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**HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES**

(HANSARD)

Thursday 25 July 2019

House of Commons

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The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

The Secretary of State was asked—

Climate Change Adaptation

1. **Liz Twist** (Blaydon) (Lab): What plans she has to implement the recommendations on climate change adaptation in the May 2019 Committee on Climate Change report on net zero carbon emissions. [912183]

The Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr Robert Goodwill): The Government recognise the need for urgent action on climate change—on both mitigation and adaptation. For example, we are investing £2.6 billion over six years in flood defences. Some sectors are already adapting to the changing climate. When I visited the Fruit Focus event in Kent, I learned that the climate is now better suited for apricot production and for vineyards. The good news is that this will mean more high-quality English sparkling wine to toast the health and success of our new Prime Minister.

Liz Twist: Do I detect an end-of-term feel about the Minister's comments?

What analysis has the Minister undertaken of the impact on homes, infrastructure and communities as a result of climate change over the next 10 to 20 years? Will he share that analysis with the House, so that Members are able to assess the impact on our constituencies?

Mr Goodwill: I thank the hon. Lady for that question. The Committee on Climate Change assessed 33 sectors, and we welcome its report. We are committed to taking robust action to improve resilience to climate change. We will formally respond to the Committee's detailed recommendations in October, in line with the timetable set out in the Climate Change Act 2008, and that will include the way climate change affects communities.

Richard Benyon (Newbury) (Con): Does my hon. Friend the Minister agree that tackling and adapting to climate change has the virtue not only of being the right policy—making sure that we continue to be a world leader in this regard—but of being popular?

Mr Goodwill: As we switch the way we support our farmers from the basic payment system to paying public money for public goods, getting action on climate change will be just one of those public goods that we can deliver outside the European Union.

Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP): The Minister might be toasting the new Prime Minister, but I do wonder how much hot air is being generated and what contribution that will make to the net emissions target. The Scottish Government have committed to net zero by 2045, rather than the UK Government's 2050 target. Is the UK not willing to match that level of ambition?

Mr Goodwill: When it comes to hot air, pots and kettles spring to mind.

I look forward to working with the Scottish Administration to achieve the target. This is not a party political issue. Every single part of this House wants to take action on climate change, and it is vital that we do so to deliver a cleaner and greener planet in the future.

Colin Clark (Gordon) (Con): This is perfect weather for barbecues and enjoying Scottish beef. Does the Minister agree that the beef industry is doing its bit to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from burping cows?

Mr Goodwill: Methane is a very potent greenhouse gas, but it is interesting to note that, unlike carbon dioxide, which takes 100 years to dissipate, methane dissipates in about 12 years. That means that if we can reduce the current rate of methane production—never mind net zero—we will actually reduce the amount of methane in the atmosphere, which will be an important way of contributing to our net zero targets.

Forestry Investment Zones: England

2. **Anne-Marie Trevelyan** (Berwick-upon-Tweed) (Con): What steps she is taking to designate forestry investment zones in England. [912184]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (David Rutley): We are piloting the first forestry investment zone in Cumbria to learn how best to support long-term forestry investment. I was delighted to visit Northumberland last week to discuss with my hon. Friend and others how to increase tree planting rates. We have everyone from the county council to the national park agreeing to work together to increase woodland creation in that great county.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan: I welcome the Minister's visit to Northumberland last week and thank him for his kind words. Does he agree that what we need is a whole of Northumberland FIZ, which will be structured to allow long-term private investment to support local landowners to plant and, importantly, maintain extensive commercial and amenity planting projects, so that our 11 million new carbon sinks—our trees—will be a reality, not just a plan?

David Rutley: I welcome my hon. Friend's further comments on the development of a FIZ in Northumberland and completely agree that we need to do more to make our long-term tree planting aspirations a reality. As we discussed last week, we need to explore further the opportunities around the potential FIZ in Northumberland, basing them around the lessons learned from the Cumbria pilot. I welcome the positive work that has already taken place. We clearly need to do a lot more to achieve our ambitious targets across the country and in Northumberland.

Mr Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): The Minister knows that the Tory Administration in the 18th and 19th centuries stole the public land from the people. That is the truth of the matter. The enclosure Acts were a stain on the history of this country. Is it not about time that we gave that land back and grew trees on it—and that we did so seriously, not through playing around with words?

David Rutley: Of course we need to do more to plant more trees, and we are taking that action. We are already committed to planting 11 million trees by 2022 and we are well on target to achieve that aim, but our aspirations are much bigger—going to 12% level of woodland cover by 2060.

Plastic Pollution

3. **Vicky Ford** (Chelmsford) (Con): What steps she is taking to tackle plastic pollution. [912185]

17. **Sir David Amess** (Southend West) (Con): What steps she is taking to tackle plastic pollution. [912199]

The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Theresa Villiers) *rose—*

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Theresa Villiers: Thank you. It is good to be back at this Dispatch Box.

Our priority is preventing plastic waste from entering the environment in the first instance. The resources and waste strategy sets out our plans to eliminate avoidable plastic waste, including measures to tackle certain single-use plastic items. This week we published Government responses to consultations on measures that include making recycling easier and ensuring that producers pay the full cost of managing their packaging waste responsibly.

Vicky Ford: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on her new role.

Pupils from Kings Road Primary School and the Bishops' Primary School in Chelmsford want to do more to reduce single-use plastic. I have obviously given them copies of "Vicky's Guide to Going Green", but what top tips would my right hon. Friend like to share?

Theresa Villiers: There are many top tips in our 25-year environment plan, and I commend my predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Surrey Heath (Michael Gove), for his world-leading work on this matter. A key message to get across to all the schoolchildren around the country who want to take part in tackling plastic waste is: don't drop litter.

Sir David Amess: I also congratulate my right hon. Friend on her appointment. Will she join me in congratulating the students from the National Citizen Service I met at Roots Hall in Southend on Monday, who, inspired by David Attenborough, are right at this very minute picking plastic from our beautiful coastline in Southend?

Theresa Villiers: I thank my hon. Friend for his question. Both questions illustrate that there is a real attitude out there among the public that they want to be part of resolving this urgent problem. The Government will continue to support organisations such

as the National Citizen Service to engage young people and ensure that they are playing a part in the Government's determination to address this problem because people are concerned about it.

Nick Smith (Blaenau Gwent) (Lab): Nearly 40 million plastic bottles are used in the UK every day, but the Government's bottle return scheme does not kick in for four years. Why so long?

Theresa Villiers: We have gone further than any other Government in history on tackling plastic waste. I acknowledge the concern felt about the matter that the hon. Gentleman has raised. We will always try to move as fast as we can to ensure that we are taking the most effective action possible, but we also need to take time to ensure that we get it right. I assure him that I will be working hard to ensure that this action is delivered as soon as possible.

Sandy Martin (Ipswich) (Lab): I welcome the new Secretary of State to her place.

On 1 May, this House unanimously supported Labour's declaration of an environment and climate emergency. The Center for International Environmental Law predicts that plastics will contribute to 13% of global carbon emissions by 2050 if no action is taken, yet the Government's plans do not envisage that extended producer responsibility for packaging will come into force before 2023 or that a 75% recycling rate will be achieved before 2030. Does the Secretary of State accept that the emergency requires much faster action?

Theresa Villiers: I look forward to working with the shadow Front Benchers on these issues. We have gone further and faster than the previous Labour Government with radical changes, including the plastic bag tax and our plans to ban plastic stirrers and other plastic products. We are a world-leading country on this issue, and we will continue to be so because we are determined to tackle the problem.

