazi.

[*Mark Field*]

I accept that the early optimism and successes were not sustained, and that would clearly have to happen at UN level.

I mentioned earlier the amount of aid that we continue to put into Libya. We have invested some £75 million in the migration programme, working across the whole route from west Africa to Libya via the Sahel. As I have said, we will also do all that we can in the camps that are not run by the Libyan authorities. We are all very concerned that a further outbreak of hostilities will only lead to even more humanitarian misery.

Andrew Rosindell (Romford) (Con): Whatever the result of the power struggle in Libya, the priority of our Government will still be to work towards compensation for the victims of Semtex supplied by Libya to the IRA. I welcome the appointment of William Shawcross to look into the whole issue, but will my right hon. Friend assure the victims that it will not be sidelined, and that the Government will continue to pursue it to ensure that justice is done and compensation is paid to those who suffered so horribly at the hands of the IRA?

Mark Field: May I first correct something that I said earlier? The UN Secretary General did not flee Libya, and I am sorry if I gave that impression and there was a misapprehension. Obviously, the UN still has a significant presence in Libya.

We all want to see a just solution for all the victims of Gaddafi-sponsored IRA terrorism, but the political and security situation in Libya has, I am afraid, effectively stalled further discussion with the authorities about a resolution of the important legacy issues to which my hon. Friend referred. He also referred to the appointment of William Shawcross as the special representative on UK victims, which forms part of the UK's ongoing commitment to helping the victims of Libya-supported IRA terrorism. I share many of his concerns and much of his impatience: we would have liked to see more progress. I think he will understand that the general instability in Libya has made that difficult, but we are working steadfastly and will continue to do so.

Dr Roberta Blackman-Woods (City of Durham) (Lab): The situation in Libya is looking increasingly desperate, as the country is on the brink of slipping back into authoritarian control. Will the Minister therefore tell us what the outcome of the discussions at the United Nations on Friday was in terms of preventing a humanitarian as well as a political crisis?

Mark Field: To be fair, the reality was that the United Nations Security Council was trying to enhance, and make it clear that we were keen to continue with, the action plan, which would obviously have involved the conference taking place on the 14th, and to redouble the united voice of the United Nations in that regard. Clearly, the humanitarian aspects are part of the ongoing work at the bilateral level—through DFID, for us, and through other organisations—and are increasingly required at the UN and non-governmental organisation level.

Ross Thomson (Aberdeen South) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend please tell the House what measures he and his Department are taking to ensure that UK staff based in Tripoli and elsewhere in Libya are being kept safe throughout these events?

Mark Field: I thank my hon. Friend for that important question. Our embassy in Tripoli has remained closed since 2014, but we do have a permanent diplomatic presence, and a lot of work involving Libyan issues is undertaken from Tunis, in neighbouring Tunisia.

We do try to update the travel advice on a factual basis, and the message that we have broadly for British nationals in Libya—clearly, there are relatively few still there—states at the moment that consular assistance is not available, for obvious reasons, and that we are therefore unable to provide any form of assisted departure. That is a fairly strong signal for UK nationals that, unless it is absolutely necessary for them to be in Libya, we would advise them not to be there.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): Libya is on the edge of a precipice. It is the biggest arms supplier to ISIS, Daesh, the Fulani herdsmen and criminal gangs. North Africa and middle Africa are in danger of being sucked into terrorism at levels never seen before. Can the Minister outline how he intends to use any available diplomatic and financial pressure to ensure that there is a crackdown on the international black market in the sale of arms?

Mark Field: The hon. Gentleman is right. One of the depressing things is that Libya has been at the edge of a precipice for more years than any of us cares to remember. As the penholder for Libya at the UN Security Council, the UK has made it and will continue to make it a priority to ensure that there is meaningful action against the illegal flow of weapons into and out of Libya. We led on Security Council resolution 2292, which authorises all member states and regional organisations to take specific and measured steps to interdict suspected embargo-breaking vessels off Libya's coast.

Mr Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con): Following Russia's decisive and successful intervention in support of President Assad, it now appears that Russia is backing General Haftar in Libya. What is to stop the west's strategic foreign policy objectives being just as much of a failure in Libya as they were in Syria?

Mark Field: I thank my hon. Friend for his rather bleak analysis of the situation. Clearly, there are fundamental differences between what is happening in Syria and in Libya. Each of those is unique, and it would be unwise to draw too many direct parallels. As I pointed out, there are other nations involved; this is not just about Russian-led support for General Haftar—as I say, there is support from Egypt, France and the United Arab Emirates. We will do all we can in our role in the UN Security Council to try to broker an international solution, and that, I am afraid, can be the only sensible way forward.

Jonathan Edwards (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr) (PC): One of the worst consequences of the conflict in Libya has been the re-emergence of an open slave trade in parts of the country, with many media interviews showing open auctions of humans. What is the British Government's assessment of the scale of the problem, and what can be done with our international partners to break down the supply chain in humans?

Mark Field: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right: the most bleak aspect of the humanitarian side is modern-day slavery and people trafficking. I do not have the

information that he requests. The precise nature of the problem is obviously in part a matter for the Department for International Development, but I am afraid it is clear that this has become prevalent not just in Libya but in a number of neighbouring countries, and that the supply lines also cross the Mediterranean.

David Morris (Morecambe and Lunesdale) (Con): There are various factions in Libya, including the Government of national accord and the Libyan national army. Whoever forms the next Government after this skirmish, will my right hon. Friend ensure that the perpetrators of the bombing in Manchester will be brought to justice? As yet, the internationally recognised Government have not supplied that extradition.

Mark Field: I thank my hon. Friend for his observations. Let me make it clear that the international community stands behind the Government of national accord, the elected Government of Prime Minister Fayez al-Serraj. There is clearly speculation as to whether there was any nexus between our intervention in Libya and the Manchester attack, but we are aware that there were Libyan nationals involved and we will obviously do our best to ensure extradition and justice at an early opportunity. However, the experience of what happened in Lockerbie means that we will have to recognise that this may take some time.

Alison Thewliss (Glasgow Central) (SNP): I have a number of Libyan constituents who have left Libya for reasons that the Minister will understand, and some of them have been waiting for decisions from the Home Office for quite some time. He alluded to the travel advice issued by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Is there any other advice that is shared between the FCO and the Home Office that could bring closure to my constituents?

Mark Field: The hon. Lady represents a city centre seat, as I do, and I am well aware of the issues faced by people who want to make their lives in the United Kingdom and who would make a great contribution here. Those people want their situation to be regularised, but these are inevitably issues for the Home Office. I am sorry—I am not trying to get out of this matter, but I think it would be useful for her to contact the Home Office with the specifics.

Mr Paul Sweeney (Glasgow North East) (Lab/Co-op): Libya is a country with immense potential, given its resource wealth and its position in the Mediterranean, yet there is something quite tragic about the fact that, having effected the displacement of its Government, the British state has not been in any way competent in effecting the transition to a peaceful solution in Libya. We have to take responsibility for that reality. What will this Government do to ensure that the United Nations-backed Government of national accord are properly resourced to effect security and stability on the ground?

They are clearly failing to do that at the moment, and they are being displaced by other forces sponsored by other foreign powers.

Mark Field: While everyone needs to take responsibility for issues that have happened in the past in Libya, it would be a little unfair to suggest that things were perfect before our engagement there in 2011. We all recognise that there have been major problems for some time, but the tragedy of what has happened in Libya and elsewhere is that things at least seemed to be better when there was a strongman dictator in charge, and that when we tried to move towards a more pluralistic and democratic outcome, things got worse. In my view, that should not in any way be a justification for dictatorship or autocracy, but it has tended to be the case. A number of dictators, including Gaddafi, have been supported by the west in the aftermath of 2003 and leading up to 2011. These are difficult issues that we inevitably have to deal with, but responsibility has to be shared with the people on the ground. The tragedy of what has happened in Libya is that it has been a divided country almost since it was created—it was created using rather an artificial divide—and the only time there appeared to be stability was under a dictatorship. That is a terrible lesson for future generations of Libyans to learn.

Stuart C. McDonald (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East) (SNP): As we have heard, many thousands of migrants have already suffered outrageous human rights abuses in Libya, including in appalling detention centres. Will the Government now argue at international level for an urgent rethink of the inhumane policy of facilitating the return to those very conditions of many of the migrants being rescued from the Mediterranean?

Mark Field: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me for saying that that is clearly a matter for the Home Office, rather than the Foreign Office. However, if the humanitarian situation in Libya deteriorates further, clearly the whole Government will have that in mind.

Martin Docherty-Hughes (West Dunbartonshire) (SNP): The Libyan crisis followed a similar crisis in Tunisia, and it is now a compound crisis, given the resignation of President Bouteflika in Algeria. Can the Minister therefore reassure the House that his Department is alive to the situation and to the problems that our Mediterranean neighbours now face with this compound crisis about to unfold on them?

Mark Field: We are very much alive to the situation. The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right that the instability in the neighbouring countries of Algeria and Tunisia provides some concern for what might happen. The migrant flows, which we thought were being reduced from their height in 2015 and 2016, may yet increase substantially, so it is something that our European neighbours are well aware of. We recognise that we will all have to play out part in trying to handle that humanitarian misery flow.

Online Harms White Paper

5.21 pm

The Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Jeremy Wright): With permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to make a statement. The Government have today published a White Paper setting out our proposals for making the internet a safer place. For so many people, the internet is an integral part of daily life; nearly 90% of UK adults are online, and for 12 to 15-year-olds the figure is 99%. As the internet continues to grow and transform our lives, we need to think carefully about how we want it to develop. In many ways, the internet is a powerful force for good; it can be used to forge connections, share knowledge and spread opportunity across the world. But it can also be used to circulate terrorist material, undermine civil discourse, spread disinformation, and to bully or abuse.

Our challenge as a society is to help shape an internet that is open and vibrant, but that also protects its users from harm. There is clear evidence that we are not succeeding. Over 8,000 sexual offences against children with an online element were reported to the police in 2017, and that figure is continuing to rise. Up to 20% of young people in the UK have experienced bullying online. The White Paper sets out many more examples of harms suffered. People are closing their social media accounts following unacceptable online abuse. For the vulnerable, online experiences can mean cyber-bullying and the risk of grooming and exploitation. We cannot allow such behaviour to undermine the very real benefits that the digital revolution can bring. If we surrender our online spaces to those who spread hate, abuse and fear, we will all lose.

This is a serious situation and it requires a serious response. The Government have taken time to consider what we might do and how we might do it. I am grateful to Members across the House, and indeed in the other place, for their consideration of these issues, in particular the Select Committee on Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. I am also grateful for the discussions I have had, including with the hon. Member for West Bromwich East (Tom Watson) and his Opposition Front-Bench colleagues. We intend to continue those conversations and to consult on what we propose, because it is vital that we get this right.

No one has done this before. There is no comprehensive international model to follow, and there are important balances to strike, in sustaining innovation in the digital economy and promoting freedom of speech, as well as reducing harm. None of that is straightforward, and the Government should not claim a monopoly on wisdom. That is why the consultation that will follow will be a genuine opportunity for Members of the House and others to contribute to these proposals.

It is also right to recognise that some work is already being done to make the internet a safer place, including by online companies themselves, but it has not been enough and it has been too reactive. It can no longer be right to leave online companies to decide for themselves what action should be taken, as some of them are beginning to recognise. That is why my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and I have concluded that the Government must act and that the era of self-regulation of the internet must end.

The Government will create a new statutory duty of care, establishing it in law that online companies have a responsibility for the safety of their users. It will require companies to do what is reasonable to prevent harmful material from reaching those users. Compliance will be overseen and enforced by an independent regulator. The White Paper sets out the expectations for the steps that companies should take to fulfil the duty of care towards their users, and we expect the regulator to reflect those expectations in new codes of practice. In the case of the most serious harms, such as child sexual exploitation and abuse and the promotion of terrorism, the Home Secretary will need to approve codes of practice and will also have power to issue directions to the regulator about their content. The Home Office will publish interim codes of practice on these subjects later this year. We are consulting on the role that Parliament should have in relation to the codes, too.

If online companies are to persuade the regulator that they are meeting their duty of care to keep their users safe, there will need to be transparency about what is happening on their platforms and what they are doing about it. If they are unwilling to provide the necessary information voluntarily, the regulator will have the power to require annual transparency reports and to demand information from companies relating to the harms on their platforms.

It is also important to give users a voice in this system, so that they can have confidence that their concerns are being treated fairly. We will therefore expect companies to have an effective and easy-to-access complaints function. We are consulting on two further questions—how we can potentially provide users with an independent review mechanism, and how we might allow designated bodies to make super-complaints to defend the needs of users.

For a model based on duty of care to work, those subject to it must be held to account for how they fulfil that duty. That is why we have concluded that a regulator will be necessary, whether a new entity or an extension of the responsibilities of an existing regulatory body. The regulator must be paid for by the online companies, but it is essential that it commands public confidence in its independence, impartiality and effectiveness. We propose that the scope of the regulatory framework will be to cover companies that allow users to share or discover user-generated content or to interact with each other online, where that activity is currently unregulated. That includes a wide variety of organisations, both big and small, from a range of sectors, and the new regulatory regime will need to be flexible enough to operate effectively across them all.

There are two key principles in such an approach. First, the regulator will adopt a risk-based approach, prioritising regulatory action to tackle harms that have the greatest impact on individuals or wider society. Secondly, the regulator will require companies to take reasonable and proportionate actions to tackle harms on their services, taking account of their size and resources. The regulator will expect more of global giants than small start-ups. It is also necessary for the regulator to have sufficient teeth to hold companies to account when they are judged to have breached their statutory duty of care. That will include the power to serve remedial notices and to issue substantial fines, and we will consult on even more stringent sanctions, including senior management liability and the blocking of websites.

However, this regulatory approach is designed to encourage good behaviour as well as punish bad behaviour. Just as technology has created the challenges that we are addressing here, technology will provide many of the solutions, for example, in the identification of terrorist videos online and images of child sexual abuse or in new tools to identify online grooming. The regulator will therefore have broader responsibilities to promote the development and adoption of these technologies and to promote safety by design.

The truth is, however, that if we focus only on what Government or the online companies do, we miss something important. We all need the skills to keep ourselves safe online, and too few of us feel confident that we have them. We will therefore task the regulator to promote those skills, and we will develop a national media literacy strategy.

This White Paper does not aspire to deal with all that is wrong with the internet; no single piece of work could sensibly do so. This White Paper forms part of the Government's response to the many challenges that the online world brings, but it is focused on some of the most pernicious harms found online and it expects much more of the companies that operate there in tackling those harms. These are big steps, but they need to be taken.

Some will say that the internet is global so no country can act alone, but I believe that we have both a duty to act to protect UK citizens and an opportunity to lead the world on this. With well-deserved worldwide reputations for fostering innovation and respect for the rule of law, the United Kingdom is well placed to design a system of online regulation that the world will want to emulate.

The more we do online, the less acceptable it is that content which is controlled in any other environment is not controlled online. A safer internet is in the interests of responsible online companies, which want their customers to spend more time online, and it is a legitimate expectation of those we represent. That is what this White Paper will deliver, and I commend it and this statement to the House.

5.31 pm

Tom Watson (West Bromwich East) (Lab): I thank the Secretary of State for his courtesy in giving advance notice of his statement. I also thank the members of the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee for their meticulous work, much of which has made it into today's document.

Let me outline what I think is at stake. We are at an inflection point in technological and human advance. Data can transform this planet almost beyond our current comprehension. The ideas of John von Neumann, I.J. Good and Ray Kurzweil tell us how accelerating intelligence and artificial intelligence can lead to a technological singularity. On health, for example, it will allow humans to take control of their own cellular biology; cancer patients worldwide will be able to share their data for the common good.

At the heart of this revolution, however, is a public policy question about the legitimate use of our personal data. That legitimate use has been imperilled because a couple of early big data pioneers distorted the market by making crazy amounts of money from targeted advertising and then protecting their market dominance.

These past months, this House has felt more divided than at perhaps any time in our recent history, yet one person and one cause has united elected representatives

of all parties throughout the House—Mark Zuckerberg and the urgent need to bring social media giants into line.

It feels like we are living in a digital dystopia: a nightmare where a young girl commits suicide after being exposed to images of self-harm on Instagram; a business model where a massacre can be livestreamed on Facebook and the video shared thousands of times on YouTube; and a horror where a teenager is groomed in an online gaming community and then murdered in cold blood.

These companies are making billions extracting and monetising our personal data, and what do we get in return? Harms, hate speech and fake news filling our timelines and the minds of young and vulnerable people. It is no wonder that New Zealand's privacy commissioner called the executives of Facebook "morally bankrupt pathological liars" after the company refused to acknowledge any need to change its policies following the Christchurch mosque attacks. I cannot disagree with him.

We found out today that Google avoided £1.5 billion of corporation tax last year. That could have paid for 60,000 nurses for our NHS. This from a company with a net worth of £645 billion. The abuses and harms perpetrated online represent one of the toughest social policy challenges of modern times. It is our duty, as elected representatives and policy makers, to rise to that challenge, and it is to the Secretary of State's credit that he has clearly taken that duty seriously today.

Labour has already committed to many of the announcements in this White Paper. An independent regulator, a legal duty of care and a tough sanctions regime will support the Government in introducing these measures, but I have no doubt that the industry will fight back. The tech giants are certainly gearing up for a fight, hiring an army of lobbyists who I expect will be in touch with each of us very soon. I hope we can all make a commitment now that these measures will be the minimum standard of regulation and that we will not resile from any of the report's recommendations.

There is much in this White Paper to be commended, but we also have concerns. Our biggest fear is that the announcements will take months, if not years, to come to fruition. When terrorists are recruiting, children are being exploited and disinformation wars are being waged online, we do not have time to spare. We need action now. Will the Secretary of State commit to bringing forward the legislation on the new regulator in the next parliamentary Session?

There is nothing in this report about protecting our democracy from dark third-party political advertising and those who wish to sow disinformation and discord. Even Mark Zuckerberg has said that Governments need to introduce regulation to protect electoral integrity. Does the Secretary of State admit that this White Paper fails to do that?

The duty of care codes and the codes of conduct sound like very important steps, but the devil will be in the detail. For example disinformation, such as anti-vaccination propaganda, is being spread unchecked in closed groups on Facebook, contributing to a burgeoning public health crisis. Will the Secretary of State explain how this White Paper might tackle that?

Underlying all the harms, hate and fake news on social media platforms is one central, fundamental problem: the distorted digital market dominated by a

[Tom Watson]

small number of data monopolies. These companies surveil our every like and share, extract our data and sell it on to advertisers 10 times over. They are hoovering up companies big and small, suppressing competition and innovation. They are now so dominant that they think themselves too big to fail—untouchable by mere national Governments.

We agree with the Secretary of State that this is only the start, and we respect what is in this White Paper and will work to help deliver it, but the truth is that, until we deal with the fundamental issue of data monopolists dominating the market, we will never really see the end of this digital dystopia.

Jeremy Wright: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman not just for what he has said this afternoon but for the open approach he has taken to the discussion of these matters. As he says, this is one of the toughest policy challenges we face, and I believe we will resolve it only if we are able to work across the House to make sure that what we produce is as robust as it can be.

As the hon. Gentleman also says, there will be a considerable amount of resistance to what is proposed in this White Paper, and we will all need to hold our nerve in the face of that pressure. He asks about legislation, and it is our intention to legislate in the next parliamentary Session, but he will understand that there is a tension between the urgency, which we all accept exists, to tackle these harms and, indeed, to legislate to do so and the need to make sure that we have taken account of the views and the thinking that others can contribute. He knows that I have sought to do that up to this point, and I will seek to do it from this point on. I want to ensure that we make this as robust as we can, that we get it right, that we have understood the detail, and that it will stand up to the kind of scrutiny and pressure that he rightly describes. With that tension in mind, we will move as quickly as we can.

On electoral integrity, the hon. Gentleman heard me say a moment ago that the White Paper does not represent the sum total of the Government's action in relation to harms on the internet more broadly. He will know that the Cabinet Office will imminently be bringing forward its "defending democracy" piece of work. I hope he will find in that a good deal of the material he referred to. Indeed, while a good number of the Government's responses to the excellent piece of work produced by the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee are, as he said, dealt with in the White Paper, some will be dealt with in that document.

Disinformation is, as the hon. Gentleman knows, one of the harms that we have identified in the White Paper as needing the attention of the regulator. We believe that a number of things can be done. We will expect the regulator, in its codes of practice and through the duty of care more broadly, to focus on the need to ensure that authoritative sources are prioritised over non-authoritative sources and that fact checking is available. There are other measures that the regulator could take, not least in respect of the point I made about public education. In relation to many of the issues on which disinformation is focused, we believe that the answer, at least in part, is to ensure that our fellow citizens are equipped with the skills they need to understand what

they should be looking for to determine what they believe and what they do not. That is a legitimate focus for the regulator.

Finally, the hon. Gentleman mentioned competition, and I understand his focus on that. Again, I make the point that it will be dealt with, but that it will be dealt with elsewhere. He will know about the Furman review, which was recently completed at the Government's instigation. We will take seriously what Professor Furman and his panel have said, and we will respond in due course. When we do so, the hon. Gentleman will have the opportunity to take the matter up again, and I know he will.

Damian Collins (Folkestone and Hythe) (Con): I thank the Secretary of State for his kind words acknowledging the work of the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee and for accepting so many of our recommendations in the White Paper. I want to ask expressly about the investigatory powers of the proposed new regulator. Does he agree that it is important that the job of the regulator is not just to identify that a failure in the duty of care has occurred, but to go into the company and investigate why that failure occurred, who knew about it and when, and what needs to be done to ensure that such a failure does not happen again? Only with that sort of internal investigation and scrutiny will we be able to set companies back on the right path.

Jeremy Wright: I agree with my hon. Friend. He will see in the White Paper provisions to make transparency powers available to the regulator, not just so that it can ask for annual transparency reports from online companies, but so that when the regulator thinks it appropriate to do so, it can ask specific questions about information that it wishes to have. It will of course be important, as he will recognise from the work of the Select Committee, to make sure that the regulator is properly staffed with those who have the necessary skills and understanding to ask the right questions and then understand the answers. We will certainly attend to that, and I am grateful for the help of my hon. Friend and the Committee in developing some of the further detail.

Hannah Bardell (Livingston) (SNP): I thank the Secretary of State for advance sight of the statement. Although it is disappointing that the White Paper was delayed, I commend the Secretary of State and the Home Secretary on the sensible and robust plans, which the Scottish National party absolutely supports. The devil will, however, be in the detail.

The extended Ofcom or the new regulator that is created will have a big and serious job on its hands. Will the Secretary of State reassure us that any regulator will be properly resourced and have the full weight of the law behind it? The protection of vulnerable children is of particular concern to many of the stakeholders and schools I have spoken to in my Livingston constituency.

The Secretary of State made some important points about people closing their social media accounts because of abuse. The reality is that online abuse has a disproportionate impact on women and girls, who face sexism and misogyny, and are readily silenced online. I am sure that he will be aware of the work of Caroline Criado Perez and her book on this issue. In a world designed for men, women and girls are being rendered invisible. That cannot continue.

Just because a regulator is appointed does not mean it will be effective. The 2008 financial crash had to happen before the Financial Conduct Authority started to regulate effectively. Any regulator, the Secretary of State says, will be paid for by the online companies. Will he say more about how that will be levied? He also mentioned that the Home Secretary will publish an interim code of practice. Will he give us a sense of when that is to happen because, as we know, it is desperately needed?

I understand—we understand—that a balance needs to be struck with free speech. The tech companies seem to take the issues of terrorism, child abuse and paedophilia a bit more seriously, but the everyday abuse of people in public life and young people, particularly girls in schools, is a serious concern. I commend to the Secretary of State “The Burning” by Laura Bates, a brilliant book that draws on Laura’s own experience of talking to students in schools. It is about a young woman who is forced to move school and country because of the vitriolic abuse that she faced online.

The Secretary of State talks of a national media literacy strategy. That is welcome. I am sure that he is aware of the SNP-led Government’s child internet safety plan, and I hope that he will co-ordinate and work closely with the Governments in Scotland and the devolved nations.

Finally, it is imperative that any new regulation or legislation addresses the funding of political advertising online. The illegal activity of the leave campaign is a dark stain on our democracy. We must ensure that our democracy is not interfered with or damaged any further. We must get this right. For the sake of the family of Molly Russell and the victims of Christchurch, we must work together across this House to ensure that social media and tech companies are properly held to account.

Jeremy Wright: I am grateful to the hon. Lady, and I agree with much of what she says. She asks some good questions, which I will try to answer.

It is important that we have a regulator that is properly resourced. I said that it was our intention to ensure that the industry pays for that regulator, which is of course what one would normally expect, but whether that is predominantly through a levy or fine income is a question we have asked for views on in the course of the White Paper. We look forward to hearing what people have to say. I am open to persuasion either way, or a combination of the two might be the best way to proceed, but obviously the weight of payment must be with the industry.

The hon. Lady asks whether the regulator will have the weight of law behind it. It will. As I indicated, we will need to legislate to set up the regulator; it will need statutory underpinning. I hope that she will be supportive of that effort when we bring legislation before the House.

The hon. Lady makes a good point about online abuse of women and girls in particular. One of the reasons that I am so keen to see this process continue is that if we do not give the citizens of this country the opportunity to speak up online, to participate in the debate on what is now one of the central forums for debate, we will lose a huge number of powerful voices in the course of making our country a better place. To women—young women in particular—who feel that that is a

hostile environment in which to participate in debate, we have a particular duty. I believe that the regulator will help us to fulfil that duty.

The hon. Lady mentions codes of practice. She might not yet have seen that the social media code of practice is published alongside the White Paper, so that document is now available and I hope that online companies will start to take clear account of it. The work that the Home Office will now do will specifically be in relation to child sexual abuse and to the promotion of terrorism. Because of the seriousness of the harms, we believe it is appropriate for the Home Secretary to have input into the design of the codes of practice.

Finally, the hon. Lady has my assurance that we will continue to work with the Scottish Government. I have already had a very productive conversation with her colleague in the Scottish Government, Kate Forbes. We will seek to take forward that co-operation as we develop the proposals.

Mr Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford and Woodford Green) (Con): I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on producing something that clearly binds all parts of the House together. There is much to be welcomed. I want to make two quick points. First, at the heart of the problem is the business model for such businesses. Because they are so light touch and therefore bear no responsibility for what they publish, they have in a sense been able to build up companies on the cheap. Making them publishers of their content is the quickest way to achieve our No. 1 purpose, which is to break up what Adam Smith in “The Wealth of Nations” called “cartelling”. May I direct the Secretary of State, as he looks at the legal constraints, to the idea that such businesses should be responsible, as publishers are, for the content on their websites? That would radically change everything. Has he had conversations with his counterparts in the United States to see whether there is commonality of purpose in what he requests?

Jeremy Wright: The argument about whether such businesses are publishers or platforms takes up a great deal of time, and not necessarily to great purpose. It is better to ask how we can keep the focus on ensuring that online platforms take responsibility for what they do. We believe that the duty of care is the right method. It will not be sustainable any longer for online companies to say, “We have no responsibility for the harms that may appear on our platforms.” They will instead be required—by law if necessary—to look at what they can do to keep their users safe in any reasonably practicable way they can. If they do not do that, they will find that the regulator imposes sanctions upon them. That seems the right way forward.

I said earlier that it is appropriate for the United Kingdom to lead on this matter, and we should be proud that we are doing so, but I hope that other countries, including the United States, will see how we are approaching common challenges that the United States faces, too, and will seek to adopt similar proposals.

Mr David Lammy (Tottenham) (Lab): Forty or 50 years ago, the tobacco industry was largely responsible for driving up cancer in our country. It took the Department of Health many years to start to regulate what was going on in the industry and deal with it on behalf of

[Mr David Lammy]

the taxpayer. It is clear from looking at some drill music and its relationship with knife crime and gang culture, and self-harm among young people, that mental ill health is being driven by much of this social media. Will the Secretary of State say something about the intersection between the Department of Health and Social Care, the chief medical officer and the new regulator?

Jeremy Wright: The right hon. Gentleman makes a good point. As he will recognise, the White Paper deals with some of the harms that he mentions—serious violence and self-harm, in particular. It is right that all of government is behind the strategy. It is important that we ensure that the links between what this regulator does, what the health service does and what many other bodies within and outside Government do are sustained.

On social media, we all recognise that we cannot put the genie back in the bottle. Social media will continue to be a significant element in the lives of young people, in particular, with all the challenges to their mental health that we know it brings. Those who promote platforms for the kind of user-generated interaction that we are concerned with in this White Paper must accept that they can do something about some of the harmful material on those platforms. If they choose to do so, they will have nothing to fear from our proposals; if they choose not to, they will find that consequences follow.

Sarah Newton (Truro and Falmouth) (Con): I am sure many of my constituents in Truro and Falmouth will welcome these important measures. How can the Government ensure that the regulator is able to compete with the tech giants in attracting the best talent to keep pace with rapid technological change?

Jeremy Wright: My hon. Friend makes a very good point. It will be a challenge to ensure that the regulator employs people of sufficient experience and ability, who can get to grips with the challenges we will expect it to confront. A linked challenge is that we must determine, in the process of designing the regulator, what rules we believe there should be about the progress that employees from the industry can make to and from it. That can be argued both ways. My hon. Friend puts her finger on one of the great design challenges, and we shall pursue it with vigour.

Christine Jardine (Edinburgh West) (LD): On behalf of my party, I welcome the Secretary of State's statement. We need regulation in this area, but regulation alone cannot address issues such as the impact on the emotional development of children and young people. Schools must be able to educate about social harm, and parents must be empowered to support their children. What will the Secretary of State do with other Departments to ensure that that sort of action takes place?

Jeremy Wright: The hon. Lady is right. She has heard me refer to education—I mean that in the broadest sense—for adults, as well as for children. She will know that my right hon. Friend the Education Secretary has recently made changes to relationships education in our schools. It is important that understanding the online world—digital literacy—is a key part of the education that we give all our young people. They now cannot manage without it.

Simon Hart (Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire) (Con): On the question of online addiction, the focus tends to be on the horrors of addiction to online gambling, but the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee is hearing evidence about the problems associated with addiction to online gaming. Will the Secretary of State give that as much attention as gambling when he looks at the legislative part of this?

Jeremy Wright: I can give my hon. Friend that assurance. As he knows from the inquiries that he and his colleagues have been pursuing, there is considerable overlap between the two. We all need to turn our attention to the opportunities to engage in activity that looks very much like gambling within a gaming context.

Jo Stevens (Cardiff Central) (Lab): I welcome much of what is in the White Paper, but it does not address the serious concerns that our Select Committee raised about the need for transparency in relation to political advertising and campaigning, which has been the source of much disinformation on social media. It is vital that electoral law is brought up to date as soon as possible, and the possibility of an early general election or a confirmatory referendum makes that even more urgent. Will the Secretary of State be a bit more specific and tell us when the Cabinet Office will publish its proposals?

Jeremy Wright: I cannot give the hon. Lady a date today, but it is imminent. When she sees that document, she will see that it complements what the Online Harms White Paper is designed to do. There is a huge amount to be discussed in relation to the challenges that the online world brings us. If I tried to put all of them in one document, it would have become pretty unwieldy. This White Paper is designed to deal with the harms that are set out within it, and the Cabinet Office documents will, I hope, deal with many of the points that she is concerned about.

Rebecca Pow (Taunton Deane) (Con): I welcome the White Paper and the fact that it has taken on board many of the recommendations of the DCMS Committee inquiry, which revealed some spine-chilling evidence about what is going on and how we are being manipulated. One of the keys is education, and I welcome the strategy for that. People need to know how vulnerable they are and how to distinguish truth from non-truth. Will the Secretary of State expand a bit more on the strategy and how we will make it effective?

Jeremy Wright: As my hon. Friend says, the Select Committee helpfully focused on that area. We want the regulator to take responsibility for ensuring that more of this happens. It will, of course, be able to make use of the resources available to it to pursue education for all. We need to ensure that we do not just pursue education in a school context but give every member of our society the skills and capabilities they require to make sense of the online world. Some of that can be described in an over-technical way. Frankly, we sometimes require greater scepticism and less trust about what we see online so we can apply our critical faculties to it, but even if we do that, greater visibility is required. The point that the hon. Member for Cardiff Central (Jo Stevens) made about political advertising is right. We must ensure that we have the greatest possible visibility to add to our scepticism.