Air Pollution: Local Authority Funding

4. **Jeff Smith** (Manchester, Withington) (Lab): What assessment the Government have made of the adequacy of funding allocated to support local authority implementation of air pollution reduction plans. [912186]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Dr Thérèse Coffey): The Government have invested £3.5 billion in improving air quality and £495 million is specifically set aside for councils where they are in breach of nitrogen dioxide limits. We will continue to support councils in a variety of ways to improve air quality.

Jeff Smith: Residents and businesses want to play their part in Greater Manchester's plans to reduce air pollution, but unless the Government will properly support plans for vehicle upgrades and for retrofitting, many businesses will not be able to afford to do so. When will the Government give the clarity and the assurances on funding that businesses in Greater Manchester need?

Dr Coffey: I have had to send back the plan to the Mayor of Greater Manchester because it is not ambitious enough in making changes in Manchester as quickly as possible to improve air quality for the residents there.

Justine Greening (Putney) (Con): Local authorities will not be able to fix the massive air pollution that is caused by a third runway expansion at Heathrow. The new Secretary of State and I both voted against that plan, and of course the new Prime Minister is a long-standing opponent. But pollution goes far wider than air pollution—it is also noise pollution—and it is in conflict with our law on net zero carbon emissions by 2050 that this House passed unanimously. Will the new Secretary of State now insist that this project is put on hold and that a review of it is undertaken before any further work is done?

Dr Coffey: It is the absolute priority for the people who are developing the third runway to come forward with a plan that meets environmental targets in law. If they do not, they will not get the consent to make it happen. However, I am highly confident that the operators of Heathrow airport will be able to devise such a plan.

13. [912195] **Rachael Maskell** (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): People with lung conditions find it really difficult to breathe on days like today. Poor air quality contributes to poor lung health, and the World Health Organisation calls this a public health emergency. So will the Secretary of State, as her first act in post, introduce a clean air Act as a priority and a matter of urgency?

Dr Coffey: The hon. Lady is absolutely right to talk about the importance of tackling air pollution with regard to lung health and other medical conditions. That is why we have been consistently working on this ever since I have been an Environment Minister, and air quality continues to improve. We are very conscious that the clean air strategy was welcomed by the World Health Organisation as being world-leading and something that it wanted other countries to pursue. The hon. Lady will well know that measures are being planned on air quality that will be in the forthcoming environment Bill.

Rachel Maclean (Redditch) (Con): Many parents, including those in Redditch, are worried about the impact of air pollution on their children's lungs, especially when they are going to and from school. Will the new Secretary of State, who I warmly welcome to her place, ensure that local authorities' funding under the clean air strategy is adequate to help them to tackle this problem?

Dr Coffey: I hope that my hon. Friend is aware that councils already have many powers to improve issues relating to cars and other vehicles, especially around schools. I would encourage her to work with Redditch Borough Council and Worcestershire County Council on taking advantage of those powers. She will also be aware that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has indicated that we are going to increase the fines for idling.

Tree Planting

5. **Julia Lopez** (Hornchurch and Upminster) (Con): What plans she has to increase tree planting rates. [912187]

11. **Maria Caulfield** (Lewes) (Con): What plans she has to increase tree planting rates. [912193]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (David Rutley): To encourage more planting, we have modified our main grant schemes and announced additional funding of £10 million for urban trees and £50 million for the woodland carbon guarantee scheme. We have invested £5.7 million in the northern forest. We have also reappointed our tree champion to develop our tree strategy so that we can plan to consult on this later in the year. That demonstrates our commitment to achieving our goal of planting 11 million trees during this Parliament, and our wider aspirations.

Julia Lopez: I congratulate the Secretary of State on her welcome return to the top table. Earlier this year, her predecessor visited the wonderful Thames Chase community forest in my constituency and planted a tree to contribute to this growing woodland. With the forest likely to be impacted by the lower Thames crossing, will the Minister provide an update on the Department's biodiversity net gain plans to ensure that major infrastructure projects have the potential to enhance, not detract from, precious green spaces?

David Rutley: I know how hard my hon. Friend works for her constituency. We have committed to mandating biodiversity net gain through the forthcoming environment Bill. That policy will deliver measurable improvements to biodiversity through development including housing and local infrastructure, thereby making sure that development has a positive environmental impact through habitat creation or enhancement. The Government are also exploring the best approaches to net gain for nationally significant infrastructure, including the lower Thames crossing.

Maria Caulfield: Trees are a vital tool in combating carbon emissions, but in Seaford and Alfriston in my constituency, trees are having to be cut down because of elm disease. What support can the Minister give my local council to ensure not just that those trees are replaced but that even more are planted?

David Rutley: As my hon. Friend knows, I am very aware of Seaford and Alfriston, and while no specific grants are currently available to replace elm in urban settings, there are opportunities for funding new planting in and around our towns and cities under the recently launched £10 million urban tree challenge fund. That fund will support the planting of at least 130,000 trees across towns and cities in England and contribute towards our manifesto commitment of planting 1 million urban trees by 2022.

Graham P. Jones (Hyndburn) (Lab): Hyndburn Borough Council has planted an awful lot of trees. In fact, I believe that it has planted more trees than any other borough in Lancashire. When will the Government

reward Labour councils such as Hyndburn Borough Council for the work they have done to meet the Government's targets?

David Rutley: I praise the work they are doing. There is a huge opportunity with the northern forest, which the Government have helped to kick-start. It will make a huge difference, working through many community forests. I was pleased to be able to plant the first Government-funded tree in Bury just a few months ago.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I thank the Minister for his response. Tree cover across the UK mainland is approximately 12%, and in Northern Ireland it is only 8%. What is the Minister doing collectively with the devolved Administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to improve the lungs of the world by planting more trees?

David Rutley: I praise the work that is going on across the country. Clearly, there is important work going on in Scotland that we need to learn from. We are absolutely committed to taking forward this important work, as I know the hon. Gentleman is, because we need many more trees to achieve our targets in addressing and tackling climate change.

Single Use Plastics Directive

6. **Alex Chalk (Cheltenham) (Con):** What her timescale is for bringing forward legislative proposals to implement the single use plastics directive 2019/904. [912188]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Dr Thérèse Coffey): The Government strongly supported the single use plastics directive, partly because we were already undertaking several of the actions proposed. I am confident that the necessary regulations will be brought in within two years, as happens with directives, but as I say, we are already on the case.

Alex Chalk: I am grateful to the Minister for that answer. I recently arranged for a bottle deposit scheme of the type used in Norway to come to Cheltenham high street, and I know from the reaction of my constituents that there is a huge demand to drive down the number of plastic bottles in our environment. Of course we have to get the detail right, but does the Minister agree that we should look at such a scheme very carefully, with a view to introducing it as quickly as possible?

Dr Coffey: Indeed. The Government published their response to the consultation just the other day, and we have indicated again our support for continuing with the scheme. I know that people are impatient—I am impatient. I have now been to about seven countries to look at their deposit return schemes. It is complex. We have the biggest on-the-go market of any country in Europe, and we need to ensure that we have a system that works, alongside all the other reforms we are making, such as extended producer responsibility and the plastics tax. It is important to ensure that those are co-ordinated and will have the desired effect.

Access to Food

7. **Bill Wiggin (North Herefordshire) (Con):** What discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on helping to ensure that everyone has access to (a) safe, (b) healthy and (c) affordable food. [912189]

The Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr Robert Goodwill): Ministers and officials regularly discuss all aspects of food security, including accessibility. We have long-established relationships with industry and work collaboratively to ensure that the UK continues to have access to safe, nutritious and affordable food from a wide range of sources, particularly from British farmers. I plan to visit the Game Fair tomorrow, so I will make a plug for British game and the grouse that will be coming into our larders following the glorious twelfth.