Paul Farrelly (Newcastle-under-Lyme) (Lab): I congratulate the Secretary of State on the White Paper and on the approach he has taken. This is not about censorship; it is about encouraging responsibility. Many of the recommendations of our Select Committee reports are echoed in the White Paper. In our reports, we left the identity of the new independent regulator unspecified. There will be a consensus that we should try to build on tried and trusted structures, rather than create a new, possibly overlapping and competing public body. In that respect, I draw attention to the growing work between Ofcom, the Information Commissioner's Office and, where necessary, law enforcement. I encourage the people who respond to the consultation and the Secretary of State, as he takes it forward, to adopt a pragmatic approach.

Jeremy Wright: Yes, I will certainly do that. I am grateful for what the hon. Gentleman says about the White Paper. As he will recognise, we have said already that we think freedom of speech is one of the issues that the regulator should concern itself with. Like him, I do not believe that there is any necessary conflict between the promotion of freedom of speech and the protection of the most vulnerable members of our society from some of the most pernicious harms.

On the identity of the regulator, the hon. Gentleman is right that this could become a congested space. He will see in the White Paper that, despite the fact that, initially at least, we have asked people to tell us what they think about the two possibilities as they stand—either a new regulator or the extension of the powers of an existing regulator—we have also envisaged a somewhat more comprehensive look at the way in which the regulatory structures currently operate.

Richard Drax (South Dorset) (Con): As a former journalist and broadcaster, I am used to being identified as the source of whatever I wrote, along with my colleagues, but trolling has the most appalling effect on many of our young and indeed—dare I say it—on many MPs who are subjected to it. Has my right hon. and learned Friend done anything about that, and can anything be done—I am afraid I am not an expert in this field—to end this and to identify those who put stuff online, because if they have nothing to hide, why can they not be identified?

Jeremy Wright: I understand my hon. Friend's point. Abuse and intimidation are of course covered in this White Paper, and it is important that online platforms do what they can to minimise that kind of activity. As he will recognise, harassment and intimidation can be criminal offences. Where they are or may be criminal offences, powers already exist to seek to identify those who may be responsible, and we should be making full use of them.

Liz Twist (Blaydon) (Lab): As chair of the all-party group on suicide and self-harm prevention, I welcome today's online harms paper as a significant step towards protecting the most vulnerable young people, but the proof will be in the implementation, and a major challenge is that much of the damaging content is hosted outside the UK. What will the Government be doing to scale up their plans and to drive forward global change to protect young vulnerable people?

Jeremy Wright: I am grateful to the hon. Lady and, indeed, the APPG for its work. I hope she will have the chance, with her colleagues, to look carefully at what we propose, respond to the consultation and give us her views.

On what the hon. Lady says about some of this content being hosted outside the UK, the important point is that companies that offer services to UK citizens will be within scope of these proposals. There is an enforcement challenge for some of the sanctions we have set out, but it is worth keeping in mind that some 85% or so of the traffic we are concerned about comes through platforms that have a significant corporate presence in the United Kingdom. That does give us a purchase on them, and it is important that we make use of it. I would also say that some of the other sanctions we are considering, including ISP blocking—although it would never be used except in the most extreme circumstances, and it does have technical challenges—would be applicable even to platforms that do not have a corporate presence in the UK.

Richard Graham (Gloucester) (Con): This is a great cross-party cause. I strongly support what the Secretary of State has said about extending the duty of care to social media firms. He will know that, some time ago, I advocated something similar in relation to the extension of the duty of care on teachers and youth workers to those who are coaching or training under-18-year-olds, particularly driving instructors or sports coaches, where there are one-on-one relationships with real child-grooming risks. The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children has now taken this up as part of its "Close the Loophole" campaign. What can my right hon. and learned Friend do about this duty of care issue as well?

Jeremy Wright: That was a brave attempt to stretch the concept of online harms a very long way. I simply say to my hon. Friend that we are working on it.

Mr Speaker: Well, I hope the hon. Gentleman feels that his elasticity has been suitably rewarded.

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): One of the problems is anonymity, because people seem to feel able to write on social media things that they would never think of saying to another person or that they would never write if their name was revealed. Yet I have known instances, for my constituents and for myself personally, when it has taken months and months for the police to be able to get the identity of individuals from the internet companies, even when serious violence has been threatened. When are these companies going to do something about the anonymity, make sure that state actors from elsewhere, such as Russia and China, stop interfering in our political processes in this country, and clean up their act?

Jeremy Wright: On anonymity, as the hon. Gentleman has heard me say and as he recognises, there are powers available; the issue is how quickly they can be used. When we come to consider a duty of care, it seems to me and my colleagues that one of the advantages of the duty of care approach is that it should bring about a change of attitude across a whole range of activities among the online companies. It will no longer be sufficient for online companies to say, "Well, we've met this rule or that rule." Instead, they must demonstrate to a

[Jeremy Wright]

regulator that they are doing all they reasonably can to keep their users safe, and that includes being safe from some of the activities the hon. Gentleman has in mind. I do not promise that any of this will be a magic bullet or that things will be transformed overnight, but I do think that the approach we are setting out will start to change the culture of these companies and start to make them think about how they meet their responsibilities more effectively.

Dr Julian Lewis (New Forest East) (Con): The briefing for this statement mentions, correctly, that all five terrorist attacks in the UK during 2017 had an online element, and online terrorist content remains a feature of contemporary radicalisation. Given that some of these companies have created applications with end-to-end encryption that they claim they cannot get into themselves, let alone the security services being able to get into them, what will these measures do to prevent online harm being done through these inaccessible applications?

Jeremy Wright: My right hon. Friend identifies one of the most troublesome aspects of online harm—that encryption is extraordinarily difficult for us to wrestle with. That is of course because there are advantages to encryption, and we use it all the time in our daily lives, but he is right that those who choose to use it for criminal purposes must also be challenged. In relation to this White Paper, I would say to him that harms at the top end of the seriousness spectrum, including the promotion of terrorism, will receive the greatest possible attention from the regulator, and our expectations from the Government will also be higher, hence the Home Secretary's close interest in the way in which codes of practice are developed, so that online companies are doing their utmost to ensure that this kind of behaviour is challenged.

Ann Coffey (Stockport) (Ind): I thank the Secretary of State for his statement. Catfishing is the theft of a person's identity in order to sexually exploit vulnerable people on social media platforms. Of course we must help people become more resilient in relation to online grooming, but we also need to change the behaviour of those who exploit others. Has the Secretary of State had any discussions with the Home Secretary about making catfishing a criminal offence?

Jeremy Wright: I have had no specific conversation with the Home Secretary on exactly that point, although the hon. Lady will recognise, when she has a chance to look at it, that the White Paper refers specifically to catfishing. If these are offences of fraud and misrepresentation, they may already be on the statute book, so it is worth looking at what the overlaps might be. However, I will take away what she says and make sure we discuss it with our colleagues in the Home Office.

Vicky Ford (Chelmsford) (Con): I thank the Secretary of State for this report. The recommendations are very much in line with the thoughts of the Science and Technology Committee inquiry. I am remembering last November, when 100 women MPs from 100 different countries met in this Chamber, and time and again we heard how the abuse that women politicians get is hampering them in doing their jobs and is a direct

attack on democracy. They were looking to the UK to take global leadership, so I thank the Secretary of State for taking that leadership. Will he confirm that the duty of care is not censorship or curtailing freedom of the press, but that it will help to protect democracy as well as individuals?

Jeremy Wright: Yes, I can confirm that. It is important to repeat that this is a process that we believe is necessary to level the playing field. These are abuses that, if they were happening in any other environment, would be controlled, and it is important that we do the same online. The point my hon. Friend makes about the abuse that female politicians have to endure very much echoes the point made by the hon. Member for Livingston (Hannah Bardell), who speaks for the Scottish National party, and she is right. Of course, it is not just politicians—female journalists and others in public life have to endure the same. It is unacceptable and it must stop.

Stephen Doughty (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op): I am pleased to see that the Secretary of State and the Home Secretary appear to have listened to many of the concerns raised by the Home Affairs Committee, including by me and the Chair, about the failure of social media companies to deal with online extremist and terrorist content. I look forward to action on that, but may I press the Secretary of State further on the integrity of our elections, our referendums and, indeed, our democracy on a day-to-day basis? Particularly in the light of the revelations in *The Guardian* last week about the millions in dark money that is being spent on advertising to influence votes going on at this very moment and to whip up hatred against Members of this House, does he not agree that we need action today, rather than to wait months for that to come?

Jeremy Wright: I certainly hope the hon. Gentleman will not have to wait months. He raises fair concerns, and I have indicated that the Government are not blind to them. This particular White Paper does not deal with that subject, but the Government will produce very shortly a document that does.

Rachel Maclean (Redditch) (Con): Of course, it is not just the tech giants that are active in the digital space; it is also our local papers. The *Redditch Standard* and the *Redditch Advertiser*, for example, do a fantastic job of holding us local politicians to account. Can the Secretary of State confirm that the welcome measures in the White Paper will not affect the ability of our small local papers, which do not have a massive resource base, to do their job?

Jeremy Wright: I can confirm that. We are concerned here with user-generated content, not with the activities of journalists or their editors. I would go further and say that it seems to me that the press—both local and national—and recognised journalists who do a good job of producing authoritative, sourced work are part of the solution, not part of the problem, particularly to the disinformation that has been identified across the House as one of the fundamental harms we are concerned about.

Liz Saville Roberts (Dwyfor Meirionnydd) (PC): I am grateful for advance sight of the statement. I welcome the principles of the White Paper, and particularly the

establishment of a statutory duty of care to users, but I note the proposal for codes of practice that are not compulsory. Is there not a risk that companies will be allowed to fulfil the duty of care as they see fit? How will the effectiveness of the alternative approaches that companies are allowed to take be evaluated, and how will the regulator sanction companies that fail to abide by their own policies?

Jeremy Wright: I think there are two points worth making in response to the right hon. Lady. First, how well the platforms hold to their own terms and conditions may well give the regulator a good indication of how well they are complying with their overarching duty of care. Secondly, she is right that the White Paper envisages that a platform might say to a regulator, “We don’t wish to follow the codes of practice,” but if a platform chooses that path, it must be able to demonstrate to the regulator that the approach it takes instead is at least as effective in dealing with online harms as the codes of practice would have been. Of course, if the platform did not succeed in persuading the regulator that it had done that, the overarching duty of care would continue to apply to it. The duty does not rely on the codes of practice for its ongoing effectiveness.

Mr Marcus Fysh (Yeovil) (Con): Like many families in south Somerset, I have been concerned about what exposure my children might have to various things online, so I welcome the look that is being taken at this issue. What are we going to do to try to stay ahead of new technologies that are able very efficiently to impersonate so that we can take action in advance? Are we looking at revising the legal framework around harassment and malicious communications to take account of that?

Jeremy Wright: The answer to my hon. Friend’s second question is yes. The Law Commission is looking now at exactly how we may refresh the law on online harassment. On his first question, I think he refers to what are commonly described as deepfakes, which are technologically very challenging. As I said earlier, it is important that the process we suggest encourages online platforms to use technology to provide solutions as well as to recognise problems. We expect that, as technology develops to create deepfakes, so should technology develop to help identify them. This duty of care will put the onus on online platforms to do just that.

Mr Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): I welcome the White Paper, but I warn the Secretary of State that he has a big, tough fight on his hands. These people are wealthy, they are well organised and they will fight back. They also have interfaces. I learned about this kind of danger in 2012, when Issenberg wrote “The Victory Lab”. He predicted much of what was going to happen in politics, but at that time the offline was solely influencing the online, so the data manipulation models were coming from financial institutions—particularly the banks. Will the Secretary of State look broadly at what is going on? Yes, some of it is online, but it has real links with data collectors in other sectors.

Jeremy Wright: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his support. He makes a fair point. He is of course right that there will be opposition to what is proposed, but it is worth noting that online companies, including Facebook, have recognised that forms of regulation are

inevitable, and we shall expect them to co-operate in the design of these processes. If they choose not to, they will find that we shall regulate anyway.

Tim Loughton (East Worthing and Shoreham) (Con): Over the past 20 years, the thrust of children’s legislation has been to place a duty on public agencies to co-operate in the protection and safeguarding of vulnerable children, yet no such duty exists for social media companies. In that time, social media companies, using complicated algorithms, have become exceedingly skilful at trying to persuade me that I need to buy essential products that I never knew I could not live without. Will the duty of care require those companies proactively to use algorithms and artificial intelligence not only to block harmful sites in the first place, but to flag up vulnerable users who search for terms such as “kill myself” and clearly harmful websites so they are detected and helped?

Jeremy Wright: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He is right that we should be particularly concerned with the most vulnerable in our society—especially children. The way we envisage the duty of care operating is that online companies should do all they reasonably can to keep their users safe. The greater the user’s vulnerability, the more care they should take to do so. It follows that, in relation to children who may be using those services—of course, this will apply particularly to services that are attractive to children—there will be a greater onus on those responsible to act. We want to see a regulator pay close attention to what has been done—proactively, not simply reactively—to ensure that that harm can be avoided, whether by the use of algorithms or by other methods. The onus will be very clearly on those who provide the service to satisfy the regulator that they are doing all they can. If they are not, the consequences I described earlier can follow.

Debbie Abrahams (Oldham East and Saddleworth) (Lab): I, too, congratulate the Secretary of State on bringing forward the White Paper. It is certainly a step in the right direction. However, I echo the disappointment that a number of my colleagues have expressed about its relationship with the electoral reform process, and particularly the issue of political disinformation, which is penetrating social media so avidly. The Secretary of State mentioned that cultural change is needed. Does he have a sense of optimism about that from his conversations and dealings with social media platforms? If his optimism is limited, what pressure does he hope to apply with international partners?

Jeremy Wright: The straight answer to the hon. Lady’s question about my level of optimism is that it is limited but it exists. It is probably necessary for us all to recognise that the online companies are making progress in the right direction, but not fast enough. We need to take action ourselves to ensure that the proper protections are in place for our citizens. As she says, we need a cultural change. We in the United Kingdom have every reason to act first and to be proud of doing so, but we must ensure—we certainly intend to do so—that we explain to our international colleagues the way we are approaching this, in the expectation and hope that, as they face similar challenges, they will want to take note of the way we have approached these subjects and approach them in a very similar way. I reassure her that the international conversation will continue.

Henry Smith (Crawley) (Con): As a parent, I of course want my children to be safe on the web, but as a civil libertarian, I want to ensure free speech. The Secretary of State spoke about the need to be sceptical and about challenging the perceived truth. People do not trust Governments, for very good reasons. With 194 other jurisdictions around the world, how does he envisage that important balance being struck through this White Paper?

Jeremy Wright: I agree with my hon. Friend that that is indeed the balance to be struck. I hope that I can reassure him that it is our intention to do so and that we believe that free speech and safety online are not mutually exclusive. We can do both; we must do both. That is what the White Paper intends to do. As he says, it simply would not be right for Government to seek to determine the answers to the questions that we are concerned with. There must be an independent regulator to do so. It must be properly funded and must be properly robust in the opportunities that it has to hold online companies to account.

Chi Onwurah (Newcastle upon Tyne Central) (Lab): Having spent 20 years in the tech industry, I can say categorically that the harms that the White Paper begins to address were well identified five or even 10 years ago, but it does nothing to address the growing harms associated with algorithms, artificial intelligence, the internet of things and data dominance. The Secretary of State says that other Departments or consultations will address them but, like the world we live in, those harms are all interconnected. Why is the Secretary of State allowing a piecemeal, ad hoc and at times knee-jerk legislative framework to develop, when what we need is a comprehensive, cross-departmental, evidence-based, forward-looking review of digital rights and responsibilities, so that we can have a regulatory framework fit for the future?

Jeremy Wright: I do not wish to damage the atmosphere of consensus that has helpfully emerged this afternoon, but I have to say that I think that the hon. Lady is completely wrong. What we have set out is exactly designed to deal with the problem that she has identified: that if we are reactive—if we chase harms that emerged some time ago and do not think about harms that are yet to emerge—we will indeed miss the point. However, that is exactly what a duty of care is designed to do. Those who are subject to a duty of care will be obliged not just to look at the harms that they already know about, but to scan the horizon. If they see a harm coming and choose to do nothing about it, they will be answerable for that failure. That is exactly one of the advantages of the duty of care model.

Nigel Huddleston (Mid Worcestershire) (Con): May I congratulate the Secretary of State, the digital Minister and all stakeholders on the development of an excellent White Paper? Not surprisingly, already there have been some criticisms of the potential impact on freedom of speech, but does the Secretary of State agree that there is a world of difference between online banter and abuse and harassment, between expressing an opinion and promulgating disinformation, and between expressing a belief and spreading hatred and terrorist propaganda? In order to ensure that everyone understands those

differences, in particular our children, will some of the money raised through a digital levy or similar be used to finance education and awareness?

Jeremy Wright: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for what he says and, if I may say so, his help and his contribution during his time in the Department. I am privileged to lead in developing this piece of work; he deserves a share of the credit too, and he is right. This is not a challenge to freedom of speech. As we were discussing earlier, if we do not make the online environment safer for everyone, whoever they are, we will be damaging freedom of speech, not enhancing it. It is important that we all recognise that this is a proposal to apply the same levels of activity, control and restriction to the online world that already exist everywhere else. Our freedom of speech thrives well in this place and elsewhere within the confines of the law. The same will be true online.

In relation to my hon. Friend's point about education and how it might be funded, it will of course be open to the regulator—we will encourage it to consider this—to spend some of its revenue on education, which we think is a key component of the White Paper.

Thangam Debbonaire (Bristol West) (Lab): A vast number and variety of forms of behaviour that are quite properly illegal offline are entirely legal or unregulated online, which effectively makes parts of the internet a kind of lawless wild west, from fake cures for cancer to fake news and the bots that make it, and from harvesting of personal data to its unfettered exploitation for commercial gain. Does the Secretary of State agree that the entire online world needs a thorough review and is well overdue for regulation, so that it is put on a sure legal footing to take us into the future? Will he commit to looking at the full range of online harms?

Jeremy Wright: The hon. Lady will see that there is a fairly extensive list of online harms in the White Paper already, and we do not regard it as exhaustive. As she heard me say to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne Central (Chi Onwurah), we think it is important that the process should be able to deal with new harms as they emerge. However, she will recognise that it is important to ensure that we preserve what is good and special about the internet—the capacity for people to come up with new ideas, to have discussion and to have a free flow and exchange—while ensuring that the harms that she rightly points to are controlled. That is exactly what the White Paper seeks to do. We do not, as I have said, believe that everything in it will yet be perfect, but it is important that she and others contribute to the process over the next period of consultation and make it better.

James Cartlidge (South Suffolk) (Con): I very much welcome the statement, but returning to the earlier question from my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Mr Duncan Smith), does the Secretary of State accept that if we are not clear about the extent to which the new duty of care impacts on the issue of publisher versus platform, the courts will make that interpretation for us?

Jeremy Wright: Harking back to a former life, in my experience there is always a risk of court involvement, but we should seek to be as clear as possible about the

responsibilities of online companies. Whatever we choose to call them—platform, publisher or something else—it is their responsibilities and what they are engaged in doing that matter. That is what we are seeking to achieve, and once we have defined that with clarity, the necessary powers will need to be available to a regulator to deal with when that does not happen.

Dr Roberta Blackman-Woods (City of Durham) (Lab): This is an important White Paper; greater online regulation is long overdue. As the Secretary of State said, over 8,000 sexual offences against children with an online element were reported in 2017, and the tragic massacre in New Zealand showed just how quickly illegal, terrorist and extreme content can spread, so is publication by the Home Office of interim codes of practice for terrorist content and online abuse later this year soon enough or strong enough?

Jeremy Wright: We think it is important to get those codes of practice right; therefore, it would not be feasible to produce them overnight. However, the hon. Lady makes a fair point, which is that we should not be waiting for these measures to be taken to see an improvement in the behaviour of online platforms. Online companies will be able to see the nature of the regulation that will come—they will also hear from this Chamber the support that exists for this kind of approach—so they will need to start to change their behaviour now. That is because when a regulator starts its work, it will want to know not just whether the online company has behaved itself for a week but for how long it has had in place the practices and procedures that we and the regulator will expect to show that it is doing its best to keep its users safe from harm.

Alison Thewliss (Glasgow Central) (SNP): Mandy Rose Jones, who founded the Empowered Woman Project, has been campaigning against online advertising of harmful rapid weight loss products, which are often given legitimacy when they are endorsed by celebrities and Instagram influencers. Will that be covered by the UK Government's proposals?

Jeremy Wright: The hon. Lady will recognise that there are a number of ways in which we might approach the problem that she describes, but the process that we are looking at relates to user-generated content, not necessarily commercial activities. I will have a look at what she says and perhaps write to her about how we might expect the White Paper to help.

Stephen Timms (East Ham) (Lab): The Offensive Weapons Public Bill Committee heard that some weapons that cannot lawfully be sold in the UK can readily be bought online on platforms such as eBay and Amazon. The Minister, in answering that debate, referred to the forthcoming White Paper. How will the proposals tackle this particular online harm?

Jeremy Wright: The right hon. Gentleman will see among the list of harms exactly this type of activity. It is important that we place the obligation on those who operate online platforms to take their responsibilities seriously. I stress that we are predominantly interested in user-generated content, not so much the sales platforms, but he will see what is said in the White Paper. We will

be grateful for his input on where he thinks we might develop ideas. I hope he will choose to respond to the consultation accordingly.

Emma Hardy (Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle) (Lab): The Secretary of State might be aware that I have been meeting the Minister for suicide prevention, the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, the hon. Member for Thurrock (Jackie Doyle-Price), to discuss my deep concern and upset over the rising number of suicides in my constituency. Just last week, there were thousands of posts under the hashtag “suicide” on Instagram. What can the White Paper do to address that?

Jeremy Wright: The hon. Lady makes a very important point. She will see in the White Paper that we think the prohibition of material that promotes suicide is exactly something that the online platforms should concern themselves with. They need to think why it is that in some cases when people enter certain search terms what comes up is material promoting suicide, rather than advice and guidance on what could be done to help. That is exactly the kind of action we will expect online companies to take. If they do not, it will be hard for them to persuade the regulator that they are doing all they reasonably can to keep their users safe.

Mr Paul Sweeney (Glasgow North East) (Lab/Co-op): My hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Chris Bryant) made a very important point about the damaging effect anonymity and pseudonyms can have on social media platforms, particularly social media monopolies such as Twitter and Facebook. However, the Secretary of State was quite vague in his response and seemed to hope more than expect that their policies might change. What consultations has he had with the police on how policies and enforcement need to change to tackle the damage caused by anonymous trolls effectively and efficiently?

Jeremy Wright: There is no vagueness here. We know what we are dealing with, and both the hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Rhondda (Chris Bryant) have identified the issue. It is not a lack of powers; it is how quickly those powers can be used. I can assure him that the Government are already in conversation with the law enforcement authorities and the online platforms about how that can be done more quickly.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: A short while ago the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire (Pete Wishart) was keen to favour the House with his dulcet tones. Has he lost the appetite? We want to hear from the fella. [*Interruption.*] I call Jim Shannon.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I thank the Secretary of State for his statement and for his personal commitment to change, which is very obvious to this House. The number of children contacting ChildLine in the past year rose by 30%, due in large part to anxiety caused by cyber-bullying and the pressure of social media. Does the Secretary of State agree that we need to target this specific area of online harm, and how does he intend to do that?

Jeremy Wright: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman because he gives me a chance to pay tribute to ChildLine. I was at its London centre last week. Those who volunteer

[Jeremy Wright]

and those who work for it professionally do remarkable work to help our young people deal with some of the challenges of our modern existence. He is right that cyber-bullying is particularly pernicious; it does not go away and it happens to young people whether they are at school or not. It is having a serious effect on their mental health. I hope that he will see in the White Paper, and what will follow it, a clear commitment to say to online platforms that they must do all they can to protect users from this kind of abuse. We do not expect anything unreasonable and we do not expect anything impossible, but where they can address this issue they must.

Mrs Madeleine Moon (Bridgend) (Lab): Last week, the Minister for Security and Economic Crime informed the Defence Committee that 43% of the terrorist threat in the UK currently comes from far-right groups who find each other on the internet and meet in enclosed chat rooms in encrypted space. They then come on to the internet to spread fear and intimidation among people who are tackling and pushing back against their activities. Will the Secretary of State talk to the Security Minister to ensure that the proposed legislation is able to deal with the threat from the far right?

Jeremy Wright: The security Minister and I have discussed the White Paper and we will do so again in view of the hon. Lady's specific comments.

Justin Madders (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab): This is as much about morality as it is about technology. As the digital and physical worlds get ever closer and more blurred, it is important that we have consistency right across the board. I am sure we can all agree that the vast majority of issues we are talking about should have no place online or in the real world, but what about the issues on which there is a difference of opinion? Who will be the arbiter, and what role will this place have in discussing whether the threshold of harm has been met?

Jeremy Wright: I hope this House will have a role not just in holding the regulator to account but in the design of codes of practice. We will consult on, among other things, how that might be done. We look forward to the hon. Gentleman's contribution to that process. It is of course worth saying—the hon. Gentleman and others have expressed a concern—how judgments on individual pieces of content might be made. It is much more likely, in my view, that the regulator will be deciding whether or not the systems that an online platform puts in place are adequate or not in protecting their users from harm, than it is that the online regulator will be making a judgment on individual pieces of content. One only has to think about the sheer volume of material being considered to realise how impractical it would be for the online regulator to decide in each and every instance. So this is really about whether online companies have in place systems to keep their users safe in the majority of cases. The regulator will have to determine that when it looks into the matter and speaks to online companies individually.

Daniel Zeichner (Cambridge) (Lab): The Secretary of State mentioned the Furman review earlier. The White Paper references it, but does not take a view on some of

its recommendations. Does the Secretary of State agree that getting more control for individuals over their personal data, so that they control where it is stored, would alter the balance of power between individuals and tech companies? That would have a range of benefits, including tackling internet harms.

Jeremy Wright: The hon. Gentleman will recognise, because he is a fair man, that the Furman review was produced only in the past few weeks, and it is important that the Government take the time to look properly at its conclusions. He is right, however, that one of the significant aspects that Professor Furman and his panel picked up on was the potential advantage of users having more control over their data and the impact that that might have on the competition questions he was concerning himself with. The hon. Gentleman has my assurance that we will look carefully at the recommendations and respond to them fully.

Dr Lisa Cameron (East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow) (SNP): I thank the Secretary of State for an excellent White Paper. I am extremely pleased that a regulator will be taking things forward. Only last week, an individual pled guilty to sending me threatening messages which have had a grave impact on me and my family. What became difficult was understanding the extent of the abuse, because a victim is blocked very quickly and pages are closed down. What more can be done to allow the police to access closed pages and blocked accounts?

Jeremy Wright: I am very sorry to hear about what has happened to the hon. Lady. As she knows and as others have said, she is sadly not alone. It is important that we consider what online platforms can do. As I have said, closed groups and encrypted communications are a particular challenge. None the less, we think that online companies should do everything they can, with the restrictions that apply to encrypted communications, to keep their users as safe as they possibly can. The regulator will be entitled to ask, as it is entitled to ask in relation to other matters, whether the platform really is doing everything it could. If it is not, there will be consequences.

Ronnie Cowan (Inverclyde) (SNP): I was delighted when I got to page 26 of the White Paper to read the phrase “designed addiction”. My heart sank, however, when I got to “future action” and it talked about setting: “the right expectations of companies to design their products in safe ways”

and to

“set clear expectations for companies to prevent harm to their users.”

If we have recognised designed addiction, has the time not come to legislate and stop those companies?

Jeremy Wright: When I visited the west coast to discuss these matters with a number of online companies, I had the privilege of meeting the inventor of the infinite scroll. He was, I am pleased to report, suitably apologetic. The hon. Gentleman is right. There are a certain number of technological responses that we might expect online platforms to adopt to deal with some of the harms we will expect them to tackle. As I have said, that will be a significant part of what the regulator should do to encourage those technological developments and ensure they are widely implemented.

Chris Elmore (Ogmore) (Lab): I welcome the Secretary of State's paper; I would argue that it is long overdue. He may be aware that last week, and three weeks ago, I launched a report by the all-party parliamentary group on social media and young people's mental health and wellbeing. The report was about social media and its impact on young people. Many of its recommendations are in the White Paper, and I genuinely welcome that. One that is not is a 0.5% levy on social media companies' profits, which could go into a social media health alliance. One thing that we heard during our inquiry from clinicians and young people was that we needed far more research into the impact of social media on mental health. Many individual areas of research need to be collated so that we can educate, inform and protect our young people as technology advances.

Jeremy Wright: I agree, and I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his work and that of his colleagues. I hope that the House recognises that within the White Paper there are contributions from a large number of Members of the House. That is as it should be, because this is a shared challenge that we must address together. I agree with the hon. Gentleman on research. It is important that we understand these problems properly, and we will do all that we can to encourage that research to take place.

Ian Paisley (North Antrim) (DUP): On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: We will come to points of order in due course. I await the hon. Gentleman's point of order with eager anticipation, as will the House.

Business of the House

6.41 pm

The Leader of the House of Commons (Andrea Leadsom): I should like to inform the House that in the event that the European Union (Withdrawal) (No. 5) Bill receives Royal Assent today, the House may be expected to approve a motion relating to section 1 of the Bill to seek an extension of the period specified in article 50(3) of the treaty on European Union. I will make further business statements as necessary this week at the earliest opportunity.

Valerie Vaz (Walsall South) (Lab): I thank the Leader of the House for advance sight of the statement. I have four quick questions. When is the motion likely to be tabled? How long will the Government give for the debate? Will the Government support the European Union (Withdrawal) (No. 5) Bill? If so, will it definitely receive Royal Assent tonight?

Andrea Leadsom: The motion will be tabled later this evening. As the hon. Lady will be aware, if Lords amendments come back, the House will consider them later this evening, in line with the Bill. If the debate is brought forward tomorrow—that is subject to the Bill receiving Royal Assent tonight—it is not intended that the motion will be with a business of the House motion. Therefore, as a proceeding under an Act, the debate would be subject to the provisions of Standing Order No. 16, so the debate will last for 90 minutes.

Sir William Cash (Stone) (Con): Will the Leader of the House confirm that the Bill currently going through the House of Lords is the biggest dog's dinner of any Bill we have seen in recent times? Are the Government opposed to the Bill? Will they do everything to defeat it?

Andrea Leadsom: I entirely agree that it is a huge dog's dinner. As I mentioned to colleagues when we were looking at the business of the House motion, the European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Act 2017—the Act to trigger article 50—had two clauses, containing only 58 words. It was debated for five full days in this Chamber. It seems inconceivable that Parliament looked at this Bill for the first time last Tuesday and has had just a few hours of debate across both Houses.

Pete Wishart (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): It is not so much a dog's dinner as a dog's Brexit. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] Come on, that was all right. The Government are simply managing this on a day-to-day, crisis management basis. No one has a clue what the business will look like tomorrow afternoon, far less what it will look like at the end of the week. All strength to the guys in ermine down the corridor, who have stuck diligently to the task and managed to get the Bill through their House. They are currently adjourned for pleasure—I am certain they will be enjoying that pleasure—but they will get back to dealing with the Bill, and the Government will be obliged to come back tomorrow within the strictures of the Bill that has been passed by this House and will be passed by the House of Lords.

I have a couple of questions. Will debate of the motion take precedence over all Government business tomorrow? Why is only one and a half hours given for consideration, given that there are likely to be a number of amendments coming back from the House of Lords?

[Pete Wishart]

Will the Leader of the House take this opportunity to remind all her right hon. and hon. Friends on the Back Benches that there is no more opportunity to vote down the Bill; all we can consider is amendments put to us by the House of Lords?

Will the Leader of the House say something about what will happen for the rest of the week? For example, will we sit on Friday? Will we have indicative votes at some point this week? Will we hear about what has been compiled by this Labour-Tory Brexit blame sharing? Will we hear anything on any of those issues in the next few days? Can we get to some semblance of how we do business in the House? This really is a dog's Brexit.

Andrea Leadsom: I fear that the hon. Gentleman might be insulting me somewhat as a keen Brexiteer. He is not being consistent, because he usually likes to stand there and insult the other place, talking about how the Lords should be gone, abolished and reduced, yet now, because they are giving him the answer he wants, he is praising them. That is not consistent. It is rather like his approach to referendums: he ignores those he does not like and insists on upholding those he does.