Bill Wiggin: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that answer, particularly because my newly appointed right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has not had a chance to speak to her Cabinet colleagues. The problem with safe food is that we need to be able to read on the label that it is safe. Natasha Ednan-Laperouse died because she ate food that was contaminated with sesame seeds, but the label did not make that clear. We still have a problem in this country with honesty in labelling. Can more be done, to ensure that the label says what it is?

Mr Goodwill: Clear labelling is vital, particularly when it comes to ingredients that may provoke allergic reactions. We have learned a very sad lesson from that situation, and the Government have responded.

Kerry McCarthy (Bristol East) (Lab): On the subject of the Game Fair, it is very sad that Chris Packham has been banned from attending to speak out against grouse shooting. I would have thought that the Minister would welcome free speech on the subject.

On food, the Government grant for school meals has not risen in the last five years. It is £2.30 per pupil. It is really difficult to provide nutritious meals for children for that amount. Can he speak to the Secretary of State for Education about that?

Mr Goodwill: I will certainly speak to the new Secretary of State for Education, a fellow Scarborough, to discuss that issue. It is very important that we have good, nutritious school meals available for children.

Neil Parish (Tiverton and Honiton) (Con): It is a great pleasure to see the new Secretary of State in her place. I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Surrey Heath (Michael Gove) for all the work he did on agriculture. I want to emphasise that, as we produce food in the future, we can have a better environment, but let us use all the technologies and everything available so that we can have affordable, safe food.

Mr Goodwill: Yes, absolutely. There are a number of new technologies that we can use, not least the opportunities that gene editing may offer to produce healthier, more productive crops in our fields.

Deidre Brock (Edinburgh North and Leith) (SNP): I welcome the new Secretary of State to her place. Changes to the Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (England) Regulations 2018, in line with changes to EU rules for ovine age identification, would go a long way to help ensure access to safe and healthy food and would help our farmers, but I am repeatedly being fobbed off with an excuse that a consultation will be coming soon. When will we see it?

Mr Goodwill: Having spent a lot of my life looking into sheep's mouths in ageing them, I know how important it is to ensure that we have a system that we can demonstrate clearly does not present any risk to health. We were keen to move away from carcass splitting. We took a precautionary approach because of the delays in delivering Brexit, but I hope we can make progress once we have left the European Union.

Caroline Nokes (Romsey and Southampton North) (Con): Access to food also requires access to labour to plant, care for and pick it. Over the last year, I have had many representations from farmers in my constituency and from the National Farmers Union. What representations is my right hon. Friend making to Cabinet colleagues advocating a points-based system to make sure that that has sufficient flex so that there is access to labour not just seasonally, but all year round?

Mr Goodwill: My right hon. Friend and I are both former Immigration Ministers, so we know this issue. Indeed, one of the points made to me at the Fruit Focus event was the need to access labour to pick our fruit. The pilot scheme that my right hon. Friend brought forward during her time at the Home Office is a step in the right direction, but we do need to ensure we can have the workforce to pick the fruit, particularly given the weakness of the pound and the fact that perhaps not all European Union citizens are as attracted to come to the UK as they were.

Fast Fashion

8. **Mary Creagh** (Wakefield) (Lab): What plans the Government have to reduce the (a) environmental and (b) social impact of fast fashion. [912190]

The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Theresa Villiers): The Government will be working through the Waste and Resources Action Programme and with industry on developing an ambitious new phase of the sustainable clothing action plan. We are planning to develop regulatory standards and labels to support durable, repairable and recyclable products; consult on an extended producer responsibility scheme; and support innovation in textile recycling. We are also increasing the transparency of reporting required on modern slavery, and continuing to prioritise the enforcement of national minimum wage legislation.

Mary Creagh: I welcome the Secretary of State to her place, but the announcements she has just made will not go far enough to tackle the fast fashion epidemic, which is being promoted by shows such as "Love Island". It may be bikini weather outside, but when bikinis are being sold for £1 on fast fashion websites, it is clear that workers are not getting what they need. When is she going to bring in extended producer responsibility and ban clothing from landfill?

Theresa Villiers: First, I very much look forward to working with the hon. Lady's Environmental Audit Committee on these and other matters. I very much hope to appear in front of the members of her Committee when there is time in their diary.

The hon. Lady raises very important points. I think there is real consensus across the House that we need action. The Government have a credible plan, which we

are delivering. As I said in response to earlier questions, we need to ensure that we get this right. I can assure her that we will be moving towards solutions on these problems in response to public concern.

Jeremy Lefroy (Stafford) (Con): Does the Secretary of State agree with me that fashion provides very important livelihoods for people in low-income countries around the world? As we, rightly, address the question of sustainability, we must never throw away their livelihoods, which are so important. In fact, we must seek to ensure that those livelihoods are improved.

Theresa Villiers: With all these matters, our goal should be to pursue both prosperity and environmental sustainability at the same time. My hon. Friend makes a very valid point that in taking forward our new regulatory structures to tackle this problem, we must also take into account the impact on developing countries and the interests of people on low incomes.

Sue Hayman (Workington) (Lab): I welcome the Secretary of State to her place. As we have heard, fast fashion has a negative impact on our environment. The Secretary of State mentioned environmental sustainability, but she repeatedly voted against measures to protect the environment and tackle climate change. How can we trust her to deliver the transformative change that we need to tackle the climate and environmental emergency we all face? Will she confirm that net zero is still the Government's target, and if so, will she commit to taking the necessary steps that she previously voted against?

Theresa Villiers: I do not know whose voting record the hon. Lady has been looking at, but it does not sound like mine. The Government are doing more on climate change than ever before, and we are one of the first developed countries in the world to commit to the net zero target—not something that our Labour predecessors were prepared to do. I have backed, with enthusiasm, a succession of vital measures taken by the Government—for example, to ensure that more of our electricity is generated by renewables than ever before.

Topical Questions

T1. [912201] **Maria Caulfield** (Lewes) (Con): If she will make a statement on her departmental responsibilities.

The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Theresa Villiers): I am delighted to have been asked to take up the outstanding work previously begun by my right hon. Friend the Member for Surrey Heath (Michael Gove), and the team of dedicated public servants at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, and its agencies. I look forward to working to deliver the Government's historic commitment to hand on the natural environment in a better state than we found it, by driving up animal welfare, championing and supporting our country's fantastic food, farming and fisheries, and ensuring that we seize the opportunities offered by Brexit.

Maria Caulfield: I warmly welcome the Secretary of State to her role. My constituency has some of the best vineyards in the country, and places such as Breaky

Bottom, Ridgeview and Rathfinny produce award-winning English sparkling wine. What steps will the Secretary of State take to promote English sparkling wine at home and abroad, and may I invite her to visit one of those vineyards to taste that wine for herself?

Theresa Villiers: I would be delighted to take up the invitation to do a little tasting of the fantastic wines to which my hon. Friend refers. The GREAT campaign has a strong focus on the brilliant high-quality food we produce in this country. In June, English sparkling wine was promoted at various events in Japan, and the campaign plans to return there in September and October. In August and September we will support Wine GB at events in the United States.

Dr David Drew (Stroud) (Lab/Co-op): I welcome the Secretary of State to her new position. When will we welcome back the Agriculture Bill and the Fisheries Bill? It is about time we saw them. We last saw them seven months ago, and we need them back.

Theresa Villiers: As the hon. Gentleman will know, such matters are in the hands of the Leader of the House and the official channels, so he might wish to raise the matter during the business question. I assure him that we wish to press ahead with these matters as soon as we are able to do so. This Government are getting on and delivering on their priorities, including the environment.

T3. [912203] **Bill Wiggin (North Herefordshire) (Con):** I am grateful for the answer that my right hon. Friend gave earlier. Grass-fed must mean 100% grass-fed, so that people with food allergies, and particularly those with a sensitivity to meat, know what they are buying.

The Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr Robert Goodwill): My hon. Friend is right: people expect clear, honest labelling on their food, and if marketing terms are not used consistently, the Government should act. Clear labelling is important not just for pasture-fed livestock, but for organic food, which is trusted around that world.

T2. [912202] **Bambos Charalambous (Enfield, Southgate) (Lab):** Like many colleagues across the House, I welcome the former Secretary of State's comments last week, which committed to ensuring that the environment Bill contains legally binding targets on fine particulate matter, in line with World Health Organisation levels, and to updating the national air quality strategy to specify an obligation for local authorities to take official action to protect children's health from toxic air. However, additional action without resources is not achievable. Will the Secretary of State commit to working with the Chancellor to ensure that vital resources are provided in the upcoming spending review?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Dr Thérèse Coffey): Discussions on the spending review are already under way, particularly with the Mayor of London, and we are considering what more we can do to boost resources. Particulate matter is one of the key things we need to tackle right

across the country. That is not solely about transport; it is also about domestic burning, and I am confident that we will bring forward regulations on how to reduce that.

T5. [912205] **Tom Pursglove (Corby) (Con):** I, too, am delighted to see the Secretary of State in her new role. What steps will her Department take to encourage and ensure that local authorities recycle as much material as possible, thus avoiding it needlessly going to landfill?

Theresa Villiers: In July, we published the Government's response to the consultation on consistency in household and business recycling collections in England. The response sets out plans to legislate to ensure consistency between local authorities, which is vital to ensuring that we raise recycling rates, and to people having a consistent picture and a better understanding of the most effective ways to recycle.

T4. [912204] **Christian Matheson (City of Chester) (Lab):** Will the Minister work with other Government Departments to establish a mandatory register for foxhunts and a mandatory reporting system for the killing of foxes, so we can see just how widespread this lawbreaking actually is?

Dr Coffey: The hon. Gentleman has raised that issue before. It is important that people obey the law, but I encourage him and others to take evidence to the police so that the Crown Prosecution Service can take forward convictions where that is appropriate.

T6. [912206] **Giles Watling (Clacton) (Con):** Yesterday, I was planning to record a video with then Secretary of State to commend the campaign I have run with the World Dog Alliance to outlaw the consumption of dogmeat in the UK. Sadly, events got in the way. I congratulate the new Secretary of State on her appointment. Will she join me and many colleagues in this place in supporting the campaign? Will she meet me and discuss it further?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (David Rutley): Our new Secretary of State's commitment to animal welfare is very clear. The Government share my hon. Friend's abhorrence at the thought of eating dogmeat. I recognise both the substantive and symbolic nature of the issues he raises. As he knows, I am exploring actively with colleagues what else we might be able to do to send the clearest possible signal that this behaviour should never be tolerated.

John Grogan (Keighley) (Lab): Does the Minister share my concern that the Environment Agency states that Yorkshire Water has unacceptable environmental pollution performance, and that Yorkshire Water discharged sewage into the River Wharfe on no fewer than 123 days last year?

Dr Coffey: The Government absolutely take that seriously. Investment in sewerage has seen a huge reduction in phosphorous and ammonia entering waters, and the Environment Agency is very active on the issue.

It undertakes checks of the ecological health of rivers regularly and it will, as will Ofwat, take action against Yorkshire Water when it fails.

Ben Bradley (Mansfield) (Con): Mansfield and Warsop are full of animal lovers, as is the rest of the UK. News of tougher sentencing for animal abuse is very welcome. What steps will the Department take, perhaps working with charities such as Battersea and others, to make sure that everybody is aware of the new sentencing rules, so that animal cruelty can be prosecuted as robustly as possible?

Theresa Villiers: I thank my hon. Friend for his question. He makes a very good point. It is not enough just to change the law; we need to make sure there is a greater awareness of the changes that I hope are soon to be implemented. I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the coalition of charities that campaigned so hard for the proposed legislation, which will shortly come back to the House, to ensure that we raise the maximum sentences for animal cruelty.

Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): In private, the Government are apparently briefing local resilience forums about the impact of a no-deal Brexit on food supply and food prices, and are predicting mass disruption. Will the Secretary of State confirm whether that is true, and will she stop keeping people in the dark? Will she publish this information, so all of us can see whether there are adequate contingencies in place?

David Rutley: Of course it is right that any responsible Government should prepare for any scenario. We are working closely with all stakeholders to make sure there is a proper flow and supply of food, whatever the scenario.

Robert Halfon (Harlow) (Con): On Saturday, I met impassioned climate change activists Cliff Kendall and Donna Tyrelli. Cliff Kendall is on hunger strike to protect the environment. They suggest that the average household can reduce its energy bills by more than £250 a year by switching to renewable energy suppliers. What steps is the Department taking to educate households about such green initiatives that help to cut the cost of living?

Theresa Villiers: There is a range of programmes under way to encourage people to switch, both to ensure that they get value for money and to talk up the advantages of moving to a more sustainable electricity supply. I will certainly be taking a personal interest in these matters in my new role.

Daniel Zeichner (Cambridge) (Lab): Improving the energy efficiency of our homes is one of the best ways to tackle climate change, yet since 2012 there has been a 95% fall in home insulation programmes. What has gone wrong?

Theresa Villiers: The Government have a strong record on climate change, but I acknowledge that we need to do more to ensure that people are able to insulate their homes. We will be working on that in the months ahead.

Ross Thomson (Aberdeen South) (Con): A year ago, Lewis Pugh was completing his long swim along the length of the English channel, from Land's End to Dover. That incredible feat highlighted the need for full protection of our seas. What plans does the Minister have to expand the number of areas of UK waters under full marine protection?

Dr Thérèse Coffey: Lewis Pugh was one of our “Year of Green Action” ambassadors and I am delighted that he continues to raise awareness of this issue. My hon. Friend will be aware of the 41 new marine conservation zones that we have designated. It would really help if the Scottish Government could also start designating more marine conservation zones, so that together as a United Kingdom we would have more than 30% of our areas protected. I wish my right hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Richard Benyon) well with his highly protected marine areas review.

Alan Brown (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): Will the new Secretary of State apologise to Scottish farmers for Westminster's stealing £160 million of EU convergence uplift, and will she do something to sort out that injustice?

Mr Goodwill: We have regular conversations with the Scottish Administration. We have made it clear that as we fund the new schemes in the United Kingdom, they will not be Barnettised and will take account of the nature of Scottish agriculture. Scotland will get a fair settlement.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

The right hon. Member for Meriden, representing the Church Commissioners was asked—

Behaviour on Social Media

1. **Daniel Kawczynski** (Shrewsbury and Atcham) (Con): What steps the Church of England is taking to promote positive behaviour on social media. [912171]

The Second Church Estates Commissioner (Dame Caroline Spelman): The Church of England supports the Government's aim to make this country the safest place to go online and has submitted evidence to the Government's Online Harms White Paper. On 1 July, the Church launched its digital charter, which thousands of individuals around the globe have signed up to and which the Government have welcomed and support.