The hon. Gentleman asks whether the motion relating to the Bill currently in the other place would take precedence tomorrow over other business. I sincerely expect not. He asks about the rest of the week. He knows that I have already announced that business, and I have also made it clear that whether we need to sit on Friday will be a decision to make once we see the results of the European Council. I will always seek to give the House as much notice as possible.

Mr Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford and Woodford Green) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that at all stages we will continue to oppose the Bill and that the Government oppose any amendments in process? Does she not agree that there is a distinct irony in that the other place has spent what is now two days debating the Bill while we ended up with a tiny amount of time and did not even debate Report or Third Reading? That is a travesty for the Chamber that is meant to be the democratic Chamber, with the other one the unelected Chamber.

Andrea Leadsom: My right hon. Friend is exactly right that it should be for this House to make key decisions, yet here we have the unelected House making play with the Bill, which is absolutely unconventional for the procedures of this Parliament. Despite the Government's grave misgivings about this legislation, for all the reasons we set out in the debate, we will not prevent the Bill being presented for Royal Assent, should it pass both Houses.

It is a well-established convention that the Government have the ability to seek and negotiate international agreements, so the Government will support one amendment in the other place: the royal prerogative amendment. There may be one or two others that seek to ensure that the prerogative is maintained as far as possible.

Ian Mearns (Gateshead) (Lab): This is the first opportunity I have had to raise this, Mr Speaker, but I did let the Leader of the House know. Last Thursday, in exceptional circumstances, the House was forced to

adjourn early, so the debate on the 2019 loan charge, after 16 speakers and 2 hours and 40 minutes of debate, was not afforded a ministerial response. Given the unprecedented circumstances, can we find some way to rectify that position and get a proper ministerial response, please?

Andrea Leadsom: The hon. Gentleman is right to raise that issue. I fear the House was a bit jealous of all the Cabinet leaks and decided to have one of its own. It was rather a big problem for the House, and the debate had to be adjourned. I have already spoken to my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, who is very much looking forward to the resumption of that debate and making his points as well as facilitating those of the Opposition spokesperson. I will announce that as soon as possible.

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con): Why the undue haste? Why are the Government conceding the Bill that they do not want before they have even had the amendments or the votes? Why have they not dug in over the need for a money resolution? It will be enormously expensive to delay the exit from the European Union, given the very high taxes that it imposes on us. Surely the Leader of the House should dig in on that and insist that the normal procedures apply.

Andrea Leadsom: My right hon. Friend is exactly right that if passed the Bill would place a severe constraint on the Government's ability to negotiate an extension and reflect the new date in the UK statute book before 12 April. The Government do not accept that the Bill is necessary and deeply regret that the House has taken it upon itself to introduce a Bill that has not had the proper preparation, scrutiny or drafting. It is of grave regret to the Government; none the less, the Government will abide by the law at all times.

Helen Goodman (Bishop Auckland) (Lab): Just to clarify precisely what the position of the Leader of the House is, is she saying that the Government do not intend to disagree with the amendment that was put forward in the other place by the former Lord Chief Justice?

Andrea Leadsom: The hon. Lady will have to forgive me: I am not sure which amendment she is referring to and therefore, I cannot answer that question on behalf of the Government at this moment.

Mr Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con): Will the Leader of the House explain why Her Majesty is being drawn into this matter by being asked to give Royal Assent immediately? Normally, Royal Assent is done at Her Majesty's pleasure. It seems to me wholly inappropriate to be forcing Her Majesty into a political position.

Andrea Leadsom: In raising that matter, my hon. Friend is inviting me to involve the monarchy in this question, and I am afraid that it is not something I am prepared to do, other than to say that Royal Assent is given at the convenience of Her Majesty.

Tom Brake (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD): May I press the Leader of the House on indicative votes? When will we be able to have them, and will they include the option of linking the Prime Minister's deal to a people's vote?

Andrea Leadsom: As the right hon. Gentleman knows, the Prime Minister has said that she is seeking agreement with an approach that the whole House can support as a way to ensure that we leave the European Union in very short order. However, if the talks that are under way now do not lead to a single, unified approach very soon, the Government will instead look to establish a consensus on a small number of clear options on the future relationship that could be put to the House in a series of votes.

Sir Peter Bottomley (Worthing West) (Con): Following the point made by the Chair of the Backbench Business Committee, the hon. Member for Gateshead (Ian Mearns), as the loan charge debate was concluded prematurely, is there a procedural question that might be considered by the Leader of the House, and perhaps by you, Mr Speaker, as to whether if House business collapses or ends earlier than expected, a proposed Government motion for business the following working day might be considered at the usual time? We anticipated Government motions and business coming forward late on Friday. It could not happen and I think we ought to have a procedure under which it could.

Andrea Leadsom: I am always keen to look very carefully at proposals made by hon. Members across the House and I will certainly take away my hon. Friend's suggestion. However, what I have discussed with you, Mr Speaker, and my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury is that we intend to bring the debate back for resumption. I hope that those who had already spoken in the debate would attend and those who were waiting to speak in it may have the opportunity to do so. Importantly, the Government and Opposition spokespeople will then be able to respond, hopefully giving some closure on that debate to the many people in the country who are very concerned about the matter.

Kevin Brennan (Cardiff West) (Lab): The House of Lords has completed the Committee stage of the Bill and all the amendments carried at the Committee stage in the Lords have been supported by the Government Minister there. Will the right hon. Lady confirm, as the Leader of the House and a Cabinet Minister here in the Commons, that when the amendments come back down the corridor to us later, the Government will follow on from what happened in the Lords and support those amendment?

Andrea Leadsom: The hon. Gentleman will know that whipping is a matter for the Whips, and I am not prepared to confirm from the Dispatch Box exactly how Government Members will be voting.

Greg Hands (Chelsea and Fulham) (Con): Rumours abound of an ill-advised customs union-based Brexit in talks with the Opposition. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the House would need time to debate the merits and demerits of a customs union in some detail, and is she personally still opposed to a customs union with the European Union?

Andrea Leadsom: What I can say to my right hon. Friend is that any discussion of a new and different proposal would need to come before the House for

careful discussion and consideration. In answer to the second part of his question, I am absolutely opposed to remaining in the European Union's customs union, but if we are to leave the EU in very short order, I think we need to be flexible and find a way forward that the whole House can support.

Alan Brown (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): The Leader of the House continues to complain about the Bill, but the bottom line is that the Bill reflects the will of the House and the will of the other place. Is that parliamentary process not far more important than MPs having to turn on the TV to hear the Prime Minister's latest formulations on what she is thinking, instead of her coming to the Dispatch Box?

Andrea Leadsom: The hon. Gentleman is not correct that I complain about the Bill. I fundamentally object to it on the grounds that it is totally unconventional for this House. When people vote for a Government at the polling booths, the Government go to form that Government as Her Majesty's Government, and then it is the convention that the Government propose the business, and Parliament scrutinises it, and may amend or reject it. What does not happen—normally, for many, many years—is that those who did not win that general election, who do not form a Government and who do not have the confidence of this House should be putting forward any legislation, and particularly legislation with such significant constitutional implications as this Bill.

Mr Jonathan Djanogly (Huntingdon) (Con): I very much support the realistic and pragmatic position currently being taken by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, but I was looking at her letter to President Tusk of 5 April in which she requested an article 50 extension to 30 June. In the letter she said that if she cannot get an agreement with the Opposition, "a series of votes" will be put to establish a position, but clearly that in itself will require the Opposition's support, so could we say that not getting a deal with the Opposition will probably lead to a long delay to article 50?

Andrea Leadsom: We have to consider this step by step. The Prime Minister has said that she wants to seek a way forward that the whole House can support. If that is not possible, she intends to come forward with a small number of options for the House to consider to seek another and perhaps slightly different way forward. It remains our intention to leave the European Union with a deal that both means we leave in line with the decision of the referendum in 2016, and protects our economy, jobs and our security.

Joan Ryan (Enfield North) (Ind): I am very disappointed to hear the tone that the Leader of the House is taking. I think it absolutely demonstrates why we have such a problem here. She fails to acknowledge that the Government have no majority, have not managed to carry this House, do not have the confidence of this House, have spent a great deal of time on anything but the business that we need to deal with, and have been absolutely intransigent. If Members think about the public out there watching this and listening to those responses, which basically seem to condemn this House and the responsible action it has taken, they will see that the public could well hold this House in contempt of our nation if it did not take

[Joan Ryan]

the action it has taken as we face this national crisis. This House is sovereign, and the Government seem to reject that notion at every point and turn.

Andrea Leadsom: I am sorry to say to the right hon. Lady that what she has said is not correct. This Government do have the confidence of the House. They are Her Majesty's Government, and, should the House feel that it does not have confidence in Her Majesty's Government, it should, of course, table a no-confidence motion. It did attempt to do that, and it lost, so—as a matter of fact—this Government do have the confidence of the House.

Let me also say that the Government have, at all times, sought to find a deal that would honour the referendum that was held in 2016 and enable the United Kingdom to leave the European Union in a way that would ensure that we met the will of the people, but would at the same time protect our economy and our security. That is what the Government have sought to do, but what Parliament has then done is reject every attempt to secure a good deal that works for the whole United Kingdom. I am always keen to hear from Members, but it is a fact that this Government carry the confidence of the House, and that Parliament has failed to support the will of the people as expressed in the referendum in 2016.

Richard Drax (South Dorset) (Con): This is an abomination of a Bill. It is not a question of what Members of this House should be saying; it is a question of what should be said by the people of this country, to whom we swore that we would leave after two years—and we are not. The Leader of the House now seems to be saying that she is pursuing a soft Brexit. I understand that we are still due to leave on 12 April, this Friday. Would it not be ironic if it were the EU that threw us out, rather than our fulfilling our honourable duty?

Andrea Leadsom: My hon. Friend is correct: the legal date for us to leave the European Union is indeed this Friday, 12 April. However, he will also be aware that the Bill that is currently being discussed in the other place seeks to change the date of our departure, and that is the substance of the motion that will be discussed tomorrow should the Bill receive Royal Assent tonight.

Sammy Wilson (East Antrim) (DUP): Rather than the Government's being condemned for being in contempt of the view of the House, should not the House recognise that, in passing the Bill, it is in contempt of the views of the vast majority of people in this country, because they voted to leave? The Bill seeks to undermine the UK's ability to leave the European Union. The Leader of the House should not hang her head in shame for being disdainful to the House of Commons, because she is right to say that the Bill is a constitutional outrage, and also a democratic outrage.

Andrea Leadsom: The right hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. Not only is the Bill against our conventions, but it seeks to subvert the will of the people as expressed in the referendum in 2016. That is a great shame, and it does not do credit to this House.

Dr Julian Lewis (New Forest East) (Con): Instead of trying to do a Ramsay MacDonald in reverse, why does the Prime Minister not just let this country leave the EU on time, at 11 pm on Friday?

Andrea Leadsom: My right hon. Friend will be aware that the Bill that is currently being discussed in the other place seeks to put into law a different date, and to ensure that it is not possible for the United Kingdom to leave the European Union at 11 pm this Friday. That is the fundamental problem that we have before us: the Bill seeks to change the outcome of the referendum by ensuring that the United Kingdom cannot leave the European Union.

Mr Jim Cunningham (Coventry South) (Lab): May I remind the Leader of the House that the Government lost their majority at the last election, and are a minority Government supported by a minority party? May I also say to her, with respect, that she should give a straight answer to the question about the Lords amendments, and tell the House which of them she is prepared to support? Let me remind her once again that, through its own amendments, the House has been trying to help the Government to achieve article 50, contrary to what the Government think.

Andrea Leadsom: I can only say to the hon. Gentleman that when the other House finishes its consideration of the Bill, it will come back to this place for further consideration later this evening, and it will then become apparent how all Members vote on amendments made in the other place.

Mr Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con): A majority of my constituents want us to leave the European Union this Friday. Presumably the best way to represent their wishes would be to vote against any extension proposed by the Government.

Andrea Leadsom: My hon. Friend will, of course, decide how he, as an individual Member of Parliament, wishes to vote. However, let me say again to all Members that the proposal that the Prime Minister negotiated with the European Union over two and a half years seeks to deliver on leaving the European Union while at the same time protecting our economy, protecting jobs and protecting our security relationship with the EU, and I urge them to continue to consider considering it as the right way to leave the EU with a deal.

Patricia Gibson (North Ayrshire and Arran) (SNP): May I pursue what was said by the Leader of the House to my hon. Friend the Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Alan Brown)? She is clearly unhappy about the Bill. Can she not see that it is owing to the Government's complete mismanagement of the entire Brexit process that the House has wrested control from them by means of the Bill? Will she acknowledge that her party lacks a majority in the House not just because her party is so divided, but because the people of the UK have decided that they do not want the Government to have full control of this process?

Andrea Leadsom: The hon. Lady seems to suggest that the ends justify the means. I would never support the introduction of a Bill of this type by the House. If a

Bill of such constitutional significance were introduced by the Government, it would be subjected to extensive consideration. That would include consideration by the Parliamentary Business and Legislation Committee, which consists of business managers, law officers, territorial Ministers and others. The Committee would test the policy and the handling plans, ensuring good engagement with Members on both sides of the House.

There is a private Member's Bill procedure, which is what the Bill's promoters have sought to use. According to that procedure, the Bill would normally be considered on a sitting Friday, and the process would take place slowly, enabling the Government to check for drafting problems and enabling all colleagues to consult on whether they believe that the outcome would be right. This Bill—following a couple of hours of debate, and with very poor drafting and a great degree of urgency—seeks to challenge the result of the referendum that was held in June 2016. That simply cannot support the hon. Lady's apparent suggestion that the end justifies the means.

Mr Simon Clarke (Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland) (Con): I echo my right hon. Friend's comments about the abomination that is this Bill. Let me put it on record that many of us switched our position on meaningful vote 3 to support the Government. That was the limit of our tolerance. We bent over backwards to try to get a deal through the House. I will simply be unable to support the Government if they propose a customs union. Can my right hon. Friend confirm my understanding that that would mean that we would have no independent trade policy, and that it would in fact be Brexit in name only?

Andrea Leadsom: What I can say to my hon. Friend is that the Government intend this country to be able to have its own free trade policy once we have left the European Union. That discussion continues to take place, and I hope we will find a solution that my hon. Friend, and other Members on both sides of the House, will be able to support.

Mr Marcus Fysh (Yeovil) (Con): Does the Leader of the House think that the Government, the Opposition or the House understand that a customs union is not a state of frictionless trade? Does she not think that, if that is proposed, we should make time in this place to ensure that there can be that understanding?

Andrea Leadsom: My hon. Friend has made a good point. I can assure him that if an arrangement can be reached that appears to be able to command a majority in the House, there will be plenty of time for discussion of it.

Points of Order

7.9 pm

Dr Rupa Huq (Ealing Central and Acton) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Have you had any indication of whether any Minister from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is planning to come to the House to make a statement about the seven new members of its Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group who have been appointed? News of the appointment tumbled out on the Twitter account of Lord Bourne, the faith Minister. There is widespread disappointment that only one of those people is a woman, bringing the total to two out of 11. However, one particular individual, Karim Sacoor, was filmed and photographed in the 2015 general election aggressively manhandling me for having the temerity to go up and speak to the then Mayor of London, now the right hon. Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Boris Johnson). I am usually overjoyed at the success of my constituents on the national stage, and I understand the rough and tumble of politics, but is it really appropriate to appoint an individual who thinks it is okay to push and shove Muslim women to a body that wants to tackle Islamophobia? Can you advise me how to make my disappointment known to those on the Treasury Bench?

Mr Speaker: First, I think the hon. Lady has found her own salvation in that respect, because she has registered her discontent very eloquently, and it will be in the *Official Report*. Before I respond further, and I do not need to respond very much, might I just as a precaution establish, although I am reasonably confident of the answer, that there are no active criminal proceedings in the matter to which she refers?

Dr Huq: No, I did not take any action.

Mr Speaker: Very good.

I am most grateful to the hon. Lady for giving me advance notice of her intended, and dare I say attempted, point of order. She does refer to a disturbing matter, but I have to say that it is not a matter of parliamentary procedure on which I can give a ruling. She has, as I have just said, put her concerns on the record. They will have been heard on the Treasury Bench and, indeed, they will doubtless soon be heard by the wider public. The Clerks in the Table Office will also be able to advise the hon. Lady on any further options she might have if she wishes further to pursue the matter. On the question of the appropriateness of the appointment, I would not presume to comment.

Ian Paisley (North Antrim) (DUP): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Was the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport able to advise you in advance of tabling his White Paper today of how he intends to give territorial effect to it, given that it requires the support of the legislative Assembly in Northern Ireland if we need any law enforcement activities or educational procedures associated with it? The National Crime Agency was clearly delayed in its operation in Northern Ireland for the same reason. We are now potentially going to see the very good provisions that have been outlined today delayed in their operation in Northern Ireland. Can you let Ministers know that it is no longer appropriate for them to table measures that

[*Ian Paisley*]

will have effect in Northern Ireland when there is no power to give them effect there? Can we resolve this issue urgently?

Mr Speaker: What I would say to the hon. Gentleman, to whom I am grateful for his point of order, is that I have been somewhat blindsided on the matter, in that I was not aware of his intention to raise it, about which I make no complaint—it is obviously a matter of earnest preoccupation to him. However, what I mean is that I have not had the chance to take advice, and I am not sure what the appropriate response would be.

What I would say off the top of my head is that, in light of the very genuine concern the hon. Gentleman has expressed, I should have thought that it would be fitting and potentially helpful if the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport were to speak to the hon. Gentleman about this matter and, dare I say, perhaps also to consult the right hon. Member for Belfast North (Nigel Dodds), who leads his party in this place, in the hope of brokering a solution, which will bring a smile to the face of the hon. Gentleman.

Martin Whitfield (East Lothian) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. On 26 March, I submitted two written questions to the Department for Work and Pensions relating to the number of universal credit work capability decisions that have been appealed and are therefore subject to a tribunal or indeed a court order, asking the Department to respond within 21 days. In addition, I requested the number of “statement of reason” requests pertaining to limited capability that have not been delivered—they have a statutory limit of 14 days.

To both questions, I received the following answer:

“the information requested is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost”.

These delays have a huge impact on constituents in East Lothian who are awaiting—indeed, some have been stranded for months awaiting—an important appeal date.

The Department’s response is worrying, because it suggests that this information is not easily available, when the Department is in breach of a court order or indeed statute. I therefore seek your advice on what I can do next. Surely it does not require a Member of Parliament to issue a freedom of information request against a Department to get this essential and, I must say, judicial answer.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Gentleman might not think it desirable to have to resort to such a device in order to extract the information he seeks, but I was rather imagining, when he said it surely would not be necessary to submit a freedom of information request, that he might have added—almost in New Forest West style—“is it?”, because the answer is that it may be necessary for the hon. Gentleman to adopt that approach. Short of that, what I say to him is that he will find that the Clerks of the Table Office can advise on follow-up questions to probe how much information is actually available. He may find—I cannot say he will—that if he tables a similar inquiry, and probes, he might get more information than has been provided to date.

Secondly, I would say to the hon. Gentleman that any hon. or right hon. Member of this place can approach the Procedure Committee—chaired with great distinction by the hon. Member for Broxbourne (Mr Walker)—if that Member is not satisfied with the Department’s performance in answering parliamentary questions. Thirdly, there are other avenues that a Member can explore for bringing a matter to the Floor of the House, either here, through questioning or debate, or indeed in Westminster Hall.

My last suggestion to the hon. Gentleman, who always has a most amiable manner in his dealings with colleagues, is that he might want to approach the Minister for a direct chat, in the hope that a peaceful resolution of this matter can be achieved. But knowing the hon. Gentleman as I do, I know that his amiability should not be mistaken for weakness or a reluctance to stick to his guns. I feel sure that he will stick to his guns, and the sooner that that is recognised by the people from whom he seeks information, so much the better.

Exiting the European Union (Customs)

7.16 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for International Trade (Graham Stuart): I beg to move,

That the draft Trade in Torture etc. Goods (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, which were laid before this House on 15 March, be approved.

I am pleased to be able to open this debate on the regulations. These regulations amend provisions of regulation (EU) No. 2019/125 of 16 January 2019 concerning trade in certain goods that could be used for capital punishment, torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

The EU regulation divides these goods into three distinct categories. First, I will begin by explaining to the House that the regulation prohibits the import and export of goods that have no practical use other than capital punishment or torture. These goods include, among other things: gallows; guillotines; electric chairs; airtight vaults; electric shock devices intended to be worn on the body; cuffs for restraining human beings that are designed to be anchored to a wall; batons and shields with metal spikes; and whips with barbs, hooks and spikes. These are appalling instruments of torture, and the Government have a clear position that the trade in such goods from the United Kingdom is absolutely unacceptable. Their export and import are prohibited, and the only exception to this rule is if the items are to be displayed publicly in a museum.

Mr Jim Cunningham (Coventry South) (Lab): What discussions has the Minister had with his EU counterparts, for example, about how we will enforce these regulations when we leave?

Graham Stuart: I thank the hon. Gentleman for that question. The aim of these regulations is to transpose the existing system, which is reliant on EU law, into purely UK law. However, he rightly identifies the issue of co-operation with other countries in the EU. We will have our own discrete regime. We have no intention of making changes to it. We will be looking to co-operate with our colleagues in the EU—and beyond—in making sure that these appalling goods are not trafficked around the world.

Secondly, the regulation imposes controls on the trade in specified goods that have legitimate uses—for example, in law enforcement—but that also carry a risk of being used for torture. These goods with potential torture application include oversized handcuffs, shackles, gang chains, spit hoods, electric shock dart guns and pepper sprays.

The third category involves those goods listed in annexe IV of the EU regulation. The annexe lists several short-acting and intermediate-acting barbiturate anaesthetic agents such as amobarbital, pentobarbital and secobarbital. These goods have a legitimate use in medicine, in research laboratories and in university chemistry departments, but they have also been approved for use—and, in some countries, actually used—either on their own or as part of a cocktail of drugs for execution by lethal injection. We will not help any country with capital punishment, and we will continue to lobby against and seek to influence countries that continue the practice, with a

view to ending capital punishment. We do not license the export of these barbiturate products to countries that have not abolished the death penalty without an end-user assurance that they will not be used for capital punishment, and we will not do so after EU exit.

All of us will have the immediate reaction that it is terrible that the UK should ever be involved in the trade of any goods that could be used for capital punishment or torture. I am confident that we can all agree that the United Kingdom does not want to be a country that makes its living trading in such possible tools of torture. These goods have been controlled by European Union regulations for well over a decade, and the United Kingdom intends to carry on with those controls in a similar way. Let me reassure the House that exports from this country of such goods have been minimal over the past decade, averaging 10 licences per year, and we do not expect that to change. The types of goods exported under licence include handcuffs for prison service use and pepper sprays for use by the police in places such as the Crown dependencies, Australia and New Zealand. We have also licensed barbiturate anaesthetic agents for medicinal use and laboratory testing. The quantities are low, and the export value is small. We do not envisage any growth in exports of those goods after EU exit.

Let me be clear about the purpose of these amending regulations. In their absence, existing European Union law would not be effective in UK domestic law on the day we exit the European Union, and our ability to control these goods would be undermined. After EU exit, this legislation will enable the Secretary of State to control the export from the UK of the listed goods that could be used for capital punishment, torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. As far as is possible, the legislation will operate as it does now, but controls on the goods will apply when they are exported from the UK rather than from the EU.

I do not believe that UK exporters want to be involved in a trade in torture goods, and I do not believe that these are the sorts of goods that UK businesses want to make, sell or export. Nevertheless, our export controls have an important part to play in promoting and ensuring global security, by controlling the goods that leave our shores. The Government have a responsibility to be prepared for any exit-day scenario, and we need to ensure that these controls continue to function properly. These exit-related regulations are just a part of the necessary legislative building blocks to ensure readiness on exit day.

The European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 enables a functioning statute book on exit day by providing Ministers with the tools to deal with deficiencies in domestic law arising as a result of our exit from the European Union. These regulations thus take another step towards completing the legislative part of controlling the export of strategic goods in preparation for a no-deal exit scenario. The Department for International Trade will continue to work to provide detailed advice and guidance about export controls and trade sanctions through EU exit and beyond. If these regulations are no longer required on exit day, we expect to revoke or amend them. Alternatively, commencement could be deferred to the end of an implementation period.

I want to take this opportunity to remind the House that these regulations are solely about preparing for European Union exit and ensuring that we have a

[Graham Stuart]

functioning statute book in any scenario. These amendments must happen because of EU exit, but EU exit is not happening because of these amendments. Parliament needs to ensure that the existing controls remain in place. Negotiations about the future relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union or the wider world are a separate matter. They play no part in this debate today. Broadly, all the provisions applying to exports from the EU customs territory today will instead apply to exports from the UK. For this reason, the Government have made every effort to provide certainty for businesses and the public wherever possible. There is no new marketing opportunity for the export of the tools of torture.

In August last year, we published a technical notice on export controls that explained our plans for post-EU exit export control licences. We will use our “Notices to Exporters”, which has 20,000 subscribers, to advise and communicate with UK businesses. We have also included EU exit advice in the export control training programme and at the annual export control symposium, as well as giving extensive advice to key sector trade associations.

I hope that the House will work in the interests of the nation to ensure the passage of this legislation, which is essential to ensuring we are prepared for EU exit and that we continue the ban on the trade in torture goods and the control over the trade in goods with the potential for torture application. I commend the motion to the House.

7.26 pm

Judith Cummins (Bradford South) (Lab): The statutory instrument before us today contains extremely important measures to ensure that the United Kingdom has a robust export controls regime in place after Brexit. It is needed to prevent UK exports from being used for torture activities, capital punishment or the suppression of citizens and their human rights in other countries. It is absolutely right that we ensure the continuance of this regime once we leave the European Union. Indeed, such is the seriousness of the matter covered by the draft regulations that we should take every opportunity to review and, where possible, improve our efforts in this area.

The draft regulations are set out in this draft instrument, together with measures voted on a few weeks ago in respect of an additional instrument. The Trade etc. in Dual-Use Items and Firearms etc. (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 were initially integrated into a single draft instrument tabled on 11 February and subsequently withdrawn. I would be grateful if the Minister could confirm why the Government withdrew that initial draft and split the measures contained in it. If there was defective drafting, can he confirm that the Government are satisfied that the revised wording properly remedies the defects?

The draft regulations operate to ensure that goods that could be used for the purposes of torture or capital punishment are banned from export and/or import or, where appropriate, that an authorisation must be sought and granted prior to their export. That is entirely right, and it is welcome that the Government have sought to continue the existing EU regime more or less unchanged in a UK-specific context after Brexit. This is by way of a series of amendments to a recent Council regulation

which, as I understand it, has not yet otherwise been incorporated in our domestic statute book. For the most part, as with a number of recent statutory instruments, the draft regulations proposed by the Government seek to ensure that references to the European Union or European Community are replaced by references to the United Kingdom, our customs territory or the Secretary of State.

However, there are amendments whose intent requires clarification, and I will come to those points shortly. Fundamentally, these provisions seek to prevent the trade in goods that may be used for torture or to administer capital punishment. How we treat our citizens, including those who have committed even the most heinous of crimes, reflects the society that we strive to be. In that respect, I am proud that it was a Labour MP who brought about the end of capital punishment in this country. As I have said before, we in the Labour party want to ensure that a robust and rigorous control system is in place in respect of dual-use items, firearms and other sensitive material. That includes any items that may be used for the purposes of torture or capital punishment. Indeed, we have called for a tighter approach to our export controls regime and for the cessation of exports to countries where there is a concern that they will be used to violate international humanitarian law. It is therefore concerning that in 2015 the Government decided to drop explicit references to the Foreign Office’s long-standing commitment to making efforts to encourage the abolition of the death penalty overseas. Although I welcome the Minister’s comments, will he confirm whether the Government have any plans to make subsequent amendments to the draft regulations once the United Kingdom has left the European Union?

Regulation 2(24) amends article 24 of the existing regulations to allow the Secretary of State, by negative resolution, to vary our schedules to add or remove items and procedures, so it is crucial that we understand the Government’s policy intention in this regard. The use of the negative resolution procedure to lift restrictions currently in place is extremely concerning. Will the Minister therefore confirm whether he is satisfied that these measures are sufficient to prevent the UK’s participation in the trade in torture goods or in drugs administered for the purposes of capital punishment, including the transfer of intellectual property within international corporate structures, such that UK-developed products might be reproduced or R&D transferred intragroup for such purposes?

Paragraphs (12) and (17) of regulation 2 remove the requirement to refer decisions made in the past three years by other EU member states in respect of these regulations. It seems entirely sensible to refer to precedents established by other countries, particularly where those countries ostensibly operate the same regime as our own. Perhaps the Minister can clarify whether the Government intend to continue to refer to any such precedents in any future decisions made by the Secretary of State. Indeed, paragraph (12) removes the EU from the list of competent bodies whose findings should be referenced, so I would be grateful if the Minister clarified the Government’s intention in that regard.

Paragraph (17) of regulation 2 removes the obligation of the Commission and member states to develop best practice approaches, alongside paragraph (31), which clearly ends the UK’s participation in the anti-torture co-ordination group. Although the Government might

consider that to be necessary once we have withdrawn from the EU, it would be helpful if he set out how the Government intend to continue dialogue with our international partners, particularly in the EU, on common approaches to controlling torture goods.

Furthermore, paragraphs (14) and (15) of regulation 2 seek to remove references to the national treatment provisions in respect of the trade in leg irons, gang chains and portable electric shock devices. Again, I ask the Minister to put on the record what the Government's intended approach to these measures will be.

Paragraph (32) of regulation 2 omits article 32 of the European regulations, which requires the Commission to publish a periodic report on the impact of these measures every five years and to include proposals for improvement. How do the Government intend to report on these measures in a UK-specific context?

Finally, paragraph (33) of regulation 2 removes the national determination of appropriate penalties provisions. I would be grateful if the Minister also put on the record what the Government's proposed penalties for breaches of these regulations will be.

7.33 pm

Tom Tugendhat (Tonbridge and Malling) (Con): I rise to support the motion, because this subject is close to my heart. One of the inalienable rights that this House has secured in this realm, and indeed on which it has exerted its influence around the world, is the absolute right not to be tortured. We enjoy many rights through the universal declaration of human rights, and indeed through the laws, customs and practice that this kingdom has established over many generations, but most are qualified rights. The right to life, for example, is not an unqualified right; if it were, every doctor would be required always to provide the most invasive surgery and treatment, whatever their patient's stage in life, even though for some that would be an act of cruelty. Many other rights are qualified in different ways, such as the right to family life, which is qualified when people commit crimes of such gravity that their rights must be legally withdrawn.

However, the right not to be tortured is an absolute right. There are no grounds on which torture can ever be acceptable. That is something that our country has recognised for many years. Those Members who have visited the Tower of London—I admit that I have not been for many years—will have seen the signatures produced by that famous traitor Guy Fawkes before and after he was tortured; the first shows the florid script of Tudor handwriting, while the second is a scratchy, ink-stained scrawl across the parchment, demonstrating the harm caused by the rack.

Sadly, elsewhere in the world torture is still used to this day, and indeed in some places it is extremely common. We have heard time and again of the terrible crimes committed against the Yazidis by Islamic State—crimes of torture that really do cry out for justice. Women have been raped, parents have been separated from their children, men have been murdered in the most horrific fashion, and children have been enslaved, to become either sex workers or murderers for Islamic State. We see all too clearly that torture is alive and well.

Sadly, torture is also alive in certain states. Most recently this was brought to our attention in relation to Brunei. It is a moment of great sadness to many of us

who know that Brunei Darussalam, as it calls itself—Brunei, the abode of peace—has been a great friend to the United Kingdom for many years. Today it finds itself reintroducing the penalty, under hudud and sharia, of stoning to death for homosexuals. If that is not a form of torture, and of unbelievably cruel and unusual punishment, I do not know what is.

Torture is alive and well today, despite the 1948 universal declaration of human rights, the 1966 international covenant on civil and political rights, and the 1984 convention against torture, which has now been signed and ratified by over 150 nations and therefore stands part of ordinary law and of the common understanding of rights that people enjoy.