Daniel Kawczynski: I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer. I am sure that she will share my serious concern about the level of hatred, intolerance and rage that appears online, especially on Twitter, sometimes with devastating consequences for young people who are very vulnerable. We have seen tragic examples of that. Will she take our appeal to the Church of England, asking that it does everything possible to work with other organisations to try to instil and inculcate in the next generation the importance of behaving normally and politely on social media?

Dame Caroline Spelman: As one of the largest providers of school education, the Church of England is encouraging all its schools to support the digital charter initiative. However, safe internet use applies to people who have faith or have no faith at all, and those of all ages. All Members of this House will be aware of the hate and hostility that many in this Chamber face on a daily

basis. I urge all colleagues to consider joining up and supporting the digital charter so that we can foster a more positive experience for people online.

Mr Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): Can I urge the right hon. Lady to make sure that all the bishops—we seem to have a lot of them in the Church of England now—lead this campaign? I am sure that Rose, our wonderful chaplain, is going to be a very energetic Bishop of Dover. We all wish her well and will miss her, but let us get these bishops doing a bit of leadership on issues such as social media.

Dame Caroline Spelman: The bishops are all participating in social media and they are signed up to this charter. Let me share with colleagues some of the things that the charter advocates: that “what we post online” ought to be “fair and factual”; that we should engage constructively and think “the best of people”; that we should consider “the language we use”; and that we should “use social media in a way that genuinely engages others.”

These are good principles.

Since the Speaker’s Chaplain has been mentioned by the hon. Gentleman, I say for the record that I condemn absolutely the very unpleasant article in *The Spectator* about the Rev. Rose, who has served this House outstandingly; I spring to her defence.

Mr Speaker: I am very grateful to the right hon. Lady. I am bound to say to her that I do not read the organ in question and therefore I am not familiar with that piece. I have no idea about it and frankly have absolutely no interest in it whatsoever. I know the Rev. Rose extremely well. She has proved to be a magnificent and enormously popular servant of this House. She will be a wonderful bishop. Dover’s gain is our loss, and we should take vicarious pride in the fact that someone valued and cherished by us is valued and cherished by the Church of England. Scribblers scribble; they matter, frankly, not a jot.

Telecommunications Masts in Parishes

2. **Sir Desmond Swayne** (New Forest West) (Con): If the Church of England will expedite the process by which parishes apply to host telecommunications masts. [912172]

Dame Caroline Spelman: Following on from my right hon. Friend’s question to me last month, I raised these concerns with the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, and I have met with BT, EE and some of the small providers, including one from my right hon. Friend’s constituency, to discuss the challenges of providing reliable rural communications infrastructure.

Sir Desmond Swayne: Will my right hon. Friend also have a go at the Ministry of Justice and ask it to put sufficient resource into the tribunal system, so that case law can be expedited to make the new telecommunications code work?

Dame Caroline Spelman: I absolutely say yes to that. Perhaps my right hon. Friend would like to join me in going to meet the new occupants of the positions concerned.

It appears clear that the new digital code tends to favour large providers, and the consequence of their preference for using existing infrastructure is a greater digital divide.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): Churches, by their very nature, are historically and architecturally important, and new telecommunications masts could have an impact on buildings. What is being done to preserve these buildings and ensure that their architectural and historical value is retained?

Dame Caroline Spelman: That is a very important question, because the Church of England has put its entire infrastructure at the disposal of providers, so that we can, using towers and spires, beam a signal into notspots. Historic England is quite comfortable about listed buildings carrying small signal boosters, which are not intrusive.

ELECTORAL COMMISSION COMMITTEE

The hon. Member for Houghton and Sunderland South, representing the Speaker’s Committee on the Electoral Commission, was asked—

Spending on Digital Campaigning

3. **Alan Brown** (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): What recent discussions she has had with the commission on reporting spending on digital campaigning in elections. [912173]

Bridget Phillipson (Houghton and Sunderland South): Transparency around spending on campaigning at elections helps voters to have confidence that campaigners follow the rules and limits on spending. Earlier this week, the Electoral Commission presented to Government statutory codes of practice on candidate and political party spending. If enacted, these codes will provide further clarity and consistency in reporting election spending, including on digital campaigning.

Alan Brown: I thank the hon. Lady for that answer. That concurs with reports from the Select Committee on Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and the Electoral Commission, which are clear that the law on digital political advertising badly needs updating. Some people have called for a database of online political ads, giving full information on content, target and reach, and spend. That should guarantee transparency. Is the hon. Lady aware of measures being taken to reform the law, and does she share my concern that so many people from Vote Leave who abused the system are now in the UK Government?

Bridget Phillipson: The social media companies’ voluntary ad libraries and reports are useful tools in monitoring who is spending money on elections and other political campaigning. In its response to the online harms consultation, the commission recommended that the new regulator ensure common standards and obligations on what social media companies publish about political adverts and that there be significant sanctions if companies do not publish meaningful information.

Chris Heaton-Harris (Daventry) (Con): Following the exoneration of Darren Grimes in a recent court case, what confidence does the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission have in the commission?

Bridget Phillipson: In the past four years, the commission has carried out approximately 450 investigations into a variety of electoral offences. The results of five of these have been challenged in the courts, and the recent appeal is the only challenge that has been upheld. The commission will review the full written detail of the judgment once it is made public, before deciding on next steps, including any appeal.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

The right hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington, representing the House of Commons Commission, was asked—

Cox Report

4. **Justin Madders** (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab): What progress the commission has made in implementing the Cox report recommendations. [912174]

Tom Brake (Carshalton and Wallington): Two of the three principal recommendations made by Dame Laura Cox have now been implemented. Implementation of the third, on the independence of the independent complaints and grievance scheme from MP involvement, is under way. The commission will be considering options in the autumn.

Justin Madders: As the right hon. Gentleman will be aware, last week we debated the Gemma White report and the real concerns of staff about the process. Does he agree that only when we have a procedure that is truly independent of Parliament, with effective, transparent sanctions, will we get the confidence of staff?

Tom Brake: I agree with that point. The hon. Gentleman may be aware that a staff team have been set up to look at the issue of independence and are considering the options. They have an independent challenge group, which will look at, for instance, the impact on parliamentary independence, the ability of Members of Parliament to operate, and ensuring that we have a system in which staff will have confidence.

Bill Wiggin (North Herefordshire) (Con): On that matter, if staff want to be treated as though this is a normal place to work, and therefore to be treated separately from the involvement of Members of Parliament, why not simply treat them as though they did work in any normal business and use the normal facilities of the law?

Tom Brake: I think that is a good point, and if the hon. Gentleman wants to submit his idea to the working group that is looking at the issue, it might want to take it into consideration when formulating responses.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

The right hon. Member for Meriden, representing the Church Commissioners, was asked—

FCO Support for Persecuted Christians

5. **Diana Johnson** (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): What steps the Church of England is taking to help implement the recommendations in the final report of the Bishop of Truro's independent review for the Foreign Secretary of FCO support for persecuted Christians. [912175]

8. **Steve Double** (St Austell and Newquay) (Con): What steps the Church of England is taking to help implement the recommendations in the final report of the Bishop of Truro's independent review for the Foreign Secretary of FCO support for persecuted Christians. [912178]

10. **David Hanson** (Delyn) (Lab): What steps the Church of England is taking to help implement the recommendations in the final report of the Bishop of Truro's independent review for the Foreign Secretary of FCO support for persecuted Christians. [912180]

The Second Church Estates Commissioner (Dame Caroline Spelman): First, I would like to pay tribute to the outgoing Foreign Secretary for having the vision to commission a report on the support that the Foreign Office provides for persecuted Christians. It was warmly welcomed by both the Church of England and the Catholic Church, and I sincerely hope that the new Foreign Secretary will follow through on the its recommendations.