It is worth considering why we are now domesticating these rights and not just allowing existing rules to stand. Of course, they will not stand as we step away from the European Union. It is also worth thinking about why these rights were introduced in Europe in the first place. Of course, many of these rights were introduced not by the European Union but by the European convention on human rights, the amazing piece of drafting that was crafted by lawyers in the aftermath of the second world war—that paragon of torture; that terrible moment when the world looked the devil in the face and the devil really did take hold. In the aftermath of that appalling moment, those laws were drafted by Conservative lawyers—in fact, one of them became a Conservative Attorney General, I am pleased to say—and by people who realised that when the world turns its face to evil, the only thing that occasionally can restrain it is the law.

I am therefore delighted that today we are again recognising that the law requires the ability to control the export of items of torture in order to ensure that we can continue to play our part.

Ian Paisley (North Antrim) (DUP): The hon. Gentleman will be able to confirm that there has been no suggestion whatever that our departure from the EU will in any way impinge on our support for the European convention on human rights, which stands alone and is unaffected by our membership of the EU.

Tom Tugendhat: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. The ECHR was signed in the 1950s, coming well before and standing separate from the EU. Indeed, it underpins many aspects of the laws that have been signed with our neighbouring states, as he will know only too well. Of course, the ECHR was not at all about the import of European law into the United Kingdom; it was about the export into Europe of UK laws written in the aftermath of the horrors of the second world war. It is of great importance that we remember that the EU and the ECHR are different things.

In closing, it is important to recognise that not only is the export of items of torture horrific but it goes against all the values for which this House and these great islands stand. It is therefore a great pleasure to support the Minister.

7.40 pm

Stuart C. McDonald (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East) (SNP): It is a pleasure to follow the Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee, and I look forward to seeing what the hon. Member for Ochil and

[*Stuart C. McDonald*]

South Perthshire (Luke Graham) has to say. I welcome and agree with much of what the Minister said, but I will echo one or two of the shadow Minister's concerns, including those about article 24 and delegated powers. I will also raise one or two further concerns later on.

Like other Brexit-related legislation, these draft regulations are pretty technical and perhaps not the easiest or most exhilarating of reads but, as other Members have said, they have an important aim and can contribute to making life more difficult for regimes that continue to practise systematic torture and implement the death penalty, doing so using products that are traded and shipped internationally. Domestic export bans have helped tackle the issue, and the so-called torture goods regulations are the EU's equivalent. It is therefore vital that we retain and even build on the provisions that ban the import and export of goods that can be used only for torture and that we establish a system of licensing for goods with legitimate uses that can also be used for torture. Not only are the provisions consistent with the European convention on human rights, as the Government are obliged to state, but they may help to enhance the protection of those rights in a small but significant way around the world.

However, one issue that I want to raise relates to something set out in the explanatory notes. One of the changes made by the draft regulations is that the "Member State notification requirements are omitted."

Those requirements are found in article 23 of the torture good regulations, and they require member states who turn down or annul authorisations to trade in goods that can be used for torture to notify other member states and the EU Commission of that fact. That means that other authorities can be alert to applications from the same traders and be alive to the issues that led to their general refusal or annulment in the first place.

Why has that requirement been completely removed from the draft regulations? I accept that it is a reciprocal arrangement that the Government have the power to correct under the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018, but I see no good reason why it should be corrected by taking the requirement out altogether. It is not a typical Brexit-related reciprocal arrangement whereby we would otherwise be left under an obligation for no good reason at all or to the benefit of the EU. In this case, there is a good reason to continue to notify EU member states and the Commission, and the beneficiaries of such notifications would of course be those who would otherwise be on the receiving end of torture if such applications were successful. I regret and query why the requirement to notify has not in some way been preserved. It would be useful to hear more about whether the Government will be seeking to work to come to a similar arrangement with the EU and other member states in future.

More generally, will the Government ensure that this country continues to play its part in tackling the trade in torture goods, including through its membership of the Alliance for Torture-Free Trade? This initiative, started by Argentina, the European Union and Mongolia, brings countries together with the aim of ending the trade in such goods. It promotes controls and restrictions on the goods, best practice, the exchange of information, co-ordination to support monitoring and enforcement,

and technical support for countries wanting to take such measures themselves. The UK is a member state in its own right, not simply through the European Union, which is obviously welcome, but I hope that this country will continue to be an active member of the organisation.

In short, the draft regulations are important, and they have the SNP's full support. However, we must do all that we can to inhibit regimes around the world from perpetrating torture and enforcing the death penalty.

7.44 pm

Luke Graham (Ochil and South Perthshire) (Con): I stand to speak in support of the draft regulations. They may sound elementary, but it is important that the UK is explicit in its opposition to instruments of torture. The UK's commitment to that is exemplified by our being one of the signatories of the Alliance for Torture-Free Trade, which the UK has helped to champion around the world, and that sends out a signal internationally.

The United Kingdom has been a leader on human rights for a long time. My hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Tom Tugendhat) has already referred to how strong the United Kingdom has been in the past, and this is not just about the recent past. Back in the 19th century, this Parliament was one of the first among the advanced nations to abolish slavery. Yes, the United Kingdom was involved in the slave trade, but it is often overlooked that this was one of the first Parliaments to abolish it. Not only did we reinforce that decision in British waters but we enforced it in international waters around the globe. All merchants in England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and throughout what was then the empire were led by this House and told what the right actions were to take and what the moral course was. They were told why trade should be not just about profits but about overall prosperity and moral righteousness.

Statutory instruments such as this are becoming increasingly important. We must ensure that our legal system is explicit, both domestically and internationally, about the element of transparency. Before I came to this place, I worked in finance—I draw Members' attention to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests—and I was able to work abroad. I worked in several Asian countries that are far less democratic than our own, and I regularly heard of cases in which people were subjected to overt, covert, explicit and emotional torture. No one was ever held to account. There was no transparency in the judiciary to hold people accountable, there was certainly no authority to hold the Government to account or, indeed, individual traders or merchants involved in supplying the materials that facilitated torture. When people who were taking part in political demonstrations, the likes of which we see outside this place every day, are taken away, bundled into a van and then never heard of again, one starts to understand the importance of this type of legislation and why the United Kingdom's position as a leader in human rights and against torture is so important.

Maintaining standards is also important. We in this House are acutely aware of that just now, and it is certainly something that we should probably reflect on more and more. However, this is also about our country maintaining standards across the world. Over the past two decades—certainly when I was going through my education—I have seen the United Kingdom soften its

lines and sometimes let standards slip. Whether in the misadministration in Iraq or not adhering to red lines in Syria, mistakes have cost so many lives, both at home and abroad. The ghosts will haunt us for many years to come. We cannot dare to repeat those kinds of mistakes in this place or elsewhere.

We must continue to champion human rights and to reinforce the international order. We must also continue to set new standards, so that when new challenges to the international order emerge—in whatever form they may be—this House can rise to meet them and ensure that we lead people together in prosperity, in peace and in moral authority.

7.48 pm

Graham Stuart: It has been a great pleasure to participate in this debate. We have heard powerful speeches, not least from the Opposition spokeswoman but also from the SNP spokesman and from my hon. Friends the Members for Tonbridge and Malling (Tom Tugendhat) and for Ochil and South Perthshire (Luke Graham).

Most of the questions came from the Opposition spokeswoman, as is appropriate. As for what happened with the process, the original draft regulations had to be withdrawn when the EU regulation was codified into a new version. Splitting the UK legislation was the most expedient way of dealing with the problem, and I really do appreciate the hon. Lady's support for what we are trying to do tonight. We have no plans for further amendments, and I can confirm that the Government will maintain strong controls over the trade in goods usable for capital punishment or torture.

The hon. Lady asked about precedent from other states. When we leave the EU we will no longer receive information from other member states about licences that they have refused. We will, however, continue to take account of all relevant information that comes our way when assessing licence applications and—this goes to the heart of the question asked by the hon. Member for Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East (Stuart

C. McDonald) of the SNP—we would welcome the opportunity to continue co-operation with the EU, but that will be subject to whatever settlement we finally agree.

The hon. Member for Bradford South (Judith Cummins) asked about reporting and transparency. We will report annually. Right now, we publish more information than almost any other nation and we want that transparent approach to continue. Of course, the UK operates one of the most rigorous and transparent export licensing systems in the world, and all export licence applications are considered on a case-by-case basis against the consolidated EU and national arms export licensing criteria. We are not changing those. We publish quarterly and annual statistics on our export licensing decisions, including details of export licences granted and refused.

I have been asked about penalties. Breaches of regulation can lead to up to 10 years in prison. We plan to maintain the existing regime. We will also continue—this issue has also been raised—to be an active member of the global Alliance for Torture-free Trade after leaving the EU.

We have a responsibility to ensure the safety and security of our people. The regulations support that objective and I am grateful to colleagues from across the House for supporting them. I commend the regulations to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Trade in Torture etc. Goods (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, which were laid before this House on 15 March, be approved.

ELECTRICITY

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

That the draft Electricity Capacity (No. 1) Regulations 2019, which were laid before this House on 28 February, be approved.—*(Amanda Milling.)*

Question agreed to.

Backbench Business

UN International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

7.51 pm

Faisal Rashid (Warrington South) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House has considered UN International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

First, I thank every member of the Backbench Business Committee for granting this important debate, as well as all those Members who indicated their support for it.

Every year on 21 March, the United Nations marks the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination through a series of worldwide events. That is because 21 March was the date of the 1960 Sharpeville massacre in South Africa, when police opened fire and killed 69 people at a peaceful demonstration against the apartheid pass laws. The day was proclaimed six years later, through a United Nations resolution on the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination, adopted on 26 October 1966. Although the international day for the elimination of racial discrimination itself was a few weeks ago, I am delighted that the House is now able formally to mark it with a debate in this Chamber.

As a Muslim MP and a proud advocate of tolerance, peace and integration, the issue is close to my heart. As the first ever Muslim Mayor of Warrington and MP for Warrington South, I have always understood the value of embracing difference and bringing communities together. Almost 96% of Warrington's inhabitants are white, but I have never been made to feel like an outsider. The people of Warrington have made me a welcome part of their community ever since I went to live there with my family more than 20 years ago. I have been proud to call Warrington my home ever since.

Sadly, we know that not all ethnic minorities are as fortunate as I have been to live in such a hospitable, tolerant environment. If all communities were as welcoming as Warrington, there would be no need for us to have this debate. As it is, many forms of racism and discrimination are on the rise. Disturbing, violent trends of antisemitism and Islamophobia have become more and more frequent. I have already mentioned the horrendous attack on the Muslim community in New Zealand last month. A Jewish place of worship in Pittsburgh was subject to a similar attack five months earlier—the deadliest attack on the Jewish community in US history. Both killers were clear in their hatred of both Jews and Muslims. Both subscribed to the far-right “great replacement” theory, which casts Muslims and other minorities as invaders of western societies and a threat to white, Christian majorities. It seems appropriate that the specific theme to mark this year's UN International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is mitigating and countering rising national populism and extreme supremacist ideologies. In the wake of those horrific far-right attacks, I am sure that Members will agree that the theme could not be timelier.

Those are not just sporadic attacks in far-flung corners of the world; they represent part of a wider trend and their impact has been felt much closer to home. Just two

weeks ago, the trial of a neo-Nazi who had plotted to kill a Member of this House was concluded. The plotter had been a member of the fascist National Action group. During the trial, the prosecution told the court that National Action had engaged in a campaign of

“racist, anti-Semitic and homophobic propaganda through which it sought to stir up a violent ‘race war’ against ethnic minorities and others it perceived as ‘race traitors’.”

I echo Mr Speaker's sentiments last week in commending the courage and integrity of my hon. Friend the Member for West Lancashire (Rosie Cooper) when faced with that vile hatred. She has demonstrated that Members of this House will not be cowed by a violent and hateful creed.

In the face of such vile hatred, it is all too easy to give in to despair, but I recall the words of Jo Cox, who from these Benches insisted that

“we are far more united and have far more in common than that which divides us.”—[*Official Report*, 3 June 2015; Vol. 596, c. 675.]

Her words, and indeed her life, serve as an inspiration for us all. We saw Jo's ethos in action even in the immediate aftermath of both the Christchurch and the Pittsburgh shootings. Muslim groups raised more than \$200,000 for bereaved families at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh, and the Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh is now raising money for the victims of the New Zealand mosque attacks. I cannot think of a more fitting illustration of Jo's message, with diverse communities coming together to reject racism, bigotry and hatred.

In my own constituency, local people of all faiths and backgrounds also came together in a local mosque to commemorate the victims of the Christchurch shootings. I am sure that many Members are able to recount similar initiatives in their constituencies, with countless examples of communities coming together to reject evil and hatred. It is a reminder, even in the darkest of moments, that if we come together to promote peace, tolerance and mutual understanding, bigotry will never prevail.

If we are to counter this threat, we must seek to understand its origins and the conditions that allow it to flourish, for there can be no doubt that white nationalist, far-right violence is firmly on the rise. In the US in 2018, every single one of the 50 extremist-related murders were linked to the far right, according to the Anti-Defamation League. In the UK between 2017 and 2018, the number of white suspects arrested for terror offences outstripped those of any other ethnic group for the first time in more than a decade. In Germany, official figures suggest that nine in 10 antisemitic crimes in 2017 were carried out by members of far-right or neo-Nazi groups.

How are we to make sense of this phenomenon? The UN produced two reports in August 2018 that investigated on a global scale contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. The reports argued that the “new forms of media” are partly responsible for the rise in nationalist populism and described how they

“aided or amplified the influence of nationalist populism”.

One study has suggested that American white nationalist movements saw their Twitter following grow by more than 600% between 2012 and 2016. These non-traditional media platforms have been used to revive fascist ideas thought to have been consigned to history.

We need to look again at the responsibility of large technology companies and how these platforms are regulated. Given the size of platforms such as YouTube and Facebook, they have an obligation to ensure that hatred, bigotry and misinformation—I emphasise that misinformation is the key—are not allowed to flourish on their watch. In recent years, we have seen the rise of far-right social media personalities who now have the ability to reach unprecedented numbers of people online. Not only are these individuals allowed to peddle their hatred to huge audiences, but they are able to profit from doing so.

Traditional forms of media have also been complicit in fuelling these racist narratives. During the height of the refugee crisis in 2015, at the very moment when African men, women and children were drowning in the Mediterranean, *The Sun* published a column describing these people as “cockroaches.” That is shocking and disgusting coming from a national newspaper. The columnist went on to argue:

“What we need are gunships sending these boats back to their own country.”

These were desperate people risking their lives, and often their children’s lives, to flee a desperate, desperate conflict. Nobody wants to leave their country unless they are desperate, and those people were desperate because of the conflict, because of the wars and because of the lack of input from the world. What kind of cruel, inhuman response is it to suggest meeting them with gunships?

Those comments were denounced by the UN’s human rights chief as akin to antisemitic Nazi propaganda. Indeed, this dehumanising rhetoric poisons public debate. For too long, ethnic minorities have been scapegoated in our national press. The media have an indispensable role in our democracy, but it must come with great public responsibility.

Racism in the workplace also continues to be a major problem in the UK. A recent survey by Prospect, the trade union, found that nearly half of ethnic minority workers have witnessed racism in their workplace, with a quarter of black and ethnic minority employees reporting that they have been racially abused.

Just this weekend there were four separate reported instances of alleged racial abuse before, during and after premier league and football league matches, which appears to emphasise a problem highlighted during the week by England international Danny Rose. Tragically, in 2019, Rose was forced to admit that he “can’t wait to see the back of football” because he is so disgusted by the racism that blights the game. I commend the example of high-profile individuals like Danny Rose and Raheem Sterling for speaking out and taking a stand against this vile abuse, but it is not good enough for us simply to wring our hands whenever this issue is raised and depend on the courage of a vocal few.

Marsha De Cordova (Battersea) (Lab): I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing this debate. I apologise for arriving late.

My hon. Friend has touched on such an important point. We have seen some of our sportsmen, particularly our young black British sportsmen, having to undergo racial abuse while they are proudly playing for their country—England. Does he agree that they have shown great courage and dignity in speaking out against the

racism they endure? Frankly, we thought that racism was back in our history, but it is still present and remains within the game of football today.

Faisal Rashid: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. There is no need for any sort of racism in any society, especially in sport—it is unbelievable.

We need to systematically eradicate all forms of racist abuse from public life. There should be an absolute zero-tolerance policy towards racism, yet governing bodies like UEFA dole out minor fines and partial stadium closures when teams are subjected to racist abuse. It is nowhere near good enough.

Finally, young people have a pivotal role to play in defeating new forms of racism. Ever since I became involved in politics, I have been inspired by the example of young people seeking to make the world a better place to live. We have recently seen the climate change protests by young people all over the world, teaching us the importance of tackling climate change for future generations. But young people are also on the frontline and at the receiving end of much of this new and pernicious rise in racism, particularly online.

Many young people are adopting extreme and racist views as a result of the content they see online, day in and day out. We can do more to combat this in our schools. Young people must be better equipped to identify new forms of misinformation and bigotry if we are to prevent these poisonous ideas from taking hold of future generations. The fight against bigotry and racism begins in the classroom. This is one of the many reasons why our current underfunding of schools is a national scandal. How can we expect future generations to build on our hard-won victories against racism and intolerance if we starve their schools of funding and resources?

I say to far-right racists: ethnic minorities are not going anywhere. We deserve to live, work and raise our families in peace in our own country. The fight against racism and all forms of discrimination is a mainstay of peace and social cohesion, especially in our increasingly diverse society. With this in mind, I hope the Government commit to marking this day each year, so that we are able to celebrate our diversity and remember those who have committed their lives to fighting racism for a better future.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Lindsay Hoyle): Order. We have six speakers, so may I suggest they each take around five minutes to ensure we get on to the Lords amendments in time and are not interrupted?

8.8 pm

Stephen Kerr (Stirling) (Con): I congratulate the hon. Member for Warrington South (Faisal Rashid) on securing this debate and on his speech, especially the last few sentiments he expressed, which were greeted around the House with calls of “Hear, hear!” He has spoken for all of us in his denunciation of all forms of bigoted racism, and he has spoken for the whole of our community in resoundingly saying that those who hate will not win.

Richard Graham (Gloucester) (Con): My hon. Friend is quite right about the speech by the hon. Member for Warrington South (Faisal Rashid); it was particularly nice to hear that Warrington South is so inclusive. Does my

[Richard Graham]

hon. Friend agree that the difficulty with hate abuse, racial abuse and intolerance in general is that it comes not just from the far right, as disgusting and abhorrent as that is, but from the far left and across the spectrum? We should be against it wherever it comes from and wherever it is directed.

Stephen Kerr: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Yesterday's lead story in *The Sunday Times* was a shocking catalogue of antisemitism inside the Labour party, which I am sure all decent Labour Members feel is as abhorrent as my hon. Friends and I do. The reality is that we live in a time when antisemitism and Islamophobic behaviour are increasing.

I am grateful that this debate has coincided with the release of the Government's Online Harms White Paper, the consultation on which is now under way. It is essential that we counter hate wherever it raises its ugly head. We must be united against all forms of intolerance. We must work together across the parties and across our communities to build a world in which everyone has equal protection of their rights and equal access to justice, education and economic opportunity, regardless of ethnicity, nationality, sexuality or race.

Alex Chalk (Cheltenham) (Con): My hon. Friend talked about the Government's White Paper. Does he agree that the White Paper is particularly urgent because social media is normalising utterly toxic and reprehensible behaviour? We need to lay down a marker that it is not acceptable in real life, it is not acceptable online and it is certainly not normal. We must reject it.

Stephen Kerr: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention. We live in the age of the false ideology of hate. We all experience it as Members of Parliament. It is clearly and utterly unacceptable.

Let me reflect on these words of Martin Luther King:

"I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be...this is the interrelated structure of reality...all mankind is tied together...in a single garment of destiny."

Those are inspiring words and thoughts.

May I conclude my brief remarks with reference to the experience that we have had in the Stirling constituency when it comes to embracing those who are different—and thank goodness for it? Just a couple of weeks ago, I had the pleasure of visiting the Islamic centre in Stirling with the Under-Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Guy Opperman), and we had the opportunity to speak to those who had gathered for Friday prayers. It was inspirational for me and my hon. Friend to be present.

It brought to mind an experience I had some time ago when an imam shared with me this simple idea: as beautiful as a bouquet of flowers of a single type is, how much more beautiful is a bouquet of many varieties of flower? That is the vision of our society that I hold on to. In front of me in the Islamic centre in Stirling were stalwarts of our community. They run successful businesses and play a very active part in all aspects of the life of the various communities that make up the Stirling constituency. I am proud of them. Undoubtedly, to echo the sentiment of the hon. Member for Warrington

South, they are part of us and we are part of them; we belong together; our home is their home and their home is our home.

I will conclude with a brief reference to the enrichment that comes through the arrival in Stirling every year of a fresh group of international students. They come from various countries, traditions and faiths, bringing colour and vibrancy to Stirling. Our lives are enriched by what they bring to our community. That is the nature of our society in modern Britain. We should rejoice in that. I invite the House to rejoice in those differences, because they make us what we are.

Laura Pidcock (North West Durham) (Lab): There is very little in what the hon. Gentleman says that I disagree with. Does he agree with me that racism is not just interpersonal, but systemic? It is difficult to sit and listen to the words he is saying when we know of the record of this Government—of the Prevent agenda, of the Windrush generation, of the "Go Home" vans. What he has said is fine, but racism is systemic and is often perpetrated by the state.

Stephen Kerr: I said clearly that we should counter racism and hate wherever it raises its head. I find it rather rich that the hon. Lady would take this opportunity to attack Conservative Members, especially in the light of the state of the Labour party so graphically illustrated in yesterday's report in *The Sunday Times*.

Marsha De Cordova: As a black woman, I find it is very important that we do not belittle or disregard the issues that face us. We saw a hostile environment with the Windrush generation that was criminal. As the granddaughter of the Windrush generation, I think the hon. Gentleman has to admit that that was caused by his Government and no other.

Stephen Kerr: I have incurred your displeasure, Mr Deputy Speaker, and I apologise for taking too long.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Lindsay Hoyle): I did say that there were five minutes each. We are now running on to eight minutes. I am very concerned about other speakers. I do not want to introduce a time limit, but if Members cannot stick to five minutes, I will make sure they go to the bottom of the list in future. I do not want to have to do that.

Stephen Kerr: I will just conclude by saying that an attempt to diminish any one of us diminishes all of us.

8.16 pm

Imran Hussain (Bradford East) (Lab): Let me make it clear, Mr Deputy Speaker, that it is not my aim to incur your displeasure and go to the bottom of the list, so I will try to limit interventions.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington South (Faisal Rashid) for bringing such an important debate to the Chamber today. It is unfortunate that we do not have long to debate such an important matter, but we are where we are. At the end of March, we observed the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, but that is not the only reason that this is such a timely debate. In this country, where

we pride ourselves on our tolerance, we still see alarming levels of racial discrimination and hatred. Even as we implore other countries to do more to tackle racial discrimination, we ourselves must never be complacent and must always do much more.

Nowhere is this alarming racial discrimination and the disturbing lack of action to tackle it seen more clearly than in the rise of the far right in this country. We are seeing the resurgence of fascist ideologies and extremist groups that we fought off decades ago. They are now returning with the same hatred for other races, ideologies, backgrounds and religions.

Chi Onwurah (Newcastle upon Tyne Central) (Lab): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Imran Hussain: I will, but I will not take many interventions.

Chi Onwurah: I thank my hon. Friend for his generosity. I want to echo his words, because the Brexit debate seems to have given new groups the feeling that they can speak in racist terms. On Saturday, the North East Patriotic Front demonstrated in Newcastle. My hon. Friend will be pleased to know that they were outnumbered more than 10 to one by those fighting against racism and Islamophobia. As we have seen repeatedly over the decades, every new example of the rise of the far right needs to be combated by each new generation.

Imran Hussain: I thank my hon. Friend. Let us as a House come together to celebrate the fact that in the face of hatred and division of any kind, we stand in unity and make sure that those who seek to divide us never ever succeed. We reaffirm that principle here today.

Just last month, the Security Service and the Met police identified far-right terrorism as a key threat to the safety of our country, with the police having stopped a number of far-right terror attacks over the past few years. The Hope Not Hate “State of Hate 2019” report echoes that, finding not only a continued rising trend in traffic to far-right websites and in followers of far-right social media accounts, but that the far right is getting younger and more extreme. I will not mince my words: we are witnessing a dangerous resurgence of Nazi ideology. When we talk about racial discrimination today, we cannot avoid that topic.

We also cannot avoid the fact that racial discrimination has been encouraged and the far right emboldened, normalised and even legitimised by the media and others who must share the blame. In very many instances, broadcasters and newspapers have given air time and column inches to those who spread hate, giving them the means to do so in the name of balanced coverage. Nothing is balanced about the far-right, extreme views of those who seek to divide us and share more with neo-Nazism than with a modern, tolerant society, so that practice must end. We must give no platform to those who spread hatred.

Furthermore, we must not just call out and shut down racism, hatred and extreme far-right fascist views where we see them, but press authorities to do much more. Right now, they are doing nowhere near what is necessary to tackle the resurgence of fascism, with a dangerous over-reliance on tip-offs or mistakes by extremists. That was demonstrated most recently in the case of National Action, which was brought down and brought

to justice through the work not of agencies but of Hope Not Hate. I pay tribute to that organisation, which has a long-standing track record of fighting against racism. It continues to do that work. However, we should never be in the situation of third sector organisations doing more to combat extremism than those we should trust to keep us safe.

I have a lengthy speech but, looking at the clock, I see that time does not permit it. However, I join my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington South in paying tribute to Raheem Sterling. As a House, we should come together on that, because he has made his views absolutely clear. On the way here, while I was writing my speech—a lot of which I have not been able to deliver in the debate, tragically—I saw that statement on the television. He made it clear that racism will not defeat any sportsmen, on or off the pitch. I pay tribute to him.

8.22 pm

Julian Knight (Solihull) (Con): I too pay tribute to the hon. Member for Warrington South (Faisal Rashid), who made a powerful speech. I congratulate him on securing this vital debate to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. I know it was on 1 March—we have had to wait—but the debate is none the less worth while.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned his own welcoming town. I want to reflect briefly on my town and the way in which it is now a diverse community—very different from what it was. Many people look at Solihull from a west midlands perspective and think of it as quite well-to-do—there is a joke that a crash in Solihull is what someone has between two Land Rovers—and traditional, meaning white in that respect.

In reality, however, Solihull like so much of the west midlands is changing enormously. What tends to happen is that people do well in Birmingham and other places, then come to and are welcome in our town and add vibrancy to it, as it expands exponentially due to the influx of people. We now have a higher than national average of BAME—black, Asian and minority ethnic—communities, and strong and vibrant Muslim, Hindu and Sikh communities, as well as Greek, Jewish, Jain and Zoroastrian ones. There are so many, I could almost take the remaining three and a half minutes of my speech mentioning them.

Solihull is a fantastic embodiment of diversity in the west midlands, and of success in that diversity, but we face our challenges. Of late, those challenges have been writ large in our town. Quite recently, we had the horror of pigs heads being left outside the Hub, a Muslim community and education centre on Hermitage Road in Solihull, by far-right activists, all because people of the same faith had decided to come together in order to bring about education and something positive in the community—absolutely shocking, as some of my hon. Friends have said.

We also have worries and concerns about antisemitism. Some in my Jewish community have spoken to me, often confidentially, about their fears right now about the rising tide of antisemitism. I will not indulge in anything party political on that—I trust, I know and I am sure that every Member of this House is absolutely horrified by the twin pillars of evil, Islamophobia and antisemitism. We stand with our communities on that.

[Julian Knight]

What do I think is at the root of those changes in Solihull? Social media has been mentioned, and we had the White Paper today. That will be only a part of a broad, patchwork approach that we will have to take as a Government and across western civilisation to managing something that is as great as the creation of the printing press. I am reminded of the fact that after the invention of the printing press in the 15th century Europe indulged in two centuries of civil wars, partly as a result of that greater communication and the way ideas could be communicated, often disturbing to the status quo.

That is the challenge that we face with some of the keyboard warriors in our society who let dark thoughts come out of the darkest recesses of their minds. Also, as groups become more empowered, the counter-stroke becomes sharper, and people react more violently in their language and behaviour.

What do we do to counter that? First, we need education, not just in our schools and colleges but in our communities—in places such as the Hub in Solihull and the Shree community centre in Sparkbrook near my constituency. We also need to say to each other, to say as a society, “I will not let racism pass. I will not stand there when these comments are made. I will tackle it, and I will do what is right.” Frankly, that is what will make our society work, and work in the long term.

8.27 pm

Ian Austin (Dudley North) (Ind): I thank the hon. Member for Warrington South (Faisal Rashid) for securing this debate. I agree with everything he said in introducing it. It is completely right to talk about attacks in the US and elsewhere. He and the hon. Member for Bradford East (Imran Hussain) were also completely right to talk about the growth of racism on the far right and the dangers of the growth in populist nationalism.

As we have just heard about Solihull, there have been shocking attacks on mosques in the city of Birmingham. We all have to be vigilant about that. I am in touch with the mosques in Dudley to express my solidarity with Dudley’s Muslim community and to ensure that they have all the security assistance that they need.

I am delighted that the hon. Member for Wolverhampton South West (Eleanor Smith) is here, because about a year ago she, I and the hon. Members for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Preet Kaur Gill) and for Birmingham, Ladywood (Shabana Mahmood) stood in the biggest room in the hotel in which, 50 years earlier, Enoch Powell made his shameful “rivers of blood” speech, and we celebrated the unity and diversity of communities in the west midlands. Since then, I have stood with members of the Muslim community in Dudley when they have been targeted by the British National party or the English Defence League. I have stood up for constituents in Dudley who, like people elsewhere in the country, were victimised because they were part of the Windrush generation.

This is also the anniversary, almost to the day, of when Britain’s Jewish community came together in the square across the street to protest against racism in the Labour party. I am afraid that we have to address that. We lose our legitimacy in complaining about other people’s racism if we are not prepared to deal with the

problems in our own parties. I want to tell the House about Susan Pollock. She was born in 1930 in Hungary and was imprisoned as a teenager in Auschwitz. She now spends her time travelling the country telling young people about the evils of racism and prejudice. I first met her when she came to Dudley to talk at our annual holocaust commemoration. The second time I met her—an Auschwitz survivor in her late 80s—was in the demonstration across the road. It was the first political demonstration she had been on in her life. I have left the Labour party, but I spent 35 years in it, and I found that deeply shocking and shameful.

It is terrible that a culture of extremism and antisemitism has resulted in the Labour party’s being investigated by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. I think that is really shocking. In *The Sunday Times* this weekend, we heard about a failure to take proper disciplinary action against hundreds of members accused of antisemitism—people who said things like

“‘Heil Hitler’, ‘F*** the Jews’ and ‘Jews are the problem’”.

They have not been expelled—it is absolutely shocking—even though complaints had been received a year ago. A councillor in Lancashire has been let back into the party after fuming about Jewish media attacks and the Rothschild family.

If I complained about everybody who said that sort of stuff to me, I would have no time to do anything else, but I complained about one member last year, because he also threatened violence at my office, which is in a building that also contains a women’s aid centre. This guy questioned the numbers killed in the holocaust and said that 6 million was the magic number. He told the Jewish community to “Put up or shut up.” He talked about “Zionist scum”, and used really obscene remarks that I will not repeat. I complained about him last August. Despite repeated emails and requests, eventually—unbelievably—he was finally suspended in February. He is still a member, as far as I am aware. I really hope that the party is listening and will deal with that.

I think that the chair of the Jewish Leadership Council, Jonathan Goldstein, was completely right this weekend to condemn what he called “corruption” within Labour. He said that those who covered it up should be “relieved of their duties”. He said:

“Last July, I called the Labour Party institutionally racist against Jews. Today’s revelations in the Sunday Times make clear for all to see just how accurate that statement was.”

Even the Deputy Speaker—sorry, I mean the deputy leader, the hon. Member for West Bromwich East (Tom Watson). Actually, I am sure you are just as appalled as I am by all this, Mr Deputy Speaker. The deputy leader of the Labour party said yesterday:

“This makes for deeply shocking and depressing reading. Labour members and the Jewish community will not understand how, many years on from the first concerns about anti-semitism being raised, we have not got to grips with it.”

It is profoundly shocking to me that a political party that I joined as a teenager to fight racism has become embroiled in a scandal like this. It has been dealt with much more seriously. The Labour party must respond properly to the reasonable requests made by the Jewish community more than a year ago, and must boot out the racists for good. As Jonathan Goldstein said this weekend, “Enough is enough.”