Diana Johnson: On 8 July, the now Prime Minister said:

"If I am fortunate enough to become PM, I will always prioritise protecting religious freedoms and stand up for those facing persecution."

I know that it is very early days, but what plans does the right hon. Lady have to speak with the Prime Minister about exactly what he will do to support persecuted Christians around the world?

Dame Caroline Spelman: We have had quite a lot of opportunities at hustings to ask quite a few leadership contenders what they would do about the report on Foreign Office support for persecuted Christians, and I am pleased to say that the new Prime Minister did give a pledge to follow through on this. If hon. Members have time to read the report, they will find that it is very revealing, and it acknowledged that a great deal needs to be done to provide more support for persecuted Christians around the world.

Steve Double: One of the many important findings of the Bishop of Truro's report is that it highlighted a lack of religious literacy at the Home Office, particularly when dealing with Christians fleeing persecution and seeking asylum. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Home Office should take heed of this recommendation, and does she believe that the Church has a role to play in improving religious literacy across Whitehall?

Dame Caroline Spelman: The report, which of course is a Foreign Office report, does reveal that lack of religious literacy, but the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster both wanted the proposal for improving religious literacy to extend to all Departments, because in a way there is hardly a Department that is not touched by the need for better religious literacy. I know that the issue of religious literacy in asylum applications has been raised in the other place and that bishops have had meetings with Ministers.

David Hanson: In a letter to me, the Government have indicated that they will look at sanctions against those who persecute Christians, or indeed those of other religious beliefs. Has the right hon. Lady had an opportunity to discuss with the Government what form those sanctions might take?

Dame Caroline Spelman: I have not discussed that with the new incumbent at the Foreign Office just yet, but I think that we need to go through all these serious recommendations that were made through the excellent work of the Bishop of Truro. For example, one of the recommendations, which I commend to the House, is a UN resolution to better protect Christians in the middle east and north Africa, whose population has dwindled from 20% to just 4%.

Fiona Bruce (Congleton) (Con): Last week, a number of MPs were the target of some really unpleasant social media attacks, simply for speaking and then voting in a conscience vote in this place according to their biblical beliefs on marriage and the sanctity of life. What is the Church of England doing to uphold freedom of speech and religion for Christians in the UK? This is a growing concern for thousands of Christians in this country today.

Dame Caroline Spelman: The hon. Lady might not have heard the answer to an earlier question, but actually the Church has seized the initiative by launching its own guidelines on safe and positive conduct on the internet. I commend that guidance to all Members present. It is certainly important that religious difference is respected. Dialogue is a two-way business, but as the Archbishop of Canterbury has said, the Church needs to model disagreeing well.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

The right hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington, representing the House of Commons Commission, was asked—

Designated Smoking Areas: Health Risks

6. **Rachael Maskell (York Central) (Lab/Co-op):** What recent assessment the Commission has made of the health risks of having designated smoking areas on the parliamentary estate. [912176]

Tom Brake (Carshalton and Wallington): The Administration Committee considers proposals for the provision of smoking areas. I can inform the hon.

Member that, for instance, on 11 March it endorsed a proposal to close the smoking area outside the Woolsack bar towards the House of Lords end of the estate, and she may want to write to the Committee if she has concerns or proposals on this issue.

Rachael Maskell: Can we ensure that all designated smoking areas are risk-assessed—particularly the area between Portcullis House and Norman Shaw South, which is a major thoroughfare—not least because they are workplaces but also to ensure that we do the best for people's health?

Tom Brake: I can confirm that the House authorities have identified and assessed several designated smoking areas, but I will draw to their attention the smoking area that the hon. Lady has referred to, because Members will know that when crossing from Portcullis to Norman Shaw, there is a little bit of passive smoking for those of us who are not smokers.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

The right hon. Member for Meriden, representing the Church Commissioners, was asked—

Festivals in Cathedrals

7. **Michael Fabricant (Lichfield) (Con):** What recent assessment the Church of England has made of the effect of holding festivals in cathedrals on the number of visiting (a) worshippers and (b) non-worshippers. [912177]

The Second Church Estates Commissioner (Dame Caroline Spelman): Cathedrals all run a series of events and religious festivals throughout the year, which vary in size, and collectively they host over 11 million visitors a year. Lichfield cathedral, in my hon. Friend's constituency, is an outstanding example of that and welcomes around 120,000 people a year to its excellent exhibitions.

Michael Fabricant: I am very grateful to my right hon. Friend for her answer. She will know that the Lichfield festival attracts over 50,000 people to the city of Lichfield and brings at least 10,000 people into the cathedral itself, so what action is her Department taking to encourage other cathedrals to do similar initiatives?

Dame Caroline Spelman: I find it an interesting idea that I have a Department, but the Church of England will seize the initiative next year; it is a great year for anniversaries in the Church of England, with the Pilgrim Fathers and Thomas à Becket, and it will be a year of cathedrals. The Association of English Cathedrals will provide a pilgrimage passport for those at home and abroad who want to visit as many cathedrals as possible.

Strategic Development Funding: Keighley

9. **John Grogan (Keighley) (Lab):** Whether the Church of England plans to allocate strategic development funding to Keighley constituency. [912179]

Dame Caroline Spelman: Mr Speaker, since this is the last question, I think, for me today I want to thank the parliamentary division in Church House and Simon Stanley in particular, as I do not yet know if I will be renewed in post; I sincerely hope so, but I imagine this is not high on the list of the Prime Minister's priorities at the moment.

I am delighted to be able to tell the hon. Gentleman that the Archbishops' Council recently awarded funding totalling over £1 million for Leeds diocese, £490,000 of which will be awarded to the Anglican churches in Keighley.

John Grogan: I feel that I will speak for many in saying I hope that the right hon. Member is reappointed by the Prime Minister by lunchtime, but further to her reply, does she agree that the work of the united parishes of Keighley is perhaps one of the finest examples in the north of England of faith in action, along with the work of the Catholic Good Shepherd Centre, the Salvation Army and, indeed, Keighley's mosques?

Dame Caroline Spelman: In the diocese of Leeds, Bowling, Idle, Great Horton and Clayton have a strong focus on deprived areas and groups that the Church of England found hard to reach, and that is why this large sum of money has been conferred by the Church Commissioners to the diocese.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

The right hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington, representing the House of Commons Commission, was asked—

Electronic Voting

11. **Martyn Day** (Linlithgow and East Falkirk) (SNP): Whether the Commission has discussed the potential merits of including trials of electronic voting systems in the restoration and renewal programme. [912181]

Tom Brake (Carshalton and Wallington): I commend the hon. Gentleman on being, I think, the sixth member of his party who in this Session has raised the issue of electronic voting; however, I am afraid that I cannot give him a different answer to the previous five responses. *[Interruption.]* I am afraid my response is that this is not a matter for the Commission; it would only be responsible for ensuring that, for instance, the funding that was necessary to ensure that that happened was in place.

Martyn Day: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his answer. I am sure when the Victorians built this place, the voting system we still have was state of the art, but now, for the modern age, we need to move to a current state-of-the-art system—electronic voting—and I hope he agrees that that would allow us more time to debate the substance of Bills.