8.33 pm

Alex Chalk (Cheltenham) (Con): I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Dudley North (Ian Austin), who gave a speech of extraordinary fluency and power. Everybody in this House knows that racism is morally and intellectually bankrupt. That is the easy bit to say. The difficult bit to face up to is that there are clear examples that show that it is on the rise. We might have lulled ourselves into a false feeling of security that there is an iron rule of social progress that determines that it should wither, but it has not. We are seeing much more of it; it has not been consigned to the dustbin of history.

Hon. Members have talked about what the possible reasons are for that, and we have talked a bit about social media, but it is worth highlighting why social media is relevant. It seems to me that the reason is this. Individuals can exist in communities that are otherwise beacons of tolerance, and yet the online community is more important to them than the real-world community that they live within. When people talk about loners, in the past that might have been individuals alone with their books, but now those loners are behind a screen, finding individuals elsewhere in the world who have similar outlooks and warped perspectives. The critical point is that this allows such individuals to normalise atrocious and appalling behaviour, to say unspeakable things about which they then find succour and comfort elsewhere in the world, and to drive each other on to ever more unspeakable thoughts and, in some appalling cases, actions.

What are the solutions? Time does not allow any great opportunity to expand on these, but I invite the House to consider three things. First, we have to do everything possible to ensure that individuals can build real-world experiences of interacting with people of backgrounds and faiths. One of the things that has struck me so powerfully in Cheltenham is to see people of all backgrounds coming together through the National Citizen Service, for example, meeting people with whom they might otherwise never expect to have any contact and finding, in the inspiring words of Jo Cox, that we have of course more in common. Increasingly, however, it requires the hand of the state to intervene to ensure that such opportunities are available. We saw that during the community day held in Winston Churchill gardens in Cheltenham, with people of all faiths interacting and being enriched through that experience.

Secondly, in Cheltenham—forgive me for mentioning it again—the security services are intensely important. At GCHQ, we have some of the finest minds anywhere in our country, and one of their key tasks is to root out violent extremism of the far right or of the far left and bring it to justice.

Thirdly, the social media companies need to get their house in order. I strongly welcome the White Paper that has been issued today, which will lay down a marker. If material that is likely to inspire hate and intolerance comes to be on their platforms, they have a duty to take it down within a reasonable period, and if they do not, the state will take action and it will hit them where it hurts—in their pockets.

Chi Onwurah: The hon. Gentleman is making an important point about both GCHQ and the tech giants. Does he agree that to be more able and to be seen to eliminate racial discrimination from platforms and

technology, the tech giants and others, including GCHQ, should better represent the diversity of the country in which they are rooted?

Alex Chalk: Yes, of course that is absolutely right. When I referred to the tech giants, I was thinking about Facebook and Instagram. Our security and intelligence agencies, such as GCHQ, should of course be diverse, and I know that it takes that extremely seriously. However, the most important point, if I may say so, that I note when I meet people from GCHQ is their absolute common determination—whether they are black, white, gay, straight or whatever—to tackle and root out this hate-filled behaviour and bring it to justice; they are utterly determined in that quest. I have found it extremely moving and uplifting to hear their determination to achieve precisely that.

With those remarks, Mr Deputy Speaker, I will conclude, but thank you for the opportunity to speak.

8.37 pm

Sir Peter Bottomley (Worthing West) (Con): May I say that many of us will sympathise with the hon. Member for Dudley North (Ian Austin)? I think he has spoken for the people on his Labour side of the House, and I hope that people on my Conservative side of the House would do the same if we had things like that in our party.

I want to approach this in two ways. The first is to give publicity to someone whom I do not think deserves it, but who is dangerous—Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, also known as Andrew McMaster, as Paul Harris, as Wayne King and now as Tommy Robinson. He is apparently a special adviser to the present leader, Gerard Batten, of UKIP. This man Stephen Yaxley-Lennon has been convicted over the years of assault, threatening behaviour, common assault, false identity documents, mortgage fraud—the judge said that it came to £640,000—and contempt of court. I am leaving aside any other current charges that may be around. I say to all my constituents, “If you are fed up with the Tory party, don’t go to a party like UKIP that takes him in as a leader’s adviser. If UKIP changes and throws him out, by all means, but until then, don’t. He’s dangerous, and the people he associates with are dangerous as well.”

The second thing is a total change of thought, but it follows up a point made from the Opposition side of the House. For people to get good jobs, they need good education. I have been helping a maths teacher who is Ghanaian. He is a really good maths teacher, and when he left a particular school, its results fell. He has been pursued by a number of people in a vendetta that has caused him to be arrested twice in the last few months, to lose his job and to be hanging around for possibly up to another nine months while the Teaching Regulation Agency and the Disclosure and Barring Service consider whether he is fit to teach. He clearly is fit to teach. He should not have been treated like that, and I do not believe that, had he been white, he would have been, either by the police or by the education authorities. I regret that the Department for Education was involved in causing him to have his last job withdrawn.

I spend a lot of time working with people who have problems. The ones that are most difficult to put right are those that involve Sikhs or other people from the subcontinent. We all know about Dr Hadiza Bawa-Garba,

[Sir Peter Bottomley]

the paediatrician who was, in my view, treated very unfairly by investigators, by prosecutors and by the General Medical Council.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): The hon. Gentleman and I share many views about human rights and religious persecution. Does he agree that this great, diverse nation—the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland—has a broad culture and historical background that brings in people from around the world, but that what brings us together is the love, respect and tolerance we have for one another? If that is at the core of our nation, we have a way of going forward.

Sir Peter Bottomley: I do.

My last example is the case of Gurpal Viridi, the excellent former police sergeant who managed to find himself on trial for a week and a half at Southwark Crown court on totally bogus charges. I wrote in advance to the Crown Prosecution Service, the Metropolitan police and the Home Office, but none of them seem to want to have an inquiry into how it all went wrong. I will return to that after Easter. I have other examples, but with those words I will resume my seat.

8.41 pm

Angela Crawley (Lanark and Hamilton East) (SNP): I congratulate the hon. Member for Warrington South (Faisal Rashid) on securing the debate. I am genuinely grateful to be able to align myself with the comments by him and by the many other speakers from across the Chamber, who approached the debate with the correct tone. As well as the hon. Gentleman, we heard from the hon. Members for Stirling (Stephen Kerr), for Bradford East (Imran Hussain), for Solihull (Julian Knight), for Dudley North (Ian Austin), for Cheltenham (Alex Chalk) and for Worthing West (Sir Peter Bottomley)—and, miraculously, the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) snuck in there. He never misses an opportunity.

The theme for this year's International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is

“mitigating and countering rising nationalist populism and extreme supremacist ideologies.”

That is one of the biggest flashpoints of racial discrimination. We have to look at the situation we find ourselves in. We fail to recognise the serious ramifications for the general public of our surrounding ourselves with Brexit. The language and general policy making exhibited by this place send a message loudly and clearly to people across the country and give them the genuine feeling that they are not welcome.

Those are not just my words; they are the words of my constituents who attended a surgery for EU nationals. They told me they no longer feel welcome, valued or recognised for their contributions to the UK. That message comes loudly and clearly from this place, and we must all do more to recognise and address that. Frankly, no one outside this Chamber can bear to hear the word “Brexit” any more or cares whether a Lords amendment is coming back, but they do care fundamentally about the messages we send and about the long-term impact of racism.

The fact of the matter is this. We often value the virtue of freedom of speech. As the hon. Member for Worthing West rightly highlighted, there are too many

opportunities for the far right to gain a platform and, worryingly, it has gained an even greater platform through the Brexit process. We in this House have created that problem by having a debate in the Chamber but not debating or listening to anyone outside it. No wonder the public have lost confidence.

Yasmin Qureshi (Bolton South East) (Lab): Does the hon. Lady agree that the rhetoric used by the media and, sadly, sometimes by politicians—including the man who occupies the White House—is built on racial superiority? As the footballer John Barnes said recently, the basis of racial discrimination is the hundreds of years of—I hope people will forgive me for saying this—European white superiority.

Angela Crawley: I wholeheartedly agree with the hon. Lady, and she is right to highlight that. Whether through football or our conversations in this place, in the media or on social media platforms, the message that we send to the world—and that world leaders send—implying that those things are acceptable has a clear resonance in society and cannot go unaddressed.

Before, during and after the Brexit referendum, there was a distinct growth in the volume and acceptability of xenophobic discourse on migration, foreign nationals and refugees in everyday life. None of that is aided by the fact that the media are quite happy to promote that discourse. As I have said, last month I held an EU nationals surgery. Among the themes was the fear for the future, security of foreign pensions and distrust of the settlement scheme. Those I spoke to genuinely felt like this Government did not want to make them feel welcome, but was instead putting them through a laborious bureaucratic process. I can only share that frustration. What kind of message does it send to someone who has spent their entire life in Scotland, raising their family, working and paying their taxes, to discover that they have fill out a form to qualify to remain in the UK after an unknown deadline—a moving goalpost? Many of those who have felt hounded by the UK Government were desperate for more information about what their rights would be. I am sorry to say that I could provide them with no more clarity about that than most of us in this House can provide about today's business. If we do not even know what we are doing from one day to the next, what chance do people in general life have to understand?

To return to the point of today's debate, in Scotland we do not want to see any EU nationals living in our country leave. As a party, the SNP has recognised the valuable contribution of EU nationals to Scotland and to our public services. Ultimately, those public services could collapse and we could lose the rich cultural contributions made by our friends and neighbours, who have come to be a part of our lives and our world, and part of the UK. They should feel welcome here in the UK. The message from the First Minister could not be clearer: we want you to stay in the UK, we value you and we welcome you. I wish to put on record my gratitude, my heartfelt thanks and my appreciation for the contribution made by those of my constituents in Lanark and Hamilton East, and those across the UK. I sincerely hope that they will stay and make Scotland their home.

I understand that I have to hurry up, so I leave hon. Members with this parting thought. Scotland has benefited from the rich diaspora across the UK. We have a rich

tapestry, and I would hate to see it lost because of the language and messaging of this country. The Home Office has a responsibility to send a loud and clear message to EU nationals that they deserve to feel and should feel part of the UK, and they should remain and we want them to remain. The Government have to send that message instead of perpetrating the racist language that is ultimately being given through subliminal messaging in the programme of this Government.

8.47 pm

Dawn Butler (Brent Central) (Lab): I know that there is not a lot of time left to sum up—you may need to stop me if I get close to time, Mr Deputy Speaker—but I want to thank and congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington South (Faisal Rashid) on today's excellent debate. If we look at the diversity around the House, we can see that there are lots of people who want to contribute. I also thank the Backbench Business Committee for allowing the debate to take place. It is a shame that we do not have enough time to really do it justice, which is why we must ensure that next time the debate takes place in Government time.

As my hon. Friend mentioned, the theme for today is mitigating and countering rising nationalist populism and extreme supremacist ideologies. We all have to work harder, through our actions and our words, if we are to combat that. Do we say things that are inclusive or dismissive when we speak? Is the environment that we create embracing or hostile? Why is that important? It is important because if we create a hostile environment, we fuel hate and right-wing ideologies. We have to underscore the dangers of populism on both the left and the right. National populism must keep sight of the ways in which multiple intersecting identities transform the experience of racial discrimination.

We have heard some great speeches today from across the House. My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford East (Imran Hussain) talked about the growth of young right wingers and how dangerous they are.

I want to take a moment to talk about Dylann Roof, 25, who shot nine black people dead in a church; Alex Fields, 20, who killed Heather Heyer. Robert Bowers was an exception as he was 46 when he killed 11 Jewish worshippers in a synagogue; Brenton Tarrant, 28, was responsible for the Christchurch, New Zealand shootings, murdering 50 people and attempting to murder 39; Thomas Mair shot and killed our friend Jo Cox; and Jack Renshaw, just 23, a convicted paedophile, tried to kill my hon. Friend the Member for West Lancashire (Rosie Cooper). Hope not Hate saved her life. Jack Coulson, 19, is in prison for the threats made against the hon. Member for Liverpool, Wavertree (Luciana Berger). These are all young white right-wing extremists. Both here and in the US we have sadly witnessed a surge of intolerance, a growth of the far right and increasing hate crime towards minority communities. We must not become complacent in the fight for equality or allow any of our hard-fought rights to be rolled back.

Almost every piece of progressive legislation in the UK was delivered by a Labour Government, including the Race Relations Act 1968 and the Human Rights Act 1998. Meanwhile, current legislation means that people can only bring a discrimination claim on the grounds of one aspect of their identity. We must do better. Section 14 of the Equality Act 2010 must be enacted so we can bring forward cases on multiple grounds of discrimination.

There are challenges, but it is important to celebrate our diversities and most people have used this opportunity to celebrate in their own constituencies. We must strive not for tolerance in society, but for acceptance. Too much have we talked about tolerance.

I know time is very short, but the words and language of Members in this House is so important. The N word is never acceptable. I am still waiting for an explanation as to why the N word was used at a particular meeting. As I say, we must be very careful. We must be exemplary in our attitudes in this place. Nationalists and populist Governments often deploy a range of tactics to disenfranchise groups portrayed as outsiders, including racial and ethnic minorities. We, including the Government, have to do better.

There are so many things I would like to mention, but I know I have to take my seat. I thank all Members for mentioning my constituent Raheem Sterling and the work that he has been doing to call out racism in football and society. He is saying that when we talk about racism and hate crimes we must talk about these issues fairly. There is no point in the names I read out being referred to as people with mental health illnesses and other people as terrorists. They are all terrorists. They are all evil nasty people.

The hon. Member for Stirling (Stephen Kerr) quoted Martin Luther King—one of my favourite quotes—on the interrelated structure of reality, but I will end on something else that Martin Luther King said:

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

He also said, and I hope we can take a bit of this away with us today:

“Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend.”

8.53 pm

The Minister for Africa (Harriett Baldwin): It is a privilege to respond to a very fine debate to mark the UN International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. I fear, Mr Deputy Speaker, that I have far too little time to respond to the range of points that were made in this important debate. I acknowledge the case that was made to mark the day on a regular basis, every year.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Warrington South (Faisal Rashid) and the Backbench Business Committee on securing time on the Floor of the House to debate this important subject. The hon. Gentleman made an exceptionally powerful speech. I was delighted to hear him explain, as a former Mayor of Warrington, the hospitable and tolerant nature of his home city, and the call he made for peace and tolerance.

There were excellent speeches from my hon. Friends the Members for Stirling (Stephen Kerr), for Solihull (Julian Knight), for Cheltenham (Alex Chalk) and for Worthing West (Sir Peter Bottomley) and from the hon. Members for Bradford East (Imran Hussain), for Dudley North (Ian Austin), for Lanark and Hamilton East (Angela Crawley) and for Brent Central (Dawn Butler). Common themes arose. There was an iteration of the observation of the rise of extreme far-right and fascist views, which we all agree have no place in our society. There was an observation about the prevalence of such views on social media, and comments welcoming the Online Harms White Paper that the Government published

[Harriett Baldwin]

today. I encourage all right hon. and hon. Members to write in with support for the approach being taken in the White Paper.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stirling said one of his local imams wants a society that represents a bouquet of different flowers; those words were particularly powerful. I also acknowledge the point made about citizen service, the International Citizen Service and the role that can play in community engagement.

The hon. Member for Brent Central made a powerful speech in which she read out a list of names. There is a live debate about whether we should dignify those people by naming them, and so ensuring that their names recorded for posterity in *Hansard*. I am jealous of her for having as a constituent Raheem Sterling, and I pay tribute to the exceptional work he and others are doing in the world of football.

The 1960 Sharpeville massacre led to the establishment of this international day, but only yesterday I was in Kigali, Rwanda, to mark the 25th anniversary of the 1994 genocide of the Tutsi. As we look across the world today, it is upsetting and absolutely wrong that since 1960 we have continued to witness incidences of intolerance, discrimination and violence on the basis of race, ethnicity and nationality. The hon. Member for Warrington South rightly mentioned incidences of religious hatred, because the horrific cases in New Zealand and the synagogue in Pittsburgh are so fresh in our minds. We all want cohesive communities across this country and in every country in which every individual feels safe from discrimination and hate. We all have a responsibility to fight racial discrimination and strengthen our communities, but, as many have said, Governments have a specific responsibility.

The Prime Minister made clear her determination to tackle racial discrimination from the very first day she took office. The racial disparities audit has revealed racial disparities in our country, and its work in highlighting

them will help to end the inequalities and injustices that members of ethnic minorities can face when they access public services and the jobs market. Every individual should be able to fulfil their potential through their enjoyment of equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities. Since 2017, the Government have taken action in education, employment, health and criminal justice. We have also made strides in our international work. We are determined to root out racial discrimination both at home and abroad.

I reassure all colleagues of the Government's absolute commitment to the total elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. We will continue to tackle these issues both domestically and internationally. We are fully committed to building safe, strong and united communities.

8.58 pm

Faisal Rashid: I am pleased that we have had this debate. It is heartening to see Members from both sides of the House joining in recommitting Parliament to the fight against racism. I thank every Member who spoke or intervened in the debate. I also thank the Minister for her contribution and for reiterating the Government's commitment to fighting racism, although I am a little confused about why the Government felt this issue was within the Foreign Office's remit. Surely it is a matter for the Home Office.

We need to remember that our voices and contributions matter. If our institutions and policies are not doing enough to stem the tide of a resurgence in racism, we need to end complacency. If we in our hearts can imagine a better world, let us keep on fighting for it and eliminate racism from our society forever.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House has considered UN International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

European Union (Withdrawal) (No. 5) Bill

Consideration of Lords amendments

9 pm

Mr Speaker: A message has been received from the Lords with Lords amendments relating to the European Union (Withdrawal) (No. 5) Bill. The Clerks at the Table advise me that copies of the Lords amendments are available in the Vote Office, online and at the Bills before Parliament website. Also online and in the Vote Office are motions and amendments relating to the Lords amendments, with a selection paper. I should inform the House that none of the Lords amendments engages financial privilege.

Clause 1

DUTIES IN CONNECTION WITH ARTICLE 50 EXTENSION

Yvette Cooper (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab): I beg to move, That this House agrees with Lords amendment 1.

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

Lords amendments 2 to 4.

Lords amendment 5, and amendment (a) thereto.

Yvette Cooper: I should be clear at the beginning that I support all five amendments from the Lords, but I oppose the further Commons amendments that have been tabled. I thank the Lords for proceeding so swiftly in these unprecedented circumstances, with only four days to go until the country could end up leaving without a deal—with all the serious implications for manufacturing, small businesses, medicine supplies, food prices, farming and transport—and with only two days before the important European Council, which needs to consider an extension to article 50.

Sir William Cash (Stone) (Con): Will the right hon. Lady give way?

Yvette Cooper: I will give way, but I will be very brief; I want to give the hon. Gentleman time to speak to his amendment.

Sir William Cash: Did the right hon. Lady notice—I watched the proceedings in the House of Lords—the continuous criticisms of this appalling Bill? They said it was a “bad Bill”, “a very bad Bill”—[*Interruption.*] Also, by the way, it is not going to prevent no deal and furthermore, there is nothing that requires, as a matter of law, the avoidance of no deal.

Yvette Cooper: Some people criticised the Bill, but the vast majority of the Lords supported the Bill, which is why we have it back before us now. Parliament has shown in both the Commons and the Lords that it is capable of responding to the gravity and the urgency of the challenge that our country faces and the very immediate risks to jobs, public services and families across the country if we drift. None of us could have imagined that we would be in this situation in the first place. These are unprecedented circumstances, but they should also serve as no precedent for the future when, as we all hope, normality might be restored.

I particularly thank Lord Robertson and Lord Rooker, who sponsored the Bill in the Lords, the Government and Opposition Front Benchers and Cross Benchers, who engaged in thoughtful discussion about these amendments, and the right hon. Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin), who did considerable work to ensure that the amendments would be effective. I said to the Minister, when we were discussing this in Committee, that we were keen to ensure that there was legal clarity for the Prime Minister as she went into the negotiations in the EU Council, and that she would be able to take sensible decisions in the national interest without having to come back to this House in the middle of negotiations—clearly, that would not be in the national interest. I welcome the work that has been done together to ensure that that clarity applies and that the Prime Minister can take those discussions forward.

Sir Bernard Jenkin (Harwich and North Essex) (Con): Will the right hon. Lady give way?

Yvette Cooper: I will give way just one more time.

Sir Bernard Jenkin: Given that the Bill still says only that the Prime Minister must “seek an extension”, how does this oblige her to accept an extension, or can she refuse one?

Yvette Cooper: The Bill makes it clear that the Prime Minister will be mandated to seek the extension in accordance with the motion that we hope will be tabled tomorrow. As a result of the amendment that has been tabled, it also allows the Prime Minister to seek further extensions and to accept extensions, subject to their not ending earlier than 22 May.

Lords amendments 1 and 2 ensure that a delay past midnight tonight will not prevent debate on the motion tomorrow. Lords amendment 3 allows Ministers other than the Prime Minister to table the motion. I think it sensible to ensure that the debate does not disrupt any negotiations with other Governments in which the Prime Minister will need to engage tomorrow. Lords amendments 4 and 5 ensure that the Prime Minister has that flexibility in the negotiations.

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

Yvette Cooper: I will not. I have given way already, and there is very little time. [*Interruption.*] I will not. I have given way many times.

As I was saying, Lords amendments 4 and 5 enable the Prime Minister to make decisions in the European Council subject to the date not being earlier than 22 May, to ensure that there is no legal uncertainty about the Council’s negotiations and decisions, and to ensure that we do not inadvertently end up with no deal as a result of confusion about the legal process.

I think that, taken together, the Lords amendments improve the Bill. I believe that the House should accept them and resist the Commons amendments, which would have a limiting effect and which would, in fact, conflict with the letter that the Prime Minister has already sent to the European Council. That would not be sensible.

Let me seek one further reassurance from the Minister, which has already been given in the other place. Given that Lords amendments 4 and 5 have been accepted in

[*Yvette Cooper*]

that place, there is some uncertainty about what might happen should the Prime Minister not achieve any agreement in the European Council deliberations. I hope that the Minister will be able to assure us that in those unusual and exceptional circumstances, which we hope will not arise, the Government would come back to the House immediately with a motion for debate, because obviously we would face the urgent possibility of leaving without a deal. As Ministers know, that has been comprehensively rejected by a huge majority in the House, and it would clearly be unacceptable for the Government simply to allow us to drift into no deal without tabling a further motion before we reach exit day.

These are, of course, unusual and unprecedented circumstances, and I know that there are strong feelings. However, I hope that we have been able to engage in our debates in a thoughtful and considered way. We have just an hour in which to discuss the amendments, and I want to ensure that all Members can express their views.

Sir William Cash: I completely repudiate what has been said by the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (*Yvette Cooper*). The reality is that this outrage is the equivalent of tossing a hand grenade into our constitutional arrangements, given the vital importance of the vote that was delivered by the British people in the referendum. It constitutes a deliberate attempt to undermine that result, and any attempt to say otherwise is a total misrepresentation of the facts.

The Bill will not compel the Prime Minister to do anything that she does not want to do anyway, which is to ask for an extension until 30 June, if we assume that the resolution of the House on Tuesday retains that date. The Bill does not compel her to agree to an extension to a different date, if offered by the European Council, and nor if one is offered with conditions. By the way, that could raise some very serious legal questions, which have not yet been followed through to their ultimate conclusion. Hence, if there is a longer extension, it will be by the Prime Minister's own voluntary act, and not as a result of compulsion by a remain-dominated Parliament, which is what this is. I have said repeatedly during these proceedings that we have a system of parliamentary Government, not government by Parliament. This is a complete reversal of that position; it is a constitutional outrage.

Further, with regard to the European elections, which are dealt with in another amendment on the amendment paper, I would just read out the new clause in my name:

"No extension of the period under Article 50(3) of the Treaty on European Union may be agreed by the Prime Minister if as a result the United Kingdom would be required to prepare for or to hold elections to the European Parliament."

There are many, many people up and down the country who would totally support that proposition. Furthermore, the reality is that, on Thursday last week, I had a similar amendment on the Order Paper. I was informed that, although it had been selected, No. 10 had given instructions to vote against it. The Government were going to vote against that amendment despite the fact that it was meant to be Government policy. All over the country, there is a firestorm about the fact that we could be involved in European elections. People are leaving their own parties over this because they are so completely infuriated by the fact that the arrangements under consideration here could lead to this absolutely insane

idea of our being involved in European elections. The turnout in European elections is derisory. The European Parliament itself is derisory. There is absolutely no reason on earth why we should be involved in these elections, and that is why I have tabled this new clause.

Pete Wishart (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): Why does the hon. Gentleman not offer himself as a candidate and make them all the more exciting?

Sir William Cash: I must admit that if I were to, there would be quite a lot of fireworks in the European Parliament—I can assure the hon. Gentleman of that.

I have no doubt whatever that what those involved are doing by creating circumstances in which the European elections could take place is not only to undermine the vote that was taken in June 2016, but, in addition, to humiliate this country by virtue of the fact this is all effectively being created by our subjugation to the European Union and by our Government crawling on their hands and knees to the European Council—this is something imposed upon them. The idea is not only that we should be put in a position of subjugation but, in terms of the letter the Prime Minister wrote on 5 April, which is a begging letter to the European Council, that we are effectively giving ourselves over to the European Union, which is a humiliation of this country. In no circumstances whatever should we have allowed this ever to happen.

Yasmin Qureshi (Bolton South East) (Lab): I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way, but does he not agree that words such as "humiliation", "submission", "begging", "traitors", "hang them" and "violence" are not appropriate in these types of debate?

Sir William Cash: They most emphatically are, because, unlike what has been going on in this House, which is a perversion and a distortion of our constitutional arrangements, the very essence of our position is to defend democracy, to defend the vote that was taken by the British people, and to stand up for the repeal of the European Communities Act 1972, which was passed and is the law of the land. That is where we are right now.

Section 1 of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 says that European Communities Act 1972 will be repealed on exit day. All that this Bill does is to move exit day. And by the way, exit day will move, if it ever does, in lockstep with the repeal of the 1972 Act unless someone is prepared to get up and tell me that they intend to repeal the repeal of the 1972 Act. We are still going to repeal that Act, and I think that that is completely lost on Opposition Members.

9.15 pm

There are many other things that I would like to say about this wretched Bill, this abomination. The manner in which it has been done is a constitutional violation. It is not a technical innovation, as some people have tried to pretend; it is a constitutional revolution. Mr Speaker, I remember you referring to a precedent that was set in 1604. As I said the other day, Oliver Cromwell came to this House in the mid-1650s in circumstances in which the House of Commons had turned itself into a rabble. He was so furious with it that he said:

"You have sat too long for any good you have been doing".

That was an accusation—[*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. I know that the hon. Gentleman is more than capable of looking after himself, so this is no disrespect to him, but he must be heard and he will be heard.

Sir William Cash: So he will, Mr Speaker.

Cromwell continued:

“Depart, I say...In the name of God, go!”

As far as I am concerned, that applies to many Members of Parliament who have reversed their votes and who have repudiated the vote of the British people and denied our democracy.

Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Is it really in order for a Member of this House to try to delegitimise other Members of this House, all of whom have our own mandates from our constituencies, simply because he does not agree with what we agree with?

Mr Speaker: It is not procedurally improper. It has offended the sensibilities of a considerable number of colleagues, but my hunch is that the hon. Member for Stone (Sir William Cash) will not suffer any loss of sleep as a consequence of that. The hon. Member for Wallasey (Ms Eagle) has made her point was considerable force, and it is on the record. Had the hon. Gentleman concluded his oration?

Sir William Cash: One last remark, Mr Speaker. I trust that the hon. Member for Wallasey will reflect on the fact that, as far as I am aware, she voted for the European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Act 2017 when this House passed it by 499 votes to about 120. That is a fact—[*Interruption.*] But perhaps she did not, so she can tell me about that.

Ms Eagle: Indeed I did vote for that Act, but I did not expect the hon. Gentleman’s Prime Minister to make such a hash of it. We have to go back to the beginning, start again and do it properly.

Sir William Cash: In conclusion, I would simply say that I, too, think that the Prime Minister has made a hash of it. It makes no difference to me. I have said it repeatedly, and I will say it again and again.

Hilary Benn (Leeds Central) (Lab): First, I should like to say to the hon. Member for Stone (Sir William Cash) that the reason we are debating this Bill again tonight is that the House of Commons has approved it and the other place has approved it with amendments. If that is a constitutional revolution, it is a constitutional revolution courtesy of the democratic will of this House and the other place. Secondly, on the subject of the European elections, the Government have made it quite clear to the House that if we are still a member of the European Union on 23 May, those elections will take place. Indeed, the Government have moved the order that will start the process and I understand that the Conservative party has started the process of calling for candidates to stand in those elections.

I rise to support my right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) and the right hon. Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin) and to thank them, because the Bill has helped

us get to the place, subject to the decision of the European Council on Wednesday, where the will of the House to oppose leaving the European Union without an agreement will finally be given effect. The House needs to remember that the Bill has one purpose, and one purpose only: it is a “prevention of a no-deal Brexit” Bill. If the House gives its approval to it shortly, it will become a “prevention of a no-deal Brexit” Act.

Sir Bernard Jenkin: Can the right hon. Gentleman just read out the text of the Bill that will oblige the Prime Minister to accept an extension when she attends the Council of Ministers?

Hilary Benn: The Prime Minister will accept an extension because she has asked for one. It is the existence of this Bill that has led her, in advance of the Bill being approved by the House, to write to the President of the European Council seeking an extension, because twice, much to the unhappiness of certain Members on the Government side of the House, she has been faced with this choice: either to take the country over the edge of a no-deal cliff, or to apply for an extension.

The reason I think some Members are very cross about that—I accept that they are cross—is that on both occasions the Prime Minister, facing both this Bill and a revolt by her Ministers, decided to act in the national interest by making that application. I hope very much that on Wednesday the European Council will grant more time, because whatever one thinks about the Prime Minister’s deal, one thing is clear: a no-deal Brexit would be disastrous for our country. That is why I hope the House will vote for the Bill tonight.

Mr Steve Baker (Wycombe) (Con): May I begin by saying how pleased I was to learn, when my hon. Friend the Member for Stone (Sir William Cash) mentioned the European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Act 2017, that so many Opposition Members voted for that Act on the basis that they took on trust the success of a Conservative Prime Minister? I am pleased that they have so much confidence in us. When they voted for that Act, they either did or did not know the terms of article 50. If they did know the terms, then they voted to leave the European Union potentially without a withdrawal agreement; and if they did not, then clearly they were ignorant of one of the most important matters of the moment. Perhaps instead they were just voting for short-term political expediency. In any event, it is not very credible for Members now to be panicking and seeking to overturn what they previously legislated for, with great care and over a considerable period of time.

I turn my attention to Lords amendment 5, which I find rather surprising, because it seeks to restore the prerogative to the Government, provided they seek a long extension. Of course, this House resoundingly defeated the Government on that very point. I am therefore very pleased that my hon. Friend the Member for Stone has tabled amendment (a) in lieu of Lords amendment 5, to rule out European elections. It states:

“No extension of the period under Article 50(3) of the Treaty on European Union may be agreed by the Prime Minister if as a result the United Kingdom would be required to prepare for or to hold elections to the European Parliament.”

This House united around what was known as the Brady amendment, to replace the backstop with alternative arrangements. I cannot think how many times I and

[Mr Steve Baker]

other Members have tabled the so-called Malthouse compromise, to limit the implementation period, replace the backstop and, in the latest incarnation, get rid of the single customs territory. We have tried and tried to give the Government the way to get a deal.

Sir Bernard Jenkin: I am listening carefully to what my hon. Friend says about amendment (a) in lieu of Lords amendment 5. Let us be absolutely clear. Is he saying that anyone who votes against amendment (a) will actually be voting for the United Kingdom to take part in the European elections, despite the fact that nearly every Member of this House voted for us to leave long before that date? It is a big reverse, is it not?

Mr Baker: It is a big reverse. Do Opposition Members seriously think that we should participate in the European elections after so long? It is a ridiculous escapade. Members should have known what they were doing when they voted to trigger article 50—[*Interruption.*] I see the right hon. Gentleman the Chair of the Exiting the European Union Committee looking quizzical and shaking his head, or perhaps nodding along.

Hilary Benn: I am listening.

Mr Baker: I am delighted that he is, but I think he voted to notify the EU of our withdrawal. If he did, he voted to leave without an agreement.

The fundamental point of the amendments to Lords amendment 5 is that the time has come, after every effort that we have made to enable the Government to secure a withdrawal agreement to which this House could give its assent, to say enough is enough. The Government should reject Lords amendment 5, accept the amendment in lieu from my hon. Friend the Member for Stone and move heaven and earth to get out on Friday without a withdrawal agreement.

Ian Murray (Edinburgh South) (Lab): I start by congratulating my right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) and the right hon. Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin) on bringing us this Bill. I had not intended to speak this evening, but I was slightly shocked by the speech from the hon. Member for Stone (Sir William Cash), who started by saying that everything we were doing was undemocratic and then proceeded to give us four or five clearly democratic examples that he was attempting to make undemocratic.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn) wondered how it could be a democratic outrage, in the words of the hon. Member for Stone, to have both this House and the other place vote for a piece of legislation in the democratic fashion that we have used for many hundreds of years.

Sir William Cash: May I just point out to the hon. Gentleman that the European Union Referendum Act 2015, which this House passed by six to one, deliberately and exclusively gave the people the right, by sovereign Act of Parliament, to make the decision themselves? That was us giving the people the right to make that decision, and the hon. Gentleman and others are now trying to retrieve that decision from the British people, which is totally undemocratic.

Ian Murray: If the hon. Gentleman wants to intervene again and tell me about one promise made at the 2016 referendum that still stands today, I will happily accept his argument. We are here only because his Government and his Prime Minister have created the biggest mess in parliamentary history in a hung Parliament—one that was made hung by his Prime Minister gambling with a 33 majority and losing. Everything changed at the 2017 general election, but he forgets that.

The hon. Gentleman went on to talk about it being undemocratic to hold European elections. It is apparently undemocratic to ask the entire country to go to a polling station to vote in a democratic election when it is the right of people across Europe, by treaty, to go to a booth to put their cross in a box. How can that be undemocratic?

How can it be undemocratic to try to prevent a no-deal scenario? This is the worst thing of all. This House has voted on at least three occasions by a vast majority to prevent a no-deal scenario, so it is perfectly democratic for the House to take charge of the business and pass legislation to ensure that no deal does not happen. That is perfectly and utterly democratic.

Ms Angela Eagle: Does my hon. Friend agree that there was no word during the referendum itself from those suggesting that we leave the European Union that we should leave without a deal and plunge our economy off a cliff?

Ian Murray: I hate to quote the leave campaign, but I think Mr Hannan himself said that nobody was considering leaving the single market. Indeed, the whole campaign was predicated on having the easiest trade deal in history, on 40 trade deals rolling over by 29 March, on a Brexit dividend, and on an extra £350 million a week for the NHS, but none of that has come to pass.

Seema Malhotra (Feltham and Heston) (Lab/Co-op): Does my hon. Friend agree that it is a sad indictment of where we have reached that Peter Osborne, who describes himself as a “strong Brexiteer”, said over the weekend:

“Now we must swallow our pride and think again”?

He was one of the 17.4 million who voted for Brexit but he now says:

“I have to admit that the Brexit project has gone sour”

and that it will “make us poorer”. It is not just remainers who support the Bill; leavers are also saying, “This isn’t what we voted for. This isn’t the state of a nation that we recognise.” It is time for us to take a step back and not rush to a decision that we will regret.

9.30 pm

Ian Murray: I am grateful for that intervention. To paraphrase a former Secretary of State, a democracy fails to be a democracy if the public are not allowed to change their mind. That is exactly what people have been doing. [*Interruption.*]

Andrew Griffiths (Burton) (Con): The hon. Gentleman has mentioned on a number of occasions the hundreds of years of activity in and decisions taken by this place. Can he give one example of when such an important constitutional Bill has been rammed through this House with fewer than four hours of debate?

Ian Murray: Time is of the essence. If the Bill had not been put through this House with four hours of debate, it would not have made it in time for the European Council on Wednesday. In actual fact, my right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford should be thanked by the Prime Minister for this Bill.

SNP Members are jumping up and down because I said that a democracy fails to be a democracy if the public are not allowed to change their mind. Actually, the public of Scotland have not changed their mind on independence. Indeed, they are more against it—*[Interruption.]* I have probably just set the cat among the nationalist pigeons.

I have a lot of respect for the hon. Member for Stone because he has always held his views about the European Union. We have to respect those views, listen to them and agree to disagree—we will definitely do that—but what is undemocratic is for Members to table amendments to trash a Bill that has gone democratically through this House and the other place to put democratically into law the prevention of no deal. That is what is undemocratic, which is why we should support the Lords amendments.

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con): Many people outside this House are losing confidence and trust in us and our proceedings. Tonight is another plunge in how they see us, because we are behaving collectively so badly. My right hon. and hon. Friends who have complained about the lack of time for debating both the Bill and the amendments are quite right. This is a serious constitutional matter. We have not been given time to construct proper amendments and there is no time in this brief hour to do justice to the complex issues raised by the Lords amendments. We had but a short debate on the original consideration of the Bill, when I was able to set out some of the constitutional difficulties involved in groups of MPs seizing the agenda and taking over money resolution and Crown prerogative matters, and we are not allowed proper time tonight to consider exactly how all that fits with this Bill.

What we do know, however, is that the very slim majority who have got the Bill this far through this House intend to go against the clearly expressed wishes of the British people in the referendum. All those who voted to leave, two years and nine months ago, had every reason to suppose that all Labour and Conservative Members elected on their 2017 manifestos would see through our exit in a timely way. They should also have expected that from the promises made by both the leave and the remain campaigns in the referendum, the legislation put through in granting that referendum, and the clear statement of the Government at the time, who said that we would implement the wishes of the British people. The Opposition did not dissent from that particular view when the Government put out their leaflet. Indeed, during the remain campaign many Labour MPs endorsed the Government. That is why tonight is another sad night. This Parliament is breaking its word, breaking its promises and letting down 17.4 million voters, but it is also letting down quite a lot of remain voters.

A lot of remain voters are good democrats who fully accept the verdict of the British people. Quite a lot of people in our country were only just remain voters or only just leave voters and are prepared to live with the judgment of the majority, and they now, too, are scandalised

that this Parliament is insisting on a second needless delay when we have had two years and nine months to prepare for exit and when our Government assure us that they are fully prepared for exiting without signing the withdrawal agreement.

I find it very odd that Members of this House think that the withdrawal agreement is, in itself, Brexit or in any way helps Brexit because, of course, the withdrawal agreement is a massively long delay to our exit, with the added problem, which the Opposition have rightly identified, that it entails signing up to a solemn and binding international treaty to undermine our bargaining position in the second part of the negotiations envisaged by the EU's process.

Sir William Cash: My right hon. Friend is making an extremely good speech. Is he aware that, as I have been informed today, the withdrawal agreement and implementation Bill, which is supposed to put this appalling withdrawal agreement into domestic law, is around 120 pages long? That is what we are heading for in the next couple of weeks.

John Redwood: My hon. Friend is right. The nature of that solemn and binding treaty will be to lock us in, for 21 or 45 months, to every feature of the European Union without representation, vote or voice, and it might mean that we end up in large sections of it—the customs union and single market alignment—in perpetuity, thanks to the Irish backstop.

It is a massive delay, and I say to my hon. and right hon. Friends on the Front Bench that, if they are offering the public either a guaranteed delay under the withdrawal agreement or a shorter delay that they wish to negotiate, a lot of leave voters would rather have the shorter delay but, of course, all of us leave voters do not want any delay at all. That is why people will be scandalised by what this House is rushing through again this evening.

The shortage of time is completely scandalous. This is a massive issue that has gripped the nation for many months. It dominates the news media, it sucks the life out of this House on every other issue and now, when we come to this big crunch event and when leave had been led to believe that we would be leaving the European Union without an agreement if necessary, they are told at the last minute, for the second time, that all their hopes for their democratic outcome will be dashed again. This Parliament does that with grave danger to its reputation.

I urge all those who wish to get this lightning legislation through again to ask themselves what they are going to say to all their leave voters, and what they are going to say to their remain voters who are also democrats and who join leave voters in saying, “Get on with it. Get it over with. Why do we have to sit through month after month of the same people making the same points that they put to a referendum and lost?”

This Parliament needs to wake up and get real. It needs to move on, it needs to rise to the nation's requirements and deal with the nation's other business, and it needs to accept that this was decided by the public. It is our duty to implement it. Leaving without this agreement is going to be just fine. We are prepared for it. Business is ready for it. Business has spent money. Business has done whatever it needed to do and, in many cases, feels very let down that it is not able to use all its contingencies, on which it has spent good money.

[John Redwood]

I would say this to all Labour MPs, particularly those with a majority of leave voters in their constituency: understand the damage you are doing, understand the damage you are doing to this institution, understand the damage you are doing to our democracy and vote for us to leave the European Union.

Wes Streeting (Ilford North) (Lab): It really is no good Government Members complaining about the lack of time—the lack of time to debate this Bill or the fact that we are days away from crashing out of the European Union with no deal. In fact, we would have done that already, were it not for the interventions of people from all parts of this House and in the other place.

Why are we in this position? There is some serious revisionist history going on tonight. It is because after the referendum, a Parliament in which a majority of Members voted to remain none the less said, “We accept that people have voted to leave the European Union.” When the Prime Minister—after she had been dragged through the courts, incidentally—was eventually forced to ask for permission to trigger article 50 and begin the process of negotiations, as has been said, the vast majority of MPs, myself included, voted to give the Prime Minister that permission. That was Parliament’s sole role in the matter: being asked for permission and giving the Prime Minister permission.

Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg (North East Somerset) (Con): When Parliament voted for article 50 to be activated, surely Members knew that we would leave after an agreement had been reached or after two years—or did they not bother reading article 50?

Wes Streeting: The hon. Gentleman will be aware from our time together on the Treasury Committee that we knew what the timeline was for the negotiations. What we could not have foreseen was that the Prime Minister would be so irresponsible, when given the authority to trigger article 50, to send that letter without first having agreement within her Cabinet, within her party and across the House. We also could not have foreseen—not least because she promised repeatedly that she would not do it—that she would have wasted a significant proportion of that two years on a general election.

In the election, the Prime Minister asked the country in explicit and personal terms to give her the mandate that she needed for a hard Brexit of the kind that many Government Members now demand. What did the public say? They said no. They did not give the Prime Minister the majority she asked for. The Conservative party lost seats and the country decided that no one party could be trusted with a majority to govern. That should bring humility on all of us. It also required a degree of contrition and compromise, but we have not seen any of that from the Prime Minister until the 11th hour.

Chris Ruane (Vale of Clwyd) (Lab): My hon. Friend has pointed out that the Conservatives lost seats in the 2017 general election. Will he also give credit to the Labour party for taking seats, including my own, Vale of Clwyd?

Wes Streeting: I absolutely do. Let me also say, as a Member of Parliament whose constituency split virtually down the middle, that there is a range of reasons why people voted in the way they did in the general election, because general elections are not single-issue democratic events. However, I can say that people in Ilford North were very worried about what a Conservative Government would bring to the country, not least because of the position that the Prime Minister staked out on Europe.

I made it very clear to my constituents that I believed that any deal should be put back to the people. That has been a consistent democratic principle. I did not know at the general election that we would be in the position we are now in: not just in the last chance saloon but on last orders. It seems that the Prime Minister is literally on last orders, as she is there just before they boot her out.

Ms Angela Eagle: Does my hon. Friend agree that the one thing the election pointed out was that there was not a majority for a hard Brexit, and that if the Prime Minister had recognised that and reached out at that moment, we would all be in a much better position than we find ourselves in?

Wes Streeting: The Prime Minister has never sought to compromise. What she has found difficult—and what any Prime Minister would find difficult—is trying to reconcile the broad range of promises that were made to people in 2016 and the inability to deliver them all. That is entirely due to the fact that the leave campaign was never honest about the tension at the heart of its offer, which was that there is a trade-off between national sovereignty and economic trade and partnership, economic security and national security. We have been great beneficiaries of pooled sovereignty, but if we try to unpool sovereignty there are trade-offs and sacrifices. The leave campaign has never been honest about that.

The final thing I want to say is about the European elections. The idea that we would decide our country’s future, not just for the next year or two but for generations, around the inconvenience of organising European elections is nonsensical. There has never been a clamour for European elections. In fact, lots of the country is currently with Brenda from Bristol on the idea of any election: “Not another one!” I find this idea that holding elections or a confirmatory vote is undemocratic to be laughable. How can involving all our country in decisions about our future possibly be anti-democratic? The idea that we would rush to judgment, crash out with no deal and make decisions that will hurt this country for generations to come because we cannot be bothered to go out and knock on a few doors is no basis on which to make a decision. We should vote against the amendment.

9.45 pm

Peter Grant (Glenrothes) (SNP): I am grateful for the chance to make a few comments on tonight’s debate. Like the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) who sponsored the Bill, we will support the Lords amendments. From our point of view, they have tidied up some of the wording in the main subsections, and they have put the original drafting into more effective and tighter wording.

I want to pick up on some of the questions that have been asked across the Chamber. Has such a major constitutional change ever been rushed through in such

a hurry? English votes for English laws is the most significant constitutional change in the past 30 years, and that did not even have an Act of Parliament before being put through. The Westminster power grab, driving a coach and horses through the devolution settlement, had 19 minutes of debate. The entire Scottish contingent of 59 MPs were allowed one word during that debate. We were allowed to say, “No”, and then we were outvoted. So the ERG should not talk to anyone on our Benches about the lack of democratic process.

Mr Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Peter Grant: Thanks to the hon. Gentleman’s friends, I have little time to speak and I do not want to take up time that the Minister will want towards the end.

The hon. Member for Stone (Sir William Cash), whom I have a great deal of respect for, for the length of service that he has given to this House, simply got his facts wrong. He spoke about when Oliver Cromwell addressed this Parliament. Oliver Cromwell had been dead for 50 years before this Parliament existed. That is even if “this Parliament” means the Parliament of Great Britain, because the Parliament of the United Kingdom did not come along for another 100 years after that. Even with the protection of the Almighty, Oliver Cromwell would not have smelt too nice if he had come here 150 years later.

As for the nonsense that because an Act of Parliament was passed in a previous Parliament, this Parliament does not like to do anything about it, what happened to the sacred principle that no Parliament can bind a successor? If that principle did not exist, we would not need elections at all, but some people on the Conservative Benches think that having elections is some kind of democratic outrage—“They shouldn’t be allowed”, or, “People don’t need the chance to change their minds.”

The same people also say that in the 2017 election, over 80% of people voted for the two major UK parties whose manifestos said they would respect the result of the referendum—I think that was a mistake by Labour, but it cannot be changed now. In 2015, however, 85% of people voted for parties that said they wanted to stay in the European Union. How can it be that between 2015 and 2017, 80% of the people were allowed to change their minds, but between 2016 and 2019, 3% are not allowed to change their minds?

As for that idea that everyone knew what they were doing in 2016, no less a person than the Attorney General admitted this weekend that he had misunderstood and that the Government had underestimated just how complicated it was going to be. If the Government’s chief legal adviser did not realise how complicated it was going to be, what chance did 33 million other people have in casting their votes?

It is right that Labour supported article 50 at the time, but Labour made a lot of mistakes at the start of the process—serious tactical mistakes—and I am pleased that a lot of them are coming around to understand and to make good those mistakes. I am a bit worried that their leader might be about to make the biggest tactical mistake on Brexit of the whole lot, but I hope he can be pulled back from that.

The single biggest difficulty, as has been said, is that the Prime Minister has made a mess of the negotiations from day one. Conservative Members complain about the number of times that she promised, “We’re leaving on 29 March”, as if that was some kind of day handed down on tablets of stone from Mount Sinai, but it is just another example of the Prime Minister creating utterly impossible expectations. I am sorry, but if the Prime Minister’s impossible expectations cause problems for the Conservative party, that is not my problem, and I want to see the day when it is no longer Scotland’s problem.

Far too much of the debate about Brexit has not been about what is in the best interests of this generation; it has paid no regard at all to the interests of future generations—it has been all about what is in the best interests of the Conservative party. It might be best for us all if the Conservative party’s existential crisis came to its natural conclusion and the rest of us could get on with building a better nation, a better set of nations and a better society for us and our descendants.

Paul Blomfield (Sheffield Central) (Lab): I thought I would inject a new tone into the debate and focus on the amendments. I will be brief.

I thank the peers for their work on the Bill in an exceptionally short time, reflecting the exceptional circumstances in which we find ourselves. Since we last debated it, the Prime Minister has—later than we would have liked—reached out to the Opposition, and we are engaging fully in that process. In that spirit, we are pleased to join the Government in accepting all the amendments. Amendments 1 to 3 tidy up the Bill to ensure that the motion is put to the House tomorrow. Amendment 5 makes a significant but helpful change to the Bill. Events have overtaken us since it was presented last week, and the Prime Minister has already written to the President of the European Council indicating her intention to seek an extension to the article 50 process until 30 June.

Charlie Elphicke: Will the hon. Gentleman tell the House what there is in the Bill that the Prime Minister has not already said she will do in relation to an article 50 extension? Given that she has already said that she will seek an article 50 extension, is it not the case that this entire Bill is nothing more than an extended vanity exercise?

Paul Blomfield: I assume that, in that case, the hon. Gentleman has no objection to the Bill.

The other important development since last week is that the Prime Minister has made clear her opposition to leaving the European Union without a deal. Amendment 5 enables her to agree to a different extension provided that it is a date after 22 May.

Amendment 4 deletes clause 1(6) and (7). Like other Members, I am conscious that last week this House voted against an identical amendment in the name of the hon. Member for Camborne and Redruth (George Eustice). However, that deletion must now be read alongside amendment 5. These amendments, taken together in the Lords, were tabled in recognition that time is of the essence if we are to avoid leaving the European Union without a deal on Friday. We therefore now support amendment 4. We oppose the amendments

[Paul Blomfield]

tabled by Conservative Members that repeat attempts made last week and seek to frustrate the objectives of the Bill.

Finally, I commend my right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) and the right hon. Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin) for their work on the Bill. I thank the staff of both Houses for everything they have done to enable speedy consideration of it.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Mr Robin Walker): I regret that we are debating this Bill, as it is unnecessary and has been progressed through Parliament without due and necessary time for debate or scrutiny. I share the view of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House that it is a matter of deep regret that we are considering the Bill this evening. Given that the other place has given it a great deal more consideration than this House, we should reflect on its amendments.

As the House is aware, the Government have already set in train the process to achieve a short extension. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Charlie Elphicke) pointed out, the Bill is not necessary to do that. When this House approved the Bill, I pointed out that it was being passed in haste. We had a heavily truncated Second Reading, a short Committee stage and no debate on Report or Third Reading. That was followed by an unusually expedited process in the other place, where there was an unprecedented use, much remarked on by the noble Lords, of closure motions during the debate on the business motion. No Government or Parliament should welcome this unhealthy state of affairs.

John Redwood: What is the point of the delay that the Prime Minister is seeking and this Bill wants? Would the EU use it to renegotiate the agreement?

Mr Walker: The Prime Minister has been very clear that she is seeking the shortest possible extension to make sure that we leave in an orderly fashion with a deal.

My Secretary of State suggested on Second Reading that the House of Lords—the other place—might wish to correct the flaws in the Bill. The combined effect of the Lords amendments is to correct deficiencies in the drafting and to mitigate some of the severe impacts that the Bill could otherwise have triggered. Like the hon. Member for Sheffield Central (Paul Blomfield), I will address each of the amendments in turn.

The amendments tabled to clause 1 in the name of the noble Lord Robertson—Lords amendments 1 to 3—reduce the chance of an inadvertent no deal. As I pointed out in Committee, the Bill as originally drafted “creates a real risk that we could be timed out and be unable to agree an extension with our European partners and implement it in domestic law.”—[*Official Report*, 3 April 2019; Vol. 657, c. 1189.] The Bill requires that motion to be moved on the day after Royal Assent. If we run past midnight, that would mean that we were debating the motion on Wednesday, the same day as the Council.

The noble Lord has identified a further flaw in the drafting whereby—at page 1, line 2—it states that only the Prime Minister can move a motion in the House of

Commons in the form set out in this Bill. Members of the House will be familiar with the fact that the usual drafting states a “Minister of the Crown”. In seeking to restrict the moving of this motion to just the Prime Minister, it would mean that the Prime Minister could not travel on Wednesday until after 1 pm, when she would be required to move the motion, disrupting discussions with EU leaders ahead of Council. The House will appreciate the importance of the Prime Minister meeting European leaders before the Council and the need to be ready to make the case for an extension. It is difficult to see how frustrating this process would help the UK to obtain a positive outcome. As such, the Government support these amendments.

Lords amendment 4, tabled in the name of the noble Lord Goldsmith, removed clause 1(6) and (7) of the Bill, requiring the Prime Minister to return to Parliament after the European Council to seek agreement to the length of the extension. We did consider a version of this amendment in this House, moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Camborne and Redruth (George Eustice), but those on the Opposition Benches voted against it. We are now in a situation where Labour peers are once again correcting the errors that were inherent in the original Bill. If subsections (6) and (7) were allowed to stand, we would need to return to the House and seek its approval for an extension on Thursday, even if that extension had already been agreed on Wednesday. That simply does not make sense.

Mr Bone: The excellent Minister is right that the amendment was moved in this House and roundly defeated. In fact, the whole point of the Bill originally was that Parliament took control of the date. For some reason I cannot understand, that has now been abandoned, which makes this Bill totally irrelevant. Of course, we can vote how we like today because it will not make any difference, will it, Minister? The Prime Minister now has the authority to do what she likes.

Mr Walker: My hon. Friend raises an interesting point. I have already pointed out that I think this Bill is unnecessary. The effect of these amendments is to restore the power of the royal prerogative, so I think I can agree with him on that. Of course—and I say this to the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper), who made this point—if an extension were not agreed, the Prime Minister would want to come back to the House at the earliest opportunity to set out the next steps.

Yvette Cooper: Will the Minister assure me that that would be before exit day in those circumstances?

Mr Walker: Yes, I say to the right hon. Lady that it would have to be.

Lords amendment 5, tabled in the name of Cross-Bench peer the noble Lord Pannick, reinstates the form of a previous amendment that I proposed in this House, and which was opposed by the backers of the Bill. It seeks to retain the royal prerogative, which gives the Prime Minister, as a matter of constitutional principle, the discretion to decide what is the best agreement to reach on behalf of Her Majesty’s Government. It is a pillar of our constitution, and the means to govern this country effectively and unencumbered.

Lords amendment 5 adds a proviso that any extension agreed should not end earlier than 22 May. Of course, the Government have already been clear that we are seeking an extension to 30 June, so that is no threat to the prerogative power. I spoke in support of the prerogative power in Committee, and the noble Lord Howard and the noble Lord Cormack were united in speaking in its support in the other place. As Member for the Faithful City, I am happy to continue to speak in its support.

While I have great sympathy for amendment (a) to Lords amendment 5, tabled by my hon. Friends the Members for Stone (Sir William Cash) and for Wycombe (Mr Baker)—I entirely agree with the sentiment—the Government have already set out our desire for an extension to 30 June to allow the maximum time to secure an orderly exit from the European Union.

Sir Bernard Jenkin: Will the Minister give way?

Mr Walker: I am afraid that I cannot give way because I am going to run out of time. I apologise to my hon. Friend.

We cannot support this amendment (a), but the Government have also been clear that it is our firm desire to secure an agreement and leave the EU by 22 May to ensure that we do not need to hold European elections. In voting for the withdrawal agreement at the last opportunity, I and the vast majority of Government Members voted to do so. Despite our continued opposition to the Bill, its irrelevance and the speed of its passage in haste, we are left with no choice but to improve it, so I support the amendments before the House that were passed in the other place.

10 pm

One hour having elapsed since the commencement of proceedings on consideration of Lords amendments, the proceedings were interrupted (Order, 3 April).

The Speaker put forthwith the Question already proposed from the Chair (Standing Order No. 83F), That this House agrees with Lords amendment 1.

Question agreed to.

Lords amendment 1 accordingly agreed to.

The Speaker then put forthwith the Questions necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded at that time (Standing Order No. 83F).

Question put, That this House agrees with Lords amendments 2 and 3.

The House divided: Ayes 396, Noes 83.

Division No. 410]

[10 pm

AYES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane	Bardell, Hannah
Abrahams, Debbie	Bebb, Guto
Afolami, Bim	Beckett, rh Margaret
Aldous, Peter	Bellingham, Sir Henry
Ali, Rushanara	Benn, rh Hilary
Allen, Heidi	Berger, Luciana (<i>Proxy vote</i>
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena	<i>cast by Mr Chris Leslie</i>)
Amesbury, Mike	Berry, Jake
Antoniazzi, Tonia	Betts, Mr Clive
Argar, Edward	Black, Mhairi
Ashworth, Jonathan	Blackford, rh Ian
Austin, Ian	Blackman, Kirsty
Barclay, rh Stephen	Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta

Blomfield, Paul	Dowd, Peter
Boles, Nick	Dowden, Oliver
Bottomley, Sir Peter	Dromey, Jack
Bowie, Andrew	Duffield, Rosie
Brabin, Tracy	Duguid, David
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben	Eagle, Ms Angela
Brake, rh Tom	Eagle, Maria
Brennan, Kevin	Edwards, Jonathan
Brine, Steve	Efford, Clive
Brock, Deidre	Elliott, Julie
Brown, Alan	Ellman, Dame Louise
Brown, Lyn	Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas	Elmore, Chris
Bruce, Fiona	Esterson, Bill
Bryant, Chris	Evans, Chris
Buck, Ms Karen	Farrelly, Paul
Buckland, Robert	Farron, Tim
Burden, Richard	Fellows, Marion
Burghart, Alex	Field, rh Mark
Burgon, Richard	Fitzpatrick, Jim
Burt, rh Alistair	Fletcher, Colleen
Butler, Dawn	Ford, Vicky
Byrne, rh Liam	Foster, Kevin
Cable, rh Sir Vince	Foxcroft, Vicky
Cairns, rh Alun	Frazer, Lucy
Cameron, Dr Lisa	Freeman, George
Campbell, rh Sir Alan	Freer, Mike
Carden, Dan	Furniss, Gill
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair	Gaffney, Hugh
Cartlidge, James	Gapes, Mike
Chalk, Alex	Gardiner, Barry
Chapman, Douglas	Garnier, Mark
Chapman, Jenny	George, Ruth
Charalambous, Bambos	Gethins, Stephen
Cherry, Joanna	Gibb, rh Nick
Clark, Colin	Gibson, Patricia
Clark, rh Greg	Gill, Preet Kaur
Cleverly, James	Glen, John
Clwyd, rh Ann	Glindon, Mary
Coaker, Vernon	Godsiff, Mr Roger
Coffey, Ann	Goodman, Helen
Collins, Damian	Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
Cooper, rh Yvette	Grady, Patrick
Corbyn, rh Jeremy	Graham, Luke
Costa, Alberto	Graham, Richard
Cowan, Ronnie	Grant, Bill
Coyle, Neil	Grant, Peter
Crabb, rh Stephen	Gray, Neil
Crausby, Sir David	Green, rh Damian
Crawley, Angela	Green, Kate
Creagh, Mary	Greening, rh Justine
Creasy, Stella	Greenwood, Margaret
Cruddas, Jon	Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
Cryer, John	Griffith, Nia
Cummins, Judith	Grogan, John
Cunningham, Alex	Gwynne, Andrew
Cunningham, Mr Jim	Gyimah, Mr Sam
Daby, Janet	Halfon, rh Robert
Davey, rh Sir Edward	Hall, Luke
David, Wayne	Hamilton, Fabian
Davies, Chris	Hammond, rh Mr Philip
Davies, Geraint	Hammond, Stephen
Davies, Glyn	Hanson, rh David
Day, Martyn	Hardy, Emma
De Cordova, Marsha	Harman, rh Ms Harriet
De Piero, Gloria	Harrington, Richard
Debbonaire, Thangam	Harris, Carolyn
Dent Coad, Emma	Harris, Rebecca
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan	Hart, Simon
Docherty-Hughes, Martin	Hayes, Helen
Dodds, Anneliese	Hayman, Sue
Doughty, Stephen	Healey, rh John

Heaton-Jones, Peter
Hendrick, Sir Mark
Hendry, Drew
Hermon, Lady
Hill, Mike
Hillier, Meg
Hinds, rh Damian
Hobhouse, Wera
Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Hollern, Kate
Hollingbery, George
Hollinrake, Kevin
Hosie, Stewart
Howarth, rh Mr George
Huddleston, Nigel
Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
Huq, Dr Rupa
Hussain, Imran
Jack, Mr Alister
James, Margot
Jardine, Christine
Jarvis, Dan
Javid, rh Sajid
Johnson, Diana
Johnson, Joseph
Jones, Andrew
Jones, Darren (*Proxy vote cast by Kerry McCarthy*)
Jones, Gerald
Jones, Graham P.
Jones, rh Mr Kevan
Jones, Ruth
Jones, Sarah
Jones, Susan Elan
Kane, Mike
Keegan, Gillian
Keeley, Barbara
Kendall, Liz
Kerr, Stephen
Khan, Afzal
Killen, Ged
Kinnock, Stephen
Knight, Julian
Kwarteng, Kwasi
Kyle, Peter
Laird, Lesley
Lake, Ben
Lamb, rh Norman
Lammy, rh Mr David
Lavery, Ian
Law, Chris
Lee, Karen
Lee, Dr Phillip
Lefroy, Jeremy
Leslie, Mr Chris
Letwin, rh Sir Oliver
Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
Lewis, Clive
Lewis, Mr Ivan
Lidington, rh Mr David
Linden, David
Lloyd, Stephen
Lloyd, Tony
Long Bailey, Rebecca
Lopresti, Jack
Lucas, Caroline
Lynch, Holly
Maclean, Rachel
Madders, Justin
Mahmood, Mr Khalid
Mahmood, Shabana

Mak, Alan
Malhotra, Seema
Mann, John
Marsden, Gordon
Martin, Sandy
Maskell, Rachael
Matheson, Christian
Maynard, Paul
Mc Nally, John
McCabe, Steve
McCarthy, Kerry
McDonald, Andy
McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
McDonald, Stuart C.
McDonnell, rh John
McFadden, rh Mr Pat
McGinn, Conor
McGovern, Alison
McKinnell, Catherine
McMahon, Jim
Mearns, Ian
Menzies, Mark
Merriman, Huw
Miliband, rh Edward
Milling, Amanda
Milton, rh Anne
Monaghan, Carol
Moon, Mrs Madeleine
Moran, Layla
Morden, Jessica
Morgan, rh Nicky
Morgan, Stephen
Morris, James
Morton, Wendy
Mundell, rh David
Murray, Ian
Murrison, Dr Andrew
Neill, Robert
Newlands, Gavin
Newton, Sarah
Nokes, rh Caroline
Norris, Alex
O'Brien, Neil
O'Hara, Brendan
Onasanya, Fiona
Onn, Melanie
Onwurah, Chi
Opperman, Guy
Osamor, Kate
Owen, Albert
Pawsey, Mark
Peacock, Stephanie
Pearce, Teresa
Pennycook, Matthew
Penrose, John
Perkins, Toby
Phillips, Jess
Phillipson, Bridget
Philp, Chris
Pidcock, Laura
Pincher, rh Christopher
Platt, Jo
Pollard, Luke
Pound, Stephen
Pow, Rebecca
Quin, Jeremy
Quince, Will
Qureshi, Yasmin
Rashid, Faisal
Rayner, Angela
Reed, Mr Steve
Rees, Christina

Reeves, Ellie
Reynolds, Emma
Rimmer, Ms Marie
Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
Rodda, Matt
Ross, Douglas
Rowley, Danielle
Ruane, Chris
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
Rutley, David
Ryan, rh Joan
Sandbach, Antoinette
Saville Roberts, rh Liz
Scully, Paul
Seely, Mr Bob
Selous, Andrew
Shah, Naz
Sharma, Mr Virendra
Sheerman, Mr Barry
Sheppard, Tommy
Sherriff, Paula
Shuker, Mr Gavin
Siddiq, Tulip (*Proxy vote cast by Vicky Foxcroft*)
Slaughter, Andy
Smeeth, Ruth
Smith, Angela
Smith, Cat
Smith, Eleanor
Smith, Jeff
Smith, rh Julian
Smith, Nick
Smith, Owen
Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
Soubry, rh Anna
Spellar, rh John
Spelman, rh Dame Caroline
Spencer, Mark
Starmer, rh Keir
Stephens, Chris
Stevens, Jo
Stevenson, John
Stewart, Iain
Stone, Jamie
Streeter, Sir Gary

Streeting, Wes
Sturdy, Julian
Sweeney, Mr Paul
Swinson, Jo
Tami, rh Mark
Thewliss, Alison
Thomas, Gareth
Thomas-Symonds, Nick
Thornberry, rh Emily
Throup, Maggie
Timms, rh Stephen
Tomlinson, Justin
Trickett, Jon
Turley, Anna
Turner, Karl
Twigg, Stephen
Twist, Liz
Umunna, Chuka
Vaz, rh Keith
Vaz, Valerie
Walker, Mr Robin
Walker, Thelma
Warman, Matt
Watling, Giles
Watson, Tom
West, Catherine
Western, Matt
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Whitfield, Martin
Whitford, Dr Philippa
Whittaker, Craig
Williams, Hywel
Williams, Dr Paul
Wilson, Phil
Wishart, Pete
Wollaston, Dr Sarah
Woodcock, John
Wright, rh Jeremy
Yasin, Mohammad
Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:
Jo Churchill and
Michelle Donelan

NOES

Afriyie, Adam
Amess, Sir David
Baker, Mr Steve
Blackman, Bob
Bone, Mr Peter
Bradley, Ben
Braverman, Suella
Bridgen, Andrew
Burns, Conor
Campbell, Mr Gregory
Cash, Sir William
Caulfield, Maria
Clarke, Mr Simon
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
Courts, Robert
Davis, rh Mr David
Dodds, rh Nigel
Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
Double, Steve
Duddridge, James
Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
Elphicke, Charlie
Evans, Mr Nigel
Fabricant, Michael

Francois, rh Mr Mark
Fysh, Mr Marcus
Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl
Girvan, Paul
Gray, James
Green, Chris
Griffiths, Andrew
Harper, rh Mr Mark
Henderson, Gordon
Hoey, Kate
Hollobone, Mr Philip
Holloway, Adam
Hughes, Eddie
Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
Jenkin, Sir Bernard
Jones, rh Mr David
Latham, Mrs Pauline
Lewer, Andrew
Lewis, rh Dr Julian
Little Pengelly, Emma
Lopez, Julia
Lord, Mr Jonathan
Loughton, Tim
Mann, Scott

Mills, Nigel
 Moore, Damien
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll
 Paisley, Ian
 Patel, rh Priti
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Pritchard, Mark
 Pursglove, Tom
 Redwood, rh John
 Rees-Mogg, Mr Jacob
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Robinson, Gavin
 Rosindell, Andrew
 Rowley, Lee
 Shannon, Jim
 Simpson, David
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, Royston

Stewart, Bob
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Syms, Sir Robert
 Thomas, Derek
 Thomson, Ross
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Trevelyan, Anne-Marie
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John
 Wiggin, Bill
 Wilson, rh Sammy
 Wragg, Mr William

Tellers for the Noes:
Richard Drax and
Craig Mackinlay

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendments 2 and 3 agreed to.