Tom Brake: Absolutely; I agree that it is time for change, although I suspect that the new Leader of the House may not be giving his entire support to such proposals as we revert to the Victorian era. I draw to the hon. Gentleman's attention the fact that the Procedure Committee is looking at electronic voting, and he has until 27 September to submit a request to it.

Mr Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con): I noticed that the whole House cheered when the right hon. Gentleman said he had no authority over this matter, but does he recognise the fact that many people see the current voting system as a huge advantage, because it enables us to nab Cabinet Ministers as they come out of the voting Lobby?

Tom Brake: I would suggest to the hon. Gentleman that there are ways in which electronic voting can take place and he would still be able to nab a Cabinet Minister. I would also point out to him that Opposition Members often have difficulties in nabbing Cabinet Ministers in the Division Lobby.

Speaker's Statement

10.30 am

Mr Speaker: Order. Just before we come to the business question, I am sure that all right hon. and hon. Members will join me in expressing thanks to Paul Evans CBE, currently the Clerk of Committees, who will retire at the end of August. Paul joined the House service in 1981 and has served in roles including Clerk of the Defence Committee and Head of the Table Office. In his current position, he has overseen this year's celebrations of the 40th anniversary of departmental Select Committees. Paul is a great academic authority on Parliament and its procedures and a highly respected speaker, author and commentator. He is known as an innovator who combines a deep knowledge of procedure with an ability and willingness to challenge and change the status quo. He was one of the founding members of ParliON, the parliamentary workplace equality network, which focuses on social mobility. I have worked with him closely for a decade. I hold him in the highest esteem, and I feel sure that all in the House who know him will do so, too. Paul will be much missed, and we wish him well.

Business of the House

10.31 am

Valerie Vaz (Walsall South) (Lab): May I ask the new Leader of the House for the forthcoming business?

The Leader of the House of Commons (Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg): Thank you, Mr Speaker—[HON. MEMBERS: "Resign!"] It's a bit early!

MONDAY 2 SEPTEMBER—The House will not be sitting.

TUESDAY 3 SEPTEMBER—Proceedings in Committee and remaining stages of the Census (Return Particulars and Removal of Penalties) Bill [Lords].

WEDNESDAY 4 SEPTEMBER—Remaining stages of the Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Bill.

THURSDAY 5 SEPTEMBER—Debate on a motion on the future UK shared prosperity fund, followed by debate on a motion on the British housebuilding industry leasehold. The subjects for these debates were determined by the Backbench Business Committee.

FRIDAY 6 SEPTEMBER—The House will not be sitting.

Valerie Vaz: I thank the Leader of the House for the forthcoming business. This is not exactly an energised list. I thought we were all supposed to be energising for the future, but maybe we can look forward to a further energised list. I want to start by thanking the right hon. Member for Central Devon (Mel Stride) for engaging in such a supportive way in the House. He really wanted to know how the House worked. I congratulate the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, the right hon. Member for South Northamptonshire (Andrea Leadsom) on her new role. I also want to thank a former Leader of the House, the right hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr Lidington), who has stood down from his Front-Bench post after 20 years. He started as a special adviser to Douglas Hurd. I hope we see the like of those people again in the Conservative party.

I, too, want to pay tribute to Paul Evans, who has been absolutely fantastic. He has had a distinguished career in the House. He has been very supportive when I have asked him questions, and he has been really assiduous in the kind of work that he has done and in the Committees. If anyone cares to look at his "Who's Who" entry, they will see that his recreations include the British constitution, walking, silence and empty places. Paul, how have you survived 38 years in the House of Commons? It is interesting that he likes the British constitution. I do not know why he is retiring—we need him more than ever now.

I welcome the Leader of the House; it is great to see him in that place. Perhaps I can suggest a few things to him. He does have staff, so the nanny can stand down. I know his previous job was to send googlies and a full toss to the Government, but he now has to try to get the business through. Along with the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire (Pete Wishart), I want to ask him whether he will get a complimentary copy of "Erskine May" for us. We should not really have to buy it. I know it is online, but it would be really helpful if the main opposition parties had a copy.

Let me talk about the way that this happens. The deal is that I ask about business and the Leader of the House is supposed to respond. We usually get two weeks' business; I wonder whether we could go back to the discipline of two weeks. I have a few questions for him. What is going on with the conference recess? Is proroguing still on the menu? Can he rule that out? We know that the Prime Minister gave a mini manifesto on the steps of Downing Street. When will we have a new Session of Parliament? This has been the longest. The previous Leader of the House said that we had used up our allotted Opposition days; can we have some unallotted days?

What a mandate, what a ringing endorsement—less than 0.4% of an electorate. Some 46.8 million citizens can vote in a general election, but the Prime Minister was selected by 92,000 people—92,000 people, taking back control. He has not won the support of our country. The Prime Minister talked about the awesome foursome, but what about the gruesome twosome? I know that the Leader of the House respects Parliament, but given that the special adviser to the Prime Minister refused to obey an order of this House and is actually in contempt of Parliament, will the Leader of the House please say whether the special adviser can come to the Floor of the House while he is in contempt of Parliament? Will he get a pass? Perhaps we need counsel's advice on this.

I know that the Leader of the House respects Parliament. There was a message sent from the Lords about a Joint Select Committee; will he look into that? I know that his predecessor, as we finished business questions, was on the way to the Lords. It is not difficult to set up a Joint Select Committee. There is not much work in the first week back. We know that the Exiting the European Union Committee has already produced a report on the effects on business under no deal. It cannot be difficult to set up a Select Committee, take the evidence that already exists and produce a report.

While the Tory party has been appointing its new Prime Minister, unprecedentedly, there have been 70 written statements—that is absolutely outrageous—over three days. There have been important ones, including one on the school teachers review body. What does it say in that statement? Yes, teachers can get a pay rise, but the Government are going to give only 0.4% to support them. The rest has to come from their own budget—2% from their own budget. This really is a tale of two Britains.

On the Philip Augar review, the previous Prime Minister said that she wanted to see it implemented, whereby tuition fees should be reduced from £9,250 to £7,000. However, the written statement says that the maximum tuition fee will remain at £9,250 for the 2020-21 academic year. Some parents can afford to pay the tuition fees up front. This really is a tale of two Britains, and, on the same day, the Secretary of State for Transport revealed that the cost of Crossrail has escalated.

As a keen parliamentarian, will the Leader of the House ensure, through the usual channels, that some of those written statements are debated on the Floor of the House? We can make an agreement and perhaps we can have a debate, given that the business is so light for the first week back.

The Leader of the House will know, I hope, that I have made a pledge that I will raise the case of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe every week until she is free. Richard

Ratcliffe said that Nazanin returned to prison and that it was like proper torture. Will the Leader of the House raise this with the Prime Minister, and will the Prime Minister make amends by meeting Richard Ratcliffe as soon as possible and make that important phone call to the Iranian Government? A five-year-old girl is growing up not knowing what it feels like to hug and kiss her parents. The Leader of the House will know, as a father of six, how important that is.

I want to say thank you, Mr Speaker, to you and your staff and the Deputy Speakers for their unfailing courtesy and help to me; to the Leader of the House and all his staff; to the Clerks; to Phil and his team of doorkeepers; to the House of Commons Library; to the official reporters; to the catering and cleaning staff; to the postal workers; to security; and to our officers and Chief Whip, and his staff. I also welcome the new Government Chief Whip, who has actually shown me personally some kindness. I thank him for that.