Lords amendment 4 agreed to.

Amendment (a) proposed to Lords amendment 5.

—(*Sir William Cash.*)

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The House divided: Ayes 85, Noes 392.

Division No. 411]

[10.18 pm

AYES

Afriyie, Adam
 Amess, Sir David
 Baker, Mr Steve
 Blackman, Bob
 Bone, Mr Peter
 Bradley, Ben
 Braverman, Suella
 Bridgen, Andrew
 Burns, Conor
 Campbell, Mr Gregory
 Cash, Sir William
 Clarke, Mr Simon
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
 Courts, Robert
 Davis, rh Mr David
 Dodds, rh Nigel
 Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
 Double, Steve
 Duddridge, James
 Duguid, David
 Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
 Elphicke, Charlie
 Evans, Mr Nigel
 Francois, rh Mr Mark
 Fysh, Mr Marcus
 Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl
 Girvan, Paul
 Gray, James
 Green, Chris
 Griffiths, Andrew
 Halfon, rh Robert
 Hands, rh Greg
 Harper, rh Mr Mark
 Henderson, Gordon
 Hoey, Kate
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holloway, Adam
 Hughes, Eddie
 Jayawardena, Mr Ranil

Jenkin, Sir Bernard
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Latham, Mrs Pauline
 Lewer, Andrew
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian
 Little Pengelly, Emma
 Lopez, Julia
 Lord, Mr Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Mann, Scott
 Mills, Nigel
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll
 Paisley, Ian
 Patel, rh Priti
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Pritchard, Mark
 Pursglove, Tom
 Raab, rh Dominic
 Redwood, rh John
 Rees-Mogg, Mr Jacob
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Robinson, Gavin
 Rosindell, Andrew
 Ross, Douglas
 Rowley, Lee
 Shannon, Jim
 Simpson, David
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, Royston
 Stewart, Bob
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Swire, rh Sir Hugo
 Thomas, Derek
 Thomson, Ross
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Trevelyan, Anne-Marie
 Vara, Mr Shailesh

Vickers, Martin
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Watling, Giles
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John
 Wiggin, Bill

Wilson, rh Sammy
 Wragg, Mr William

Tellers for the Ayes:
Richard Drax and
Craig Mackinlay

NOES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
 Abrahams, Debbie
 Afolami, Bim
 Aldous, Peter
 Ali, Rushanara
 Allen, Heidi
 Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
 Amesbury, Mike
 Antoniazzi, Tonia
 Argar, Edward
 Ashworth, Jonathan
 Austin, Ian
 Barclay, rh Stephen
 Bardell, Hannah
 Bebb, Guto
 Beckett, rh Margaret
 Bellingham, Sir Henry
 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
 Bottomley, Sir Peter
 Bowie, Andrew
 Brabin, Tracy
 Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
 Brake, rh Tom
 Brennan, Kevin
 Brine, Steve
 Brock, Deidre
 Brown, Alan
 Brown, Lyn
 Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
 Bruce, Fiona
 Bryant, Chris
 Buck, Ms Karen
 Buckland, Robert
 Burden, Richard
 Burghart, Alex
 Burgon, Richard
 Burt, rh Alistair
 Butler, Dawn
 Byrne, rh Liam
 Cable, rh Sir Vince
 Cairns, rh Alun
 Cameron, Dr Lisa
 Campbell, rh Sir Alan
 Carden, Dan
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Cartledge, James
 Chalk, Alex
 Chapman, Douglas
 Chapman, Jenny
 Charalambous, Bambos
 Cherry, Joanna
 Clark, Colin
 Clark, rh Greg

Cleverly, James
 Clwyd, rh Ann
 Coker, Vernon
 Coffey, Ann
 Collins, Damian
 Cooper, Rosie
 Cooper, rh Yvette
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy
 Costa, Alberto
 Cowan, Ronnie
 Coyle, Neil
 Crabb, rh Stephen
 Crausby, Sir David
 Crawley, Angela
 Creagh, Mary
 Creasy, Stella
 Cruddas, Jon
 Cryer, John
 Cummins, Judith
 Cunningham, Alex
 Cunningham, Mr Jim
 Daby, Janet
 Davey, rh Sir Edward
 David, Wayne
 Davies, Chris
 Davies, Geraint
 Davies, Glyn
 Day, Martyn
 De Cordova, Marsha
 De Piero, Gloria
 Debbonaire, Thangam
 Dent Coad, Emma
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
 Docherty-Hughes, Martin
 Dodds, Anneliese
 Doughty, Stephen
 Dowd, Peter
 Dowden, Oliver
 Dromey, Jack
 Duffield, Rosie
 Eagle, Ms Angela
 Eagle, Maria
 Edwards, Jonathan
 Eford, Clive
 Elliott, Julie
 Ellman, Dame Louise
 Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
 Elmore, Chris
 Esterson, Bill
 Evans, Chris
 Farrelly, Paul
 Farron, Tim
 Fellows, Marion
 Field, rh Mark
 Fitzpatrick, Jim
 Fletcher, Colleen
 Flint, rh Caroline
 Ford, Vicky
 Foster, Kevin
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Frazer, Lucy
 Freeman, George

Freer, Mike
 Furniss, Gill
 Gaffney, Hugh
 Gapes, Mike
 Gardiner, Barry
 Garnier, Mark
 George, Ruth
 Gethins, Stephen
 Gibb, rh Nick
 Gibson, Patricia
 Gill, Preet Kaur
 Glen, John
 Glindon, Mary
 Godsiff, Mr Roger
 Goodman, Helen
 Grady, Patrick
 Graham, Luke
 Graham, Richard
 Grant, Bill
 Grant, Peter
 Gray, Neil
 Green, rh Damian
 Green, Kate
 Greening, rh Justine
 Greenwood, Margaret
 Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
 Griffith, Nia
 Grogan, John
 Gwynne, Andrew
 Gyimah, Mr Sam
 Halfon, rh Robert
 Hall, Luke
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hammond, rh Mr Philip
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, rh Matt
 Hanson, rh David
 Hardy, Emma
 Harman, rh Ms Harriet
 Harrington, Richard
 Harris, Carolyn
 Hart, Simon
 Hayes, Helen
 Hayman, Sue
 Healey, rh John
 Heaton-Jones, Peter
 Hendrick, Sir Mark
 Hendry, Drew
 Hermon, Lady
 Hill, Mike
 Hillier, Meg
 Hinds, rh Damian
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hollern, Kate
 Hollingbery, George
 Hollinrake, Kevin
 Hosie, Stewart
 Howarth, rh Mr George
 Huddleston, Nigel
 Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Hussain, Imran
 Jack, Mr Alister
 James, Margot
 Jardine, Christine
 Jarvis, Dan
 Javid, rh Sajid
 Johnson, Diana
 Johnson, Joseph
 Jones, Andrew

Jones, Darren (*Proxy vote cast by Kerry McCarthy*)
 Jones, Gerald
 Jones, Graham P.
 Jones, rh Mr Kevan
 Jones, Ruth
 Jones, Sarah
 Jones, Susan Elan
 Kane, Mike
 Keegan, Gillian
 Keeley, Barbara
 Kendall, Liz
 Kerr, Stephen
 Khan, Afzal
 Killen, Ged
 Kinnock, Stephen
 Knight, Julian
 Kwarteng, Kwasi
 Kyle, Peter
 Laird, Lesley
 Lake, Ben
 Lamb, rh Norman
 Lammy, rh Mr David
 Lavery, Ian
 Law, Chris
 Lee, Karen
 Lee, Dr Phillip
 Lefroy, Jeremy
 Leslie, Mr Chris
 Letwin, rh Sir Oliver
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Lewis, Clive
 Lewis, Mr Ivan
 Lidington, rh Mr David
 Linden, David
 Lloyd, Stephen
 Lloyd, Tony
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lynch, Holly
 Maclean, Rachel
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Mahmood, Shabana
 Mak, Alan
 Malhotra, Seema
 Mann, John
 Marsden, Gordon
 Martin, Sandy
 Maskell, Rachael
 Matheson, Christian
 Maynard, Paul
 Mc Nally, John
 McCabe, Steve
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
 McDonald, Stuart C.
 McDonnell, rh John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGinn, Conor
 McGovern, Alison
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McMahon, Jim
 Mearns, Ian
 Menzies, Mark
 Merriman, Huw
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Milling, Amanda
 Milton, rh Anne
 Monaghan, Carol

Moon, Mrs Madeleine
 Moran, Layla
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, rh Nicky
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, James
 Morton, Wendy
 Mundell, rh David
 Murray, Ian
 Murrison, Dr Andrew
 Neill, Robert
 Newlands, Gavin
 Newton, Sarah
 Nokes, rh Caroline
 Norris, Alex
 O'Brien, Neil
 O'Hara, Brendan
 Onasanya, Fiona
 Onn, Melanie
 Onwurah, Chi
 Osamor, Kate
 Owen, Albert
 Pawsey, Mark
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pearce, Teresa
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Penrose, John
 Perkins, Toby
 Phillips, Jess
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Philp, Chris
 Pidcock, Laura
 Pincher, rh Christopher
 Platt, Jo
 Pollard, Luke
 Pound, Stephen
 Pow, Rebecca
 Quin, Jeremy
 Quince, Will
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Rashid, Faisal
 Rayner, Angela
 Reed, Mr Steve
 Rees, Christina
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reynolds, Emma
 Rimmer, Ms Marie
 Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
 Rodda, Matt
 Rowley, Danielle
 Ruane, Chris
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
 Rutley, David
 Ryan, rh Joan
 Sandbach, Antoinette
 Saville Roberts, rh Liz
 Scully, Paul
 Seely, Mr Bob
 Selous, Andrew
 Shah, Naz
 Sharma, Mr Virendra
 Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Sheppard, Tommy
 Sherriff, Paula
 Shuker, Mr Gavin

Siddiq, Tulip (*Proxy vote cast by Vicky Foxcroft*)
 Slaughter, Andy
 Smith, Angela
 Smith, Cat
 Smith, Eleanor
 Smith, Jeff
 Smith, rh Julian
 Smith, Nick
 Smith, Owen
 Snell, Gareth
 Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
 Soubry, rh Anna
 Spellar, rh John
 Spelman, rh Dame Caroline
 Starmer, rh Keir
 Stephens, Chris
 Stevens, Jo
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, Iain
 Stone, Jamie
 Streeter, Sir Gary
 Streeting, Wes
 Sturdy, Julian
 Sweeney, Mr Paul
 Swinson, Jo
 Syms, Sir Robert
 Tami, rh Mark
 Thewliss, Alison
 Thomas, Gareth
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick
 Thornberry, rh Emily
 Throup, Maggie
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Trickett, Jon
 Turley, Anna
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Stephen
 Twist, Liz
 Umunna, Chuka
 Vaizey, rh Mr Edward
 Vaz, rh Keith
 Vaz, Valerie
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Walker, Thelma
 Warman, Matt
 Watson, Tom
 West, Catherine
 Western, Matt
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whitfield, Martin
 Whitford, Dr Philippa
 Williams, Hywel
 Williams, Dr Paul
 Wilson, Phil
 Wishart, Pete
 Wollaston, Dr Sarah
 Woodcock, John
 Wright, rh Jeremy
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Noes:
Jo Churchill and
Michelle Donelan

Question accordingly negated.

Question put, That this House agrees with Lords amendment 5.

The House proceeded to a Division.

Mr Speaker: I ask the Serjeant at Arms to investigate the delay in the No Lobby.

The House having divided: Ayes 390, Noes 81.

Division No. 412]

[10.35 pm

AYES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
Abrahams, Debbie
Afolami, Bim
Aldous, Peter
Ali, Rushanara
Allen, Heidi
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
Amesbury, Mike
Antoniazzi, Tonia
Argar, Edward
Ashworth, Jonathan
Austin, Ian
Barclay, rh Stephen
Bardell, Hannah
Bebb, Guto
Beckett, rh Margaret
Bellingham, Sir Henry
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
Bottomley, Sir Peter
Bowie, Andrew
Brabin, Tracy
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
Brake, rh Tom
Brennan, Kevin
Brine, Steve
Brock, Deidre
Brown, Alan
Brown, Lyn
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
Bruce, Fiona
Bryant, Chris
Buck, Ms Karen
Buckland, Robert
Burden, Richard
Burghart, Alex
Burgon, Richard
Burt, rh Alistair
Butler, Dawn
Byrne, rh Liam
Cable, rh Sir Vince
Cairns, rh Alun
Cameron, Dr Lisa
Campbell, rh Sir Alan
Carden, Dan
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Cartledge, James
Chalk, Alex
Chapman, Douglas
Chapman, Jenny
Charalambous, Bambos
Cherry, Joanna
Clark, Colin
Clark, rh Greg
Cleverly, James
Clwyd, rh Ann
Coaker, Vernon

Coffey, Ann
Collins, Damian
Cooper, rh Yvette
Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Costa, Alberto
Cowan, Ronnie
Coyle, Neil
Crabb, rh Stephen
Crausby, Sir David
Crawley, Angela
Creagh, Mary
Creasy, Stella
Cruddas, Jon
Cryer, John
Cummins, Judith
Cunningham, Alex
Cunningham, Mr Jim
Daby, Janet
Davey, rh Sir Edward
David, Wayne
Davies, Chris
Davies, Geraint
Davies, Glyn
Day, Martyn
De Cordova, Marsha
De Piero, Gloria
Debbonaire, Thangam
Dent Coad, Emma
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
Docherty-Hughes, Martin
Dodds, Anneliese
Doughty, Stephen
Dowd, Peter
Dowden, Oliver
Dromey, Jack
Duffield, Rosie
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eagle, Maria
Edwards, Jonathan
Efford, Clive
Elliott, Julie
Ellman, Dame Louise
Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
Elmore, Chris
Esterson, Bill
Evans, Chris
Farrelly, Paul
Farron, Tim
Fellows, Marion
Field, rh Mark
Fitzpatrick, Jim
Fletcher, Colleen
Ford, Vicky
Foster, Kevin
Foxcroft, Vicky
Frazer, Lucy
Freeman, George
Freer, Mike
Furniss, Gill
Gaffney, Hugh
Gapes, Mike
Gardiner, Barry
Garnier, Mark
George, Ruth
Gethins, Stephen

Gibb, rh Nick
Gibson, Patricia
Gill, Preet Kaur
Glen, John
Glendon, Mary
Godsiff, Mr Roger
Goodman, Helen
Grady, Patrick
Graham, Luke
Graham, Richard
Grant, Bill
Grant, Peter
Gray, Neil
Green, rh Damian
Green, Kate
Greening, rh Justine
Greenwood, Margaret
Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
Griffith, Nia
Grogan, John
Gwynne, Andrew
Gyimah, Mr Sam
Halfon, rh Robert
Hall, Luke
Hamilton, Fabian
Hammond, rh Mr Philip
Hammond, Stephen
Hancock, rh Matt
Hanson, rh David
Hardy, Emma
Harman, rh Ms Harriet
Harrington, Richard
Harris, Carolyn
Harris, Rebecca
Hart, Simon
Hayes, Helen
Hayman, Sue
Healey, rh John
Heaton-Jones, Peter
Hendrick, Sir Mark
Hendry, Drew
Hermon, Lady
Hill, Mike
Hillier, Meg
Hinds, rh Damian
Hobhouse, Wera
Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Hollern, Kate
Hollingbery, George
Hollinrake, Kevin
Hosie, Stewart
Howarth, rh Mr George
Huddleston, Nigel
Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
Huq, Dr Rupa
Hussain, Imran
Jack, Mr Alister
James, Margot
Jardine, Christine
Jarvis, Dan
Javid, rh Sajid
Johnson, Diana
Jones, Andrew
Jones, Darren (*Proxy vote*
cast by Kerry McCarthy)
Jones, Gerald
Jones, Graham P.
Jones, rh Mr Kevan
Jones, Ruth
Jones, Sarah
Jones, Susan Elan

Kane, Mike
Keegan, Gillian
Keeley, Barbara
Kendall, Liz
Kerr, Stephen
Khan, Afzal
Killen, Ged
Kinnock, Stephen
Knight, Julian
Kwarteng, Kwasi
Kyle, Peter
Laird, Lesley
Lake, Ben
Lamb, rh Norman
Lammey, rh Mr David
Lavery, Ian
Law, Chris
Lee, Karen
Lee, Dr Phillip
Lefroy, Jeremy
Leslie, Mr Chris
Letwin, rh Sir Oliver
Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
Lewis, Clive
Lewis, Mr Ivan
Lidington, rh Mr David
Linden, David
Lloyd, Stephen
Lloyd, Tony
Long Bailey, Rebecca
Lopresti, Jack
Lucas, Caroline
Lynch, Holly
Maclean, Rachel
Madders, Justin
Mahmood, Mr Khalid
Mahmood, Shabana
Mak, Alan
Malhotra, Seema
Marsden, Gordon
Martin, Sandy
Maskell, Rachael
Matheson, Christian
Maynard, Paul
Mc Nally, John
McCabe, Steve
McCarthy, Kerry
McDonald, Andy
McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
McDonald, Stuart C.
McDonnell, rh John
McFadden, rh Mr Pat
McGinn, Conor
McGovern, Alison
McKinnell, Catherine
McMahon, Jim
Mearns, Ian
Menzies, Mark
Merriman, Huw
Miliband, rh Edward
Milling, Amanda
Milton, rh Anne
Monaghan, Carol
Moon, Mrs Madeleine
Moran, Layla
Morden, Jessica
Morgan, rh Nicky
Morgan, Stephen
Morris, James
Morton, Wendy
Mundell, rh David
Murray, Ian

Murrison, Dr Andrew
 Neill, Robert
 Newlands, Gavin
 Newton, Sarah
 Nokes, rh Caroline
 Norris, Alex
 O'Brien, Neil
 O'Hara, Brendan
 Onasanya, Fiona
 Onn, Melanie
 Onwurah, Chi
 Osamor, Kate
 Owen, Albert
 Pawsey, Mark
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pearce, Teresa
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Penrose, John
 Perkins, Toby
 Phillips, Jess
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Philp, Chris
 Pidcock, Laura
 Pincher, rh Christopher
 Platt, Jo
 Pollard, Luke
 Pound, Stephen
 Pow, Rebecca
 Quin, Jeremy
 Quince, Will
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Rashid, Faisal
 Rayner, Angela
 Reed, Mr Steve
 Rees, Christina
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reynolds, Emma
 Rimmer, Ms Marie
 Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
 Rodda, Matt
 Ross, Douglas
 Rowley, Danielle
 Ruane, Chris
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
 Rutley, David
 Ryan, rh Joan
 Sandbach, Antoinette
 Saville Roberts, rh Liz
 Scully, Paul
 Seely, Mr Bob
 Selous, Andrew
 Shah, Naz
 Sharma, Mr Virendra
 Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Sheppard, Tommy
 Sherriff, Paula
 Shuker, Mr Gavin
 Siddiq, Tulip (*Proxy vote cast
 by Vicky Foxcroft*)
 Slaughter, Andy
 Smith, Angela
 Smith, Cat

Smith, Eleanor
 Smith, Jeff
 Smith, rh Julian
 Smith, Nick
 Smith, Owen
 Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
 Soubry, rh Anna
 Spellar, rh John
 Spelman, rh Dame Caroline
 Spencer, Mark
 Starmer, rh Keir
 Stephens, Chris
 Stevens, Jo
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, Iain
 Stone, Jamie
 Streeter, Sir Gary
 Streeting, Wes
 Sturdy, Julian
 Sweeney, Mr Paul
 Swinson, Jo
 Syms, Sir Robert
 Tami, rh Mark
 Thewliss, Alison
 Thomas, Gareth
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick
 Thornberry, rh Emily
 Throup, Maggie
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Trickett, Jon
 Turley, Anna
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Stephen
 Twist, Liz
 Umunna, Chuka
 Vaizey, rh Mr Edward
 Vaz, rh Keith
 Vaz, Valerie
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Walker, Thelma
 Warman, Matt
 Watson, Tom
 West, Catherine
 Western, Matt
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whitfield, Martin
 Whitford, Dr Philippa
 Williams, Hywel
 Williams, Dr Paul
 Wilson, Phil
 Wishart, Pete
 Wollaston, Dr Sarah
 Woodcock, John
 Wright, rh Jeremy
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:
**Jo Churchill and
 Michelle Donelan**

NOES

Afriyie, Adam
 Amess, Sir David
 Baker, Mr Steve
 Blackman, Bob
 Bone, Mr Peter
 Bradley, Ben
 Braverman, Suella

Bridgen, Andrew
 Burns, Conor
 Campbell, Mr Gregory
 Cash, Sir William
 Caulfield, Maria
 Clarke, Mr Simon
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey

Courts, Robert
 Dodds, rh Nigel
 Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
 Double, Steve
 Duddridge, James
 Duguid, David
 Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
 Elphicke, Charlie
 Evans, Mr Nigel
 Francois, rh Mr Mark
 Fysh, Mr Marcus
 Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl
 Girvan, Paul
 Gray, James
 Green, Chris
 Griffiths, Andrew
 Harper, rh Mr Mark
 Henderson, Gordon
 Hoey, Kate
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holloway, Adam
 Hughes, Eddie
 Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Latham, Mrs Pauline
 Lewer, Andrew
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian
 Lopez, Julia
 Lord, Mr Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Mann, Scott
 Mills, Nigel
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll

Paisley, Ian
 Patel, rh Priti
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Pritchard, Mark
 Pursglove, Tom
 Raab, rh Dominic
 Redwood, rh John
 Rees-Mogg, Mr Jacob
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Robinson, Gavin
 Rosindell, Andrew
 Rowley, Lee
 Shannon, Jim
 Simpson, David
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, Royston
 Stewart, Bob
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Swire, rh Sir Hugo
 Thomas, Derek
 Thomson, Ross
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Trevelyan, Anne-Marie
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Watling, Giles
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John
 Wiggin, Bill
 Wilson, rh Sammy
 Wragg, Mr William

Tellers for the Noes:
**Richard Drax and
 Craig Mackinlay**

*Question accordingly agreed to.
 Lords amendment 5 agreed to.*

Business without Debate

HOME AFFAIRS

Motion made,
 That Alex Norris and John Woodcock be discharged from the Home Affairs Committee and Janet Daby and Toby Perkins be added.—(*Bill Wiggin, on behalf of the Selection Committee.*)

Hon. Members: Object.

JUSTICE

Motion made,
 That Janet Daby be discharged from the Justice Committee and Andy Slaughter be added.—(*Bill Wiggin, on behalf of the Selection Committee.*)

Hon. Members: Object.

NORTHERN IRELAND AFFAIRS

Ordered,
 That Mr Robert Goodwill be discharged from the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee and Sir Desmond Swayne be added.—(*Bill Wiggin, on behalf of the Selection Committee.*)

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

Motion made,
 That Mr Gavin Shuker be discharged from the Women and Equalities Committee and Stephanie Peacock be added.—(*Bill Wiggin, on behalf of the Selection Committee.*)

Hon. Members: Object.

Yvette Cooper (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Both Houses of Parliament have tonight strongly made clear their view that a no deal would be deeply damaging to jobs, manufacturing and the security of our country, and they have also set out support for the Prime Minister in securing an agreement later this week. But these are unprecedented circumstances, so can I please put on record my strong thanks to the Clerks of the House who have made it possible for us to put forward this cross-party legislation in these very unusual circumstances? We are hugely grateful for the Clerks' expertise, without which it would not be possible for any Back Bencher or any Member to propose amendments or legislation in any form. That has proved particularly important in these extremely unusual and fast-moving circumstances.

Mr Speaker: I thank the right hon. Lady for what she has said. Notwithstanding the existence of strongly differing opinions on this legislation, and on the wider issue of Brexit, I hope that all colleagues will share in the appreciation for the skill and dedication of our professional staff. Colin Lee, the Clerk at the Table sitting in front of me, is well known to many throughout the House as a quite outstanding public servant, and the same is true of the whole team who serve us so well and so faithfully and dispassionately day after day. That is respected, and I appreciate the fact that it has been put on the record by the right hon. Lady.

Hilary Benn (Leeds Central) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Given the unusual speed with which the legislation we have just approved has passed through both Houses, and given the Leader of the House's business statement earlier today, are you able to advise us whether there is confidence that Royal Assent will indeed be granted tonight so that the motion under the Act—I think I am the first person to refer to it as an Act—once Royal Assent has been given, can be considered tomorrow?

Mr Speaker: The short answer is that I am cautiously optimistic on that front. Steps are being put in train to ensure that Royal Assent is obtained before the House rises tonight. I thank the right hon. Gentleman for giving me the opportunity to provide that information to the House.

Dr Sarah Wollaston (Totnes) (Ind): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. May I put it on record that today the Prime Minister has found time to meet the 1922 committee but, I regret to say, we still do not have a date for her to meet the Liaison Committee? I know that you have already pointed out to the House that that is part of the House's ability to hold the Prime Minister to account at this important time. Will you join me in hoping that the Government Front Bench will, again, pass on to the Prime Minister a formal request for her to set a date?

Mr Speaker: I am certainly very happy to join the hon. Lady in the expression of that request. I make no comment on the other gathering in front of which the Prime Minister may have appeared. Certainly, as far as the House is concerned, the point that the Chair of the Liaison Committee makes is of the highest importance.

The role of the Liaison Committee in holding the Executive to account and, in particular, holding the Prime Minister to account can hardly be overstated. The Liaison Committee is a greatly respected body. The custom and practice whereby the Prime Minister regularly appears before it are now very well established. It would seem to me to be highly desirable that an appearance should take place sooner rather than later.

Ian Murray (Edinburgh South) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I do not wish to detain the House, but further to the point of order from my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn), I want to seek your guidance on the European Union (Withdrawal) (No. 5) Bill, which is heading for Royal Assent this evening. I want to seek your guidance on the procedures of this House, given the business statement for tomorrow, should there be unusual circumstances and the Bill not receive Royal Assent this evening.

Mr Speaker: My feeling is that as long as Royal Assent is given by tomorrow morning, the motion should be unaffected. It would, however, be—how can I put it?—altogether tidier if Royal Assent were achieved tonight. The hon. Gentleman is, in a sense, the opposite of Dr Pangloss: he is working on the basis of the worst case scenario that could arise. What I would say is, it is not that bad.

PETITIONS

Local facilities on the Hull Boothferry Estate

11.2 pm

Emma Hardy (Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle) (Lab): I rise to present a petition concerning the lack of facilities for residents of the Boothferry estate in the city of Kingston upon Hull. I thank our wonderful candidate, Dawn Sullivan, who arranged the collection of all the petitions in front of me. I hope that the Government will take note of the circumstances in this area and others around the country, arising as they do from successive cuts to local authority budgets since 2010.

The petition states:

The petition of residents of the United Kingdom,

Declares that the facilities on the Boothferry Estate in Hull are woefully inadequate and need to be improved, notes that there is only a single pharmacy to support a population of 3,028 and further notes that Hull City Council has lost one pound in every three from its budget since this government came to office in 2010.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to release more money to Hull City Council to improve local facilities on the Boothferry Estate.

And the petitioners remain, etc.

[P002445]

Closure of Suggitts Lane Level Crossing, Cleethorpes

11.3 pm

Martin Vickers (Cleethorpes) (Con): I am pleased to present a petition from residents of my Cleethorpes constituency, concerning the closure of Suggitts Lane level crossing. This is an issue that I have brought before the House on four previous occasions. The petition,

[*Martin Vickers*]

which contains almost 4,000 names, shows the strength of feeling in the local community against the closure, which will cause great inconvenience. I pay particular tribute to Lynn Sayles and her team, who worked so hard in producing the petition.

The petition states:

The petition of residents of North East Lincolnshire,

Declares that the proposed closure of the level crossing (number 42, O.S. Grid ref. TA300097) at Suggitts Lane Level Cleethorpes by Network Rail is at this time not warranted, and substantial investment and enhancement of safety at the crossing should be explored and enacted before any other option is considered. This is to avoid loss of a vital historic, public amenity and would also result in a significant proportion of the public (who for health and disability reasons are unable to use the footbridge) being denied access to the Sea Front and Local Amenities.

The petitioners therefore urge the House of Commons to instruct Network Rail to consult with users of the crossing in order to establish a viable plan to keep the crossing open.

And the Petitioners remain, etc.

[P002446]

UK Fishing Industry: Non-EEA Visas

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

11.5 pm

Mr Alistair Carmichael (Orkney and Shetland) (LD): We are considering the matter of visas for non-European economic area citizens working in the UK fishing industry—sadly, not for the first time. In fact, I last brought this matter before the House on 11 July. Others have led Adjournment debates on the same topic on different occasions. It has been raised on multiple occasions at Home Office questions, most recently by me. Sadly, now, here at the beginning of April, we are no further forward.

I will not rehearse the arguments around the necessity for our fishing skippers to be able to employ crew from outside the European Union or the EEA. I suspect that that has been done to death. If we were going to win the argument by raising the issues, we would have won it long ago.

Tonight, I will gently remind the Minister of a couple of things that she told the House in July. I invite her, when she speaks, to give us something of a progress report. I will then consider the content of the Migration Advisory Committee report from September of last year which, according to the Minister when I last raised this with her, is now the basis on which the Government seek to resist the fairly sensible and, I would have thought, uncontroversial measures that we seek to have introduced.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I commend the right hon. Gentleman for his fortitude in this issue. The Minister, too, knows the reasons why we are discussing it. Does the right hon. Gentleman not agree that highly skilled fishermen from the Philippines, for example, and other countries must have streamlined access to this incredibly dangerous profession? Does he agree that the future of our fishing sector depends on it?

Mr Carmichael: I do agree, and I thank the hon. Gentleman not only for his assiduous attendance at these debates and at other meetings but for his use of the term “highly skilled” fishing crews. Those who go to sea to bring the fish home to put on our plates are highly skilled. The root of the problem is in essence one of attitude, which somehow classes those brave, hard-working men as low skilled. Yes, I agree with him.

Dr Philippa Whitford (Central Ayrshire) (SNP): Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the problem seems to be that when skill is defined, it is always still defined in academic terms? Actually, skill is an inherent ability that someone has to do a task, not necessarily academic at all.

Proceedings interrupted.

ROYAL ASSENT

Mr Speaker: I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified her Royal Assent to the following Acts:

Animal Welfare (Service Animals) Act 2019

European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2019.

On resuming—

Mr Carmichael: I am sure we will all sleep better for that—especially knowing that Her Majesty will now be in a position to give her full attention to the matter of visas for fishing crews.

I cannot now remember the point that the hon. Member for Central Ayrshire (Dr Whitford) made, beyond the fact that I certainly agreed with it. [*Interruption.*] It was about academia—indeed. It is worth noting that those who serve on the Migration Advisory Committee and those who have been Ministers are all very learned people. I have long held the view that if we sent some of them out in fishing boats, and if we had more skippers in ministerial offices and in the Migration Advisory Committee, the problem would be solved next Tuesday.

David Duguid (Banff and Buchan) (Con): This is a similar point to the one that the hon. Member for Central Ayrshire (Dr Whitford) just made. It is often argued that the crew members who are much sought after in the Scottish fishing industry and in Northern Ireland are often regarded as low skilled. We can argue about whether they are high skilled or low skilled, but does the right hon. Gentleman agree that we have a shortage of those very specific skills?

Mr Carmichael: That is absolutely the case. If the crews could be found in the fishing ports that the hon. Gentleman and I represent, we would not be here tonight because there would not be a problem. The fact is that for a whole variety of reasons, which have been rehearsed in the past, the crews are not there. It is difficult for the pelagic fleet and the whitefish fleet, because it pushes them out beyond territorial waters, but it makes the viability of the inshore fleet, which routinely fishes within the 12 mile limit, next to impossible.

I remind the Minister that, in July last year, she said:

“I recognise that the fishing industry will be best placed to take advantage of those future opportunities”—

that is how she earlier described the post-Brexit situation—
“if it has the workforce that it needs.”

It is manifestly still the case today, as I can see from my mailbag and email inbox, that the industry does not have the workforce it needs. The fact that there are so many hon. Members in the Chamber tonight at gone 11 o'clock bears further testimony to that.

The Minister went on to say:

“Two key points will be to the fore when we consider the industry's future labour needs. First, as we leave the European Union, we will take back control of immigration and have an opportunity to reframe the immigration system...In making sure that that happens, we will need the best evidence available, which is why we have commissioned the independent Migration Advisory Committee to report on the economic and social impacts of the UK's departure from the EU and on how the UK's immigration policy should best align with the Government's industrial strategy. The committee will report in the autumn, and the Government will take full account of its recommendations when setting out their proposals for the future immigration system.”—*Official Report*, 11 July 2018; Vol. 644, c. 1082.]

She went on to acknowledge the case that many of us made about the urgency of the matter—it was urgent in July last year.

I now wish to turn the House's attention to the Migration Advisory Committee's report of last September. The section entitled “Productivity, innovation, investment

and training impacts” on page 2 of the executive summary includes an interesting paragraph—paragraph 14—which states:

“The research we commissioned showed that overall there is no evidence that migration has had a negative impact on the training of the UK-born workforce. Moreover, there is some evidence to suggest that skilled migrants have a positive impact on the quantity of training available to the UK-born workforce.”

That is a very small point, but I mention it because in the debate in July several hon. Members said that there was a real problem with the training available, and that it was because of that that we had had to resort, in the short to medium term, to bringing in non-EEA nationals.

One of the most disappointing parts of the committee's report is that headed “Community impacts”, which is to be found on page 4 of the executive summary. It rates only nine lines, and the related part in the full report runs to some five pages only, most of which comprises graphs. It speaks about some of the issues, which the committee identifies as community impacts, and states:

“The impacts of migration on communities are hard to measure owing to their subjective nature which means there is a risk they are ignored.”

However, it goes on to talk about some things—for example, the impact on crime and on how people view their own communities—but there is not a word in that part about population levels, which is absolutely critical in most island and coastal communities to which the fishing industry is confined. There is nothing to be found about the fact that the inability of boats to go to sea has a massive impact on the shore-side industries, which in turn has a massive impact on the viability of schools, post offices and all sorts of local public services.

Bill Grant (Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock) (Con): Following on from that aspect, the Department's assumption that vessels can simply be crewed by locals is indeed just not true: it cannot be done. We must have a visa system that attracts multi-skilled individuals from beyond these shores and beyond the EEA to ensure we have a fully crewed fishing fleet to do the work required of it.

Mr Carmichael: That is the other reason why I thought I would not bother rehearsing the arguments—I anticipated plenty of people doing so in the Chamber this evening. The hon. Gentleman makes a very good point, and I congratulate him on it. It is one I have made in the past, as have other hon. Members. It is as true today as it was in July, and it all contributes to my and my constituents' sense of frustration that now, getting into the middle of April, we are still no further forward.

Douglas Ross (Moray) (Con): When the right hon. Gentleman held a debate last July, England was losing a World cup semi-final. I am pleased to say that the football fortunes are better this time, with Scotland's women beating Brazil 1-0 tonight, so I congratulate him on any link there.

Does the right hon. Gentleman agree with me that there is a simple solution? Previously, we had a scheme that allowed non-EEA workers to work within the fishing industry. It was successful, and it did what it was intended to do. There is a simple solution for the Minister, which is to stand up at the Dispatch Box and say we will revert to that scheme.

Mr Carmichael: That has perfect simplicity. I will not get into a conversation, with the hon. Gentleman in particular, on the subject of football—there are very few people in this House who know less about the subject than I do—but he brings welcome news to the House. The point about the previous system is a good one because it also has a bearing on the conclusions of the Migration Advisory Committee about what they describe, I think pejoratively, as “low-skilled workers”.

To quote from the executive summary again—I will look in a bit more detail at the substantive parts of the report in a second—at paragraph 36 on page 5, the committee states:

“We do not recommend an explicit work migration route for low-skilled workers with the possible exception of a seasonal agricultural workers schemes.”

In fact, such a scheme has subsequently, however inadequately, been introduced. It observes, quite drily:

“This is likely to be strongly opposed by the affected sectors.”

It goes on to say at paragraph 37:

“If there is to be a route for low-skilled migrant workers we recommend using an expanded youth mobility scheme rather than employer-led sector-based routes.”

This is quite telling about the work of the Migration Advisory Committee, because it seems to be suggesting, when looking at sector-based routes, that it rejects such a route because those coming to the UK for these, as it calls them, low-skilled jobs, should then be able to move from sector to sector. It is ridiculous: the idea that somebody is going to come from the Philippines to work in a whitefish or pelagic boat out of Lerwick, and then go and take a job in a bar or picking fruit or whatever, just shows how divorced it is from the reality of what it has been charged with considering. But probably the most insulting part of this piece of work is the reference to youth mobility and a cultural exchange scheme for people aged 18 to 30 from a number of listed participating countries.

Hugh Gaffney (Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill) (Lab): Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the fishing industry should be appealing to people on a career basis, but that, in the meantime, the Scottish fishing industry needs non-EEA fishermen, and the Government must recognise that and play their part?

Mr Carmichael: That is absolutely the case. It is going to take a long time to get back to having fishing as a career, because the fishing industry has been talked down by teachers, career advisers and the rest for years now. I understand the reasons for that, but I think they are misplaced. It will be a long time before we change that attitude—and it is attitude that is behind this.

Dr Whitford: Is that not an issue when, particularly up and down the west coast, where inshore fishing is hit, we have skippers who own boats and therefore should be really successful but are not at sea because they cannot get crew?

Mr Carmichael: Indeed. They cannot get crew, so they cannot land fish, which affects jobs in the processing sector. There is a ripple impact, which affects everyone from the shoreside suppliers right the way down the line.

Returning to the youth mobility scheme, the Migration Advisory Committee concludes, at paragraph 7.53 on page 118:

“If the Government does want to provide a safety valve for the employers of low-skilled workers then an expanded Youth Mobility route could potentially provide a good option. The benefits of this option are that younger migrants are more likely to be net fiscal contributors (because the scheme does not allow dependants) and workers have freedom of movement between employers, which is likely to reduce the risk that employers will use migrants’ visa status to hold down their wages.”

So, according to the Migration Advisory Committee, the answer to the crew shortages in our fishing ports is to crew boats using New Zealanders and Australians on a gap year. I just wonder what world these people live in. That is insulting, and it is not just an insult from the Migration Advisory Committee; since the Minister and her colleagues rely on the report as the basis for continuing to refuse the most modest and common-sense proposal, it is an insult from those on the Treasury Bench themselves.

My plea to the Minister is simple. We have made this case times without number. Will she now please start to listen?

11.22 pm

The Minister for Immigration (Caroline Nokes): I congratulate the right hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr Carmichael) on securing the debate, and I am grateful to the other hon. Members who have intervened.

As the right hon. Gentleman pointed out, this is not the first time he has had an Adjournment debate on this topic. The last occasion was indeed on 11 July last year, although I would like to correct my hon. Friend the Member for Moray (Douglas Ross), who made the point that England were losing their World cup semi-final. If I remember correctly, they were not losing while we were having the debate; it was not until we had adjourned to the Smoking Room that I managed to see England lose. As an English Member responding to contributions from a number of Scottish colleagues that night, I was very conscious that they may have slightly different ambitions for the evening when it came to the football.

At the invitation of the right hon. Gentleman, I would like to bring the House up to date with what has happened in the nine months since we were last gathered for a debate on this important subject. The first thing to mention is that I spent some of last summer on the road. It is always—perhaps particularly at the moment—good to get away from this place. I visited agricultural and fishing communities in both Scotland and Northern Ireland, and I was able to listen at first hand to the concerns of those working in those industries. I found it incredibly valuable to hear what they had to say.

The second point—the right hon. Gentleman referenced this significantly in his speech—is that the Migration Advisory Committee issued its report on the impact of EEA migrants last September, with recommendations on the future system. The MAC took evidence from a wide range of organisations and individuals and visited every region of the United Kingdom, and that included talking to representatives of the fishing sector. I recognise that not everybody agrees with the MAC’s conclusions—probably an impossibility, given the subject matter—but I do not think that anyone can dispute the thoroughness and rigour of its approach.

Mr Carmichael: I very much dispute the rigour and thoroughness. The MAC has taken a broad range of views, in a broad range of sectors. It has given no specific consideration at all to the needs of the fishing industry. Will the Minister, either by going back to the MAC or else by some other route, ensure that we get the proper consideration of the industry's needs that—as surely must be apparent from the parts of the report that I have read out—they have not yet been given?

Caroline Nokes: The right hon. Gentleman will be conscious that the MAC's commission was quite wide ranging—as I pointed out, it spoke to the representatives of the fishing industry—but he will also be aware that at present it is conducting a review of the shortage occupation list at all levels. Whereas previous reviews have looked at higher skill levels—I will address the definition of skills in a moment—this time round the MAC has been asked to look at all skill levels and so will consider industries such as fishing, which we have been talking about this evening.

The hon. Member for Central Ayrshire (Dr Whitford) talked about skill levels, and I think it is worth expanding briefly on that point. As the Minister, I am conscious that when we discuss visas and immigration matters we often use the terminology of skilled and highly skilled. That is in no way to denigrate the range of different skills that are necessary across a wide range of industries. I have had a number of meetings, particularly over the last couple of weeks, in which we have talked about the care sector. Nobody would suggest that those working in care were not highly skilled, with a range of perhaps softer skills, which are absolutely necessary when caring for those with disabilities.

However, the MAC was clear when it gave its advice to us in the autumn that there was no case for schemes for particular sectors in the immigration system, other than agriculture, which has some unique characteristics. Instinctively, that has to be the right approach. Governments should avoid picking particular sectors of the economy for special treatment. That would inevitably be a highly subjective process and a major distortion of the operation of the market. It is also noticeable that the text of the recent report by the expert advisory group on migration and population established by the Scottish Government does not mention fishing once. The MAC has concluded that immigration is not the answer to depopulation in local areas—a point that the right hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland referred to—and that there other measures that the Scottish Government could look to.

Mr Carmichael: Is the Minister telling the House, then, in all seriousness and sincerity, that she agrees with the suggestion that, instead of a sector-based scheme, we should be looking at expanding the youth mobility programme?

Caroline Nokes: If the right hon. Gentleman exercises some patience, I am coming to a number of points that I would like to make.

It is crucial that the House reflects on the fact that the White Paper published in December was the start of a year-long engagement across different regions of the United Kingdom and different sectors of industry. To date, there have already been in excess of 45 engagement events or roundtables, and we have taken evidence from

650 different organisations or individuals in the first three months of this year alone. That process will continue over the course of this year, because I am conscious that we are introducing a future immigration system that will have to reflect the realities of a post-Brexit Britain and that will have to be sufficiently flexible and adaptable to address the needs of an economy that undoubtedly will change in future. It is important that we listen to the concerns raised by industry and hon. Members and get it right.

Jim Shannon: I remind the Minister of the evidence from the Anglo-North Irish Fish Producers Organisation that we left with her when I and other hon. Members went to speak to her. The organisation advertised across the whole of Europe, and of the 140 people who replied only five actually came forward. That is an indication that across Europe we cannot get the people to do the jobs and so, if I can use a fishing term, we have to cast our net wider to get the right people for the job. Those are the facts of the case.

Caroline Nokes: As the hon. Gentleman will have heard me say, we have also asked the MAC to look at a revision of the shortage occupation list. He will know that we have suggested the introduction of a separate shortage occupation list for Northern Ireland, as well as consulting on one for Wales, in addition to the separate list that we already hold for Scotland.

We need to be mindful that tying workers to particular employers or sectors can increase the risk of exploitation. I am sure hon. Members will be aware that recently four United Nations rapporteurs wrote to the Irish Government to point out that their scheme, which has been put in place in Ireland to bring in non-EU workers to work in the fishing industry there, is giving rise to forced labour and exploitation on Irish fishing vessels. There is evidence that laws on minimum wage, maximum hours and safety—the right hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland is laughing as I say this—have been widely flouted.

David Duguid: On the subject of exploitation, I hope my right hon. Friend is looking forward, as I am, to her visiting my constituency in the near future to see the conditions in which a lot of non-EEA workers live and work. I would also like to bring her back to the numbers required in this case. In the horticultural sector, the Home Office has already made an allowance in the form of a pilot scheme for 2,500 people. Without getting into a debate about whether that is enough for that sector, that is twice as many as the number that we are talking about for this sector. The latest estimate I have from the Scottish White Fish Producers Association is that we currently have 800 non-EEA crew members, with 400 from the EU. After Brexit, that will be a total of 1,200, which is less than half the number that will be provided for the horticultural sector. Can such a number of visas be made available to see us through on a non-permanent basis while, at the same time, we develop skills locally?

Caroline Nokes: I have listened to my hon. Friend on this subject on many an occasion. He is a forceful and passionate advocate for the industry. On the seasonal workers scheme in the edible horticultural sector, it is important that we have the opportunity to evaluate the

[Caroline Nokes]

scheme and reflect on it, but I am certainly listening closely to the calls this evening for a similar scheme for fishing.

I am conscious that I only have a few minutes left, but I would like to focus attention on the White Paper, which, as I said, we published back in December. I have already indicated that we will have a year of engagement—we are already three months in. It is important to reflect on the fact that the MAC has already suggested that we reduce the skill level from RQF 6 to RQF 3 for those seeking to come to the UK, post the introduction of the new immigration system. As I said earlier, I am not for one moment suggesting that no skill is required to work in the fishing industry. Indeed, having spoken to people in the sector in both Scotland and Northern Ireland, I am full of admiration for those who work in what are extremely difficult, challenging and sometimes downright dangerous conditions. Having given that important clarification, I would like to repeat that the MAC advised that there should be no specific route for those undertaking jobs below RQF 3. We recognise, however, that after 45 years of free movement, many businesses and employers have come to rely on a steady stream of lower skilled migrant labour. We do not wish to create a cliff edge. Accordingly, the White Paper sets out our intention that as a transitional measure we will create a temporary visa that will allow migrants from low immigration risk countries to come to the UK for up to a year to work in jobs at any skill level.

The White Paper does not represent the Government's last word on this topic; quite the reverse. It is the start of the conversation, not the end, and we are talking to every sector of the economy across every nation of the

United Kingdom and every region of England. As I said earlier, Ministers and officials have held 45 meetings with more than 650 stakeholders, and that work will continue in the coming months. I confirm that it will include representatives of the fishing sector. I also hope that it will give me the opportunity to get out and about and visit the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Banff and Buchan (David Duguid).

I have the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, my right hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough and Whitby (Mr Goodwill), with me this evening, and Members will be aware that the Fisheries Bill is making its progress through the legislative process. With that, I conclude my remarks.

Mr Carmichael: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I sense that the Minister has finished her comments. I want to place on record that she said that I was laughing in relation to safety at sea.

Mr Speaker: The right hon. Gentleman is signalling that he was not.

Mr Carmichael: Indeed. As a one-time member of the national council of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, that is a matter that I take seriously. Such mirth as I was displaying had more to do with the Minister's apparent enthusiasm, rare in Government circles these days, for the reports of UN rapporteurs.

Mr Speaker: The right hon. Gentleman has made his own point in his own way.

11.35 pm

House adjourned without Question put (Standing Order No. 9(7)).

Written Statements

Monday 8 April 2019

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

Companies House Public Targets

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Kelly Tolhurst): My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State of Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Lord Henley) has made the following statement:

I have set Companies House the following targets for the year 2019-20:

Public Targets

Ensure that our digital services are available 99.9% of the time.

Ensure that 97% of companies have an up-to-date confirmation statement.

Achieve a customer satisfaction rate of 83%.

Provide a digital service to enable someone at risk to apply for their personal data to be protected.

Deliver digital services that transform the end to end accounts filing journey.

Increase job applications from underrepresented groups by 10%.

Ensure that our people understand, and are engaged with, our purpose and vision, achieving a score in this area in the civil service people survey in the upper quartile.

Reduce the cost of our business activities by 3.5%.

[HCWS1495]

DEFENCE

Counter-Daesh Operations

The Secretary of State for Defence (Gavin Williamson): The House may welcome an update on the military campaign against Daesh in Iraq and Syria. Forces in Iraq and Syria now say that, with the support of the global Coalition, they have liberated all the towns and cities that were once occupied by Daesh. This is a huge achievement, and one in which UK forces should take great pride for the part they played in this success. The Global Coalition assesses there are currently not enough Daesh fighters remaining in Iraq and Syria to make any further significant territorial gains. Nonetheless, it is important to note that this is not the defeat of Daesh as an organisation. Daesh has dispersed into a cellular structure in order to maintain insurgency activity, planting improvised explosive devices, conducting extortion, kidnapping and mounting terrorist attacks. The UK, as a partner in the Coalition, is committed to defeating this ongoing threat, in order to guarantee the lasting defeat of Daesh's ambitions, to build on the stability of the region and protect our interests and our national security.

The UK has contributed sophisticated intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities to find, identify and enable the Coalition to degrade Daesh's military capabilities, which is as crucial to the air campaign now as it was at Daesh's territorial height. ISR alone does not make a successful campaign, however; since the beginning of operations over Iraq and Syria, the UK's Tornado, Typhoon and Reaper aircraft have released over 4,300 weapons against Daesh targets to reduce their military capabilities.

In 2015, the then Secretary of State for Defence, Sir Michael Fallon, committed to providing Parliament with UK airstrike numbers from the Coalition's datasets to allow us to compare our contribution with other Coalition partners. This was a move away from using a UK dataset and methodology to calculate our airstrike contribution to the Counter-Daesh fight. Following the House of Commons Defence Committee's request to provide a biannual breakdown of our air contribution to the Counter-Daesh campaign in Iraq and Syria, I have reviewed the method by which our contribution to the Coalition's air campaign are calculated and from this decided to discontinue reporting on airstrikes, which can be interpreted differently each time they are viewed, to focus on reporting the number of actual weapon release events.

Under doctrine, an airstrike is one or more weapon releases against the same target by one or more aircraft. With this definition, two aircraft dropping weapons on the same target could be seen by one person as one airstrike, and as two airstrikes by another. We do not consider this a reliable method of reporting our contribution. A weapon release event is the employment of a single weapon system, by a single airframe, at one time, against a single target. As such, a weapon release event will always be calculated and reported in the same way and cannot be misinterpreted.

[HCWS1498]

HOME DEPARTMENT

Serious Youth Violence

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Sajid Javid): The Government are deeply concerned about the recent rise in serious violence, particularly knife crime, which is robbing too many children and young people of their futures. This is a challenge that affects all of society, and agencies must come together in a co-ordinated, wide-reaching and long-term effort.

In order to ensure the strongest possible response, the Prime Minister hosted a serious youth violence summit at 10 Downing Street, with the support of the Home Secretary, from 1 to 4 April. The central aim of the summit was to ensure a shared understanding and commitment to a multiagency, "public health" approach to tackling knife crime and serious violence more generally.

This approach involves partners across different sectors—such as education, health, social services, offender management services, housing, youth and victim services, working closely with community and faith leaders, and the voluntary and charitable sectors—taking joint action

to address the underlying risk factors that increase the likelihood that an individual will become a victim or a perpetrator of violence.

The Prime Minister opened the summit by chairing a roundtable meeting with a range of experts, representatives and practitioners from key sectors, community leaders, young people, and cross-party politicians. Alongside the Prime Minister, both I and other senior Ministers discussed with these experts what more can be done to tackle recent rises in serious violence. This was followed by a series of themed sessions chaired by Secretaries of State and Ministers during the week, aimed at harnessing expert knowledge and creating the conditions to boost joint working across sectors and organisations. I will place a full list of the attendees—of whom there were well over 100 over the course of the week—in the Libraries of both Houses.

The full programme of thematic sessions, which took place over the course of the summit, included:

Best practice in law enforcement, chaired by the Minister for Policing and the Fire Service;

The role of education, chaired by the Secretary of State for Education;

Investing in communities, chaired by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government;

Positive activities for young people, chaired by the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport;

Creating opportunities for young people, chaired by the Minister for Crime, Safeguarding and Vulnerability;

The role of the health sector, chaired by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care;

Effectiveness of the criminal justice system, chaired by the Secretary of State for Justice.

The following coincided with this summit:

I announced that Impetus, in partnership with the Early Intervention Foundation and Social Investment Business, will run the new youth endowment fund, which will support interventions with children and young people at risk of involvement in crime and violence, based on £200 million of new Government funding.

The Government announced £100 million additional funding in 2019-20 to tackle serious violence, including £80 million of new funding from the Treasury. This will allow police to swiftly crackdown on knife crime on the areas of the country most affected by knife crime and will also allow for investment in violence reduction units.

That I will be making it simpler for the police in the seven forces particularly affected by violent crime, to use section 60 (area-wide) stop and search powers where they reasonably believe that an incident involving serious violence may occur. This pilot will be for up to a year, with a review after six months—after which we will make decisions on next steps. 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.

I launched a public consultation on a new legal duty to ensure that public bodies work together to protect young people at risk of becoming involved in knife crime. This would underpin the multiagency approach already being driven by the serious violence strategy, which stresses the importance of early intervention to tackle the root causes of violent crime. Similar approaches have been used in Scotland and Wales, and are designed to ensure that every part of the system is supporting young people with targeted interventions before they commit violence or are groomed by gangs.

These announcements build on the significant progress we have made in delivering the commitments set out in the serious violence strategy published in April 2018.

These include: the early intervention youth fund of £22 million, through which the Home Office is already supporting 29 projects in England and Wales; the new national county lines co-ordination centre; an antknife crime community fund which provided £1.5 million in 2018-19 to support 68 local projects to tackle knife crime; and a national knife crime media campaign—#knifefree—to raise young people's awareness of the consequences of knife crime; and the establishment of the serious violence taskforce, which I chair and which is attended by Members of Parliament, Ministers, senior police officers, representatives of agencies in the public and voluntary sectors and others, to drive action across a number of fronts.

The summit has reinforced my view, shared across Government, that there is not one single solution to rising levels of serious violence, and that co-ordinated action is needed across a number of fronts. Attendees agreed on the need to understand the causes and consequences of serious violence, focused on prevention and early intervention, and informed by evidence and rigorous evaluation of interventions. To do this, we must bring together information, data and intelligence and encourage organisations and individuals to work in concert rather than in isolation, focusing on those identified as being most vulnerable to involvement in serious violent crime. Attendees identified many examples of good practice taking place in local areas and communities, and there was consensus on the importance of a shared approach to preventing and tackling serious violence.

In particular, the summit has already enabled the following outcomes:

The creation of a new ministerial taskforce, chaired by the Prime Minister, to drive cross-Government action. This will be supported by a new, dedicated, serious violence team in the Cabinet Office to support cross-departmental co-ordination.

There is commitment to better data collection and sharing of appropriate data between the healthcare sector and other key organisations in order to protect children, and to make it easier for health professionals to play an enhanced role in reducing violence. This will be accompanied by the rollout of mental health support teams based in and around schools and education settings, to help vulnerable children within their community, some of which will be in areas most affected by knife crime. The teams will be available to support children directly or indirectly affected by knife crime as part of the school or college response.

There is an expansion of the partnership with the Premier League to increase one of its flagship community programmes, Premier League Kicks, which uses football to inspire young people to develop their potential and build stronger, safer communities. Sport England, which invests more than £10 million in projects that use sport to support crime reduction, has also pledged to increase investment in sport and physical activity for children in hot spot areas.

There is an extension of the support provided by the National Homicide Service to witnesses, as part of a raft of new measures, which will focus on supporting victims and witnesses of violent crime and directing youth offenders away from further violence. These include: extending emotional, practical, trauma and counselling support beyond victims to now include those who witness murder or manslaughter in London; specialist training for staff at youth offender institutions to spot signs of past abuse, exploitation or serious violence experienced by the youths in custody and help direct them to support services; and reviewing the victims' code, which sets out what services victims are entitled to receive, to make it clearer what support witnesses of serious violent crime can access.

These deliverables represent the first step of an increased programme of work across Government—and beyond—to tackle serious youth violence. Once the ministerial taskforce has been established, it will agree a plan of action and then oversee its implementation going forward. We will continue to keep Parliament updated. The summit demonstrates the commitment from the Prime Minister, myself and Ministers across Government, setting a clear direction and galvanising action to tackle serious violence. Working together, this new approach will ensure we meet the scourge of youth violence head on, so that more families are spared the unimaginable suffering that has already been endured by so many.

[HCWS1497]

Windrush Compensation Scheme

The Minister for Immigration (Caroline Nokes): Yesterday the Home Secretary announced the launch of the Windrush Compensation Scheme. The Government deeply regret what has happened to some members of the Windrush generation and the launch of the compensation scheme marks a key milestone in righting the wrongs they have experienced.

Detailed information about the compensation scheme, including the rules that govern the scheme, with the forms and guidance that people need to make a claim, are available online at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/windrush-compensation-scheme>. Our helpline is also open now on: 0800 678 1925 for those wishing to receive printed copies of the claim form or for any other queries, this is free if calling from within the UK. Those calling from outside the UK will be called back.

I would like to clarify, further to questions raised with the Home Secretary on the Floor of the House, three issues in relation to eligibility to apply for compensation. The first is in relation to those who are not resident in the UK. A Commonwealth citizen outside the UK, who was settled in the UK before 1 January 1973, who has settled status, right of abode or is now a British citizen, or whose settled status has lapsed due to being absent from the UK for a period of two or more years is eligible to apply for compensation.

Secondly, the definition of a close family member for the purpose of the compensation scheme is a spouse or civil partner living with the claimant, cohabitee for continuous period of two years or more, a parent, a child or a sibling. Close family members are entitled to

claim regardless of whether a primary claimant chooses to make an application and whether said claimant is deceased.

Thirdly, the definition of serious criminality for the purposes of the compensation scheme is defined as a conviction that received a sentence of imprisonment of four years or more, and that the offending was of such a nature that makes it inappropriate to make an award in whole or part. This provision does not apply to a conviction and sentence outside of the UK for conduct which on the date of the conviction was not an offence in the UK.

The Home Office is committed to raising awareness of the scheme, and to encouraging eligible people of all nationalities to submit a claim. Eligibility for compensation goes beyond members of the Caribbean Commonwealth, and we are putting in place a programme of events with key stakeholders, faith and community organisations to promote both the scheme and the wider work of the Commonwealth citizens taskforce. The first of such events is scheduled for Lambeth town hall on Friday 5 April and full details are available via the gov.uk page.

Regrettably, in promoting the scheme via email to interested parties, an administrative error was made which has meant data protection requirements have not been met, for which the Home Office apologises unreservedly.

This occurred in emails sent to some of the individuals and organisations who had registered an interest in being kept informed about the launch of the compensation scheme, which included other recipients' email addresses. Five batches of emails, each with 100 recipients, were affected. No other personal data was included.

A recall was commenced as soon as the problem had been identified. The departmental data protection officer has been informed and an internal review will be conducted to ensure this cannot happen again. The Department has voluntarily notified the Information Commissioner's Office of the incident.

I am firmly committed to doing right by the Windrush generation. The compensation scheme is an important step towards that and I will ensure that action is taken to ensure the highest standards are met not only in the processing of cases, but also in continued efforts to publicise the scheme and ensure those entitled to redress receive it.

[HCWS1496]

ORAL ANSWERS

Monday 8 April 2019

	<i>Col. No.</i>		<i>Col. No.</i>
HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT	1	HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT—continued	
Coastal Communities: Funding	8	Housing: Newcastle	17
Council Tax Increases	6	Housing Sector	15
Economic Growth: Midlands Engine	16	Leaving the EU: Local Authority Funding	1
Home Ownership	18	Leigh: Local Authority Funding	13
Homeless People: Death Rates	11	Parish Councils	14
Homelessness: Former Armed Services Personnel..	17	Social Housing	10
Homes for Social Rent	4	Topical Questions	19
Homes for Social Rent	7	Vulnerable Children: Local Authority Support	13

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

Monday 8 April 2019

	<i>Col. No.</i>		<i>Col. No.</i>
BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY	1WS	HOME DEPARTMENT	2WS
Companies House Public Targets.....	1WS	Serious Youth Violence	2WS
DEFENCE	1WS	Windrush Compensation Scheme	5WS
Counter-Daesh Operations	1WS		

No proofs can be supplied. Corrections that Members suggest for the Bound Volume should be clearly marked on a copy of the daily Hansard - not telephoned - and *must be received in the Editor's Room, House of Commons,*

**not later than
Monday 15 April 2019**

STRICT ADHERENCE TO THIS ARRANGEMENT GREATLY FACILITATES THE
PROMPT PUBLICATION OF BOUND VOLUMES

Members may obtain excerpts of their speeches from the Official Report (within one month from the date of publication), by applying to the Editor of the Official Report, House of Commons.

CONTENTS

Monday 8 April 2019

List of Government and Principal Officers of the House

Oral Answers to Questions [Col. 1] [see index inside back page]
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government

New Member [Col. 25]

Access to Medical Cannabis [Col. 26]
Answer to urgent question—(Matt Hancock)

Libya [Col. 42]
Answer to urgent question—(Mark Field)

Online Harms White Paper [Col. 55]
Statement—(Jeremy Wright)

Business of the House [Col. 78]
Statement—(Andrea Leadsom)

Exiting the European Union (Customs) [Col. 89]
Motion—(Graham Stuart)—agreed to

Backbench Business
UN International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination [Col. 99]
Motion—(Faisal Rashid)—agreed to

European Withdrawal (No. 5) Bill [Col. 117]
Lords amendments considered

Petitions [Col. 146]

UK Fishing Industry: Non-EEA Visas [Col. 148]
Debate on motion for Adjournment

Royal Assent to Acts passed [Col. 148]

Written Statements [Col. 1WS]

Written Answers to Questions [The written answers can now be found at <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers>]