All sorts is going on in our Whips Office: my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmere (Chris Elmore) has got married, Devena has got married, Millie has moved to the Department for Education, and we welcomed Keir William Stocks Sullivan on Monday 22nd—I send good wishes to Simon and his wife. Finally, I thank Sam Clark, who has been in the usual channels departments of the Opposition and the Government for six years. He is going to restoration and renewal—another big thing for the Leader of the House. I hope Sam will enjoy lots of Mars bars—that is a private joke. I obviously thank everyone in my office.

I say to each and every hon. Member: I know how hard this time has been, and I hope you all have a restful and peaceful summer recess.

Mr Rees-Mogg: I thank the shadow Leader of the House for her incisive list of questions and, indeed, for the suggestion that I replace nanny with the staff in the Leader of the House's office. I think they might be a bit bemused if six children trotted in with me and expected to be looked after by House of Commons staff, so I will not go down that route.

"Erskine May" is available online for free. I understand that Opposition Members view themselves as modern, cutting-edge and thrusting. Therefore, going online might not be too problematic for them. Even I can do it occasionally myself. If they do not want to do that, the proper edition of "Erskine May" is available for £400 and may prove a good investment.

The business has been announced for a week, as has been standard practice for some time. I know that historically it was not, but you said yourself, Mr Speaker, that convention has to evolve, and this is one of those conventions that has evolved. Now, we merely have it for one week.

The hon. Lady asked about the conference recess. She knows that recesses are a matter for this House to determine. No doubt a proposal will be made through the usual channels, but I imagine that it would be convenient for Members to be able to attend their own party conferences. That is what has happened previously, and it tends to be to everybody's benefit. *[Interruption.]* I am glad to see the Labour Chief Whip nodding, or at least appearing to nod, at that. I therefore think that something may be forthcoming in due course.

[Mr Rees-Mogg]

The issue of Prorogation is absolutely marvellous, because the hon. Lady asked for a new Session and asked when this Session would end, and then asked me to promise that we would not prorogue. We cannot have both, because we cannot get to a new Session without proroguing. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has said that he views Prorogation as an archaic mechanism and that he does not wish to see archaic mechanisms used—[*Laughter.*] As I am now bound by collective responsibility, that is now also my view.

The Lords message about a Joint Committee will obviously be looked into. We always wish to treat the other place with respect; that is an important way in which we operate. That will be taken care of in due course.

On the written ministerial statements, I was going to use a word beginning with “d” and ending in “n”, with an “-ed” on the end—you are if you do and the same if you don’t—but Mr Speaker might rule me out of order if I did say that, which I do not want to happen on my first appearance at this Dispatch Box. Parliament wants to know what is going on and there is limited time for debates. Earlier this week, Mr Speaker granted me an urgent question on Batten disease. We know that the system for getting statements and urgent questions answered works. Therefore, if there are issues that people wish to raise from the 70 written ministerial statements, there are mechanisms that the hon. Lady is extremely well aware of.

As to the hon. Lady’s very important point about Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe, absolutely I will take that up. I promise that I will take it up every week for her. We as a nation should always put the interests of our citizens first; that is fundamental to how this country should operate in its conduct with foreign nations. The treatment that Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe has had to undergo is shameful and must be so distressing. When the hon. Lady talks about her child—a five-year-old—being deprived of a mother, that is the most awful thing that one can imagine. I have the greatest sympathy and yes, of course I will take this matter up.

May I conclude by reiterating the thanks that the hon. Lady gave to everybody in the House? How lucky I am now to be Leader of the House—what a privilege it is and what a fine House we have. I have always found that, whenever one wants to know what is going on in the House, the Doorkeepers know first and provide us with a fabulous service.

In paying tribute to Paul Evans as he retires, I should say that the British constitution is a hobby of all sensible people. It is the most interesting matter to discuss and be informed about. It is why £400 for “Erskine May” is such a good investment: it educates one about the British constitution. I wish him well in his retirement.

Finally, I pay tribute to my predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Central Devon (Mel Stride), who was such a distinguished Leader of the House and Lord President of the Council.

Mr Speaker: There are, of course, Greek antecedents of the word “archaic”—a concept and fact with which the Leader of the House himself will be closely familiar. However, I think I can say, without fear of contradiction

and for the avoidance of doubt, that the word “archaic” as it is now spelt originated in the 19th century, and in France. By the standards of the Leader of the House, it is distressingly modern and also—I say this simply as a matter of fact—of foreign origin. He will have his own views about that matter and others.

Mr Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford and Woodford Green) (Con): I start by welcoming my hon. Friend—I do not think he is yet “right hon.”—to his post. I think he will bring modulated and very moderate tones to these debates. One thing is for certain: having a seat in business questions will now be an absolute must. I welcome my hon. Friend in that regard.

Nothing can be done in this Session, but I want to raise a particular issue. With Lord McColl, I am a co-sponsor of a Bill to change the process relating to modern-day slavery. I ask and urge my hon. Friend to press his colleagues at the Home Office, who have to date been utterly mealy-mouthed about the changes necessary to give victims of modern-day slavery the opportunity to come forward without fearing arrest and incarceration. Will he press his colleagues at the Home Office to urgently bring forward the Bill’s provisions as soon as possible, to improve the quality of the lives of those who suffer most? [*Interruption.*]

Mr Rees-Mogg: As I rise, my right hon. Friend the Member for South Northamptonshire (Andrea Leadsom), the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, has arrived to sit next to me. She is a very distinguished predecessor of mine, whom I congratulate on her promotion and return from the Back Benches.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Mr Duncan Smith) is absolutely right about modern-day slavery. It would be opportune to pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May), the former Prime Minister, for all the work that she did on modern-day slavery—the terrible and hidden curse that it is. I share his view that everything should be done to stop it. The Home Office should move in that direction and people should not fear criminal prosecution if they have been held as modern-day slaves. That would clearly be desperately unfair.

Pete Wishart (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): I join you in your warm tributes to Paul Evans, Mr Speaker. I wish him all the best in his retirement.

I thank our curious new Leader of the House for announcing the, well, meaningless stuff that we are coming back to in September. I warmly welcome him to his place. He is the fifth Leader of the House that I have had in this post, but it has to be said that he is by far the most exotic.

The Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Andrea Leadsom) *indicated dissent.*

Pete Wishart: I did not mean to upset the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy with that remark.

It might be as well to point out that the hon. Gentleman is Leader of the House of Commons, not the House of Plantagenet or the House of Tudor. He will have, of course, a number of key responsibilities, prime among

them being restoration and renewal—perhaps not a concept for which he is particularly renowned, unless it involves one of his own houses.

I join everybody in paying tribute to the right hon. Member for Central Devon (Mel Stride). We will now never get that holiday bus from hell, and I will forever miss his terrible jokes about music at my expense. Although he knew that his post would probably only be temporary, he did take his job in his “Stride”.

I do not know about you, Mr Speaker, but I went to bed last night and had this horrible nightmare that the UK Government had been taken over by rabid, right-wing Brexiteers. I am not particularly sure whether I am awake yet. May we have a debate about dystopian visions of hell, and have a look at where this Cabinet of dysfunctional Bash Street Kids fits in?

I presume that at some point when we get back after recess the Leader of the House will want to have some sort of debate about Brexit, given that it has been his life’s mission. He and his European Research Group colleagues are now the political mainstream in this House, so when will we get the chance to debate their big plans to crash out of the EU without a deal, and all the disastrous consequences that await us?

The Leader of the House is familiar with Scotland—he famously fought the Glenrothes by-election with his nanny and his Roller—so he knows there is no way on earth that Scotland is going down with his colleagues in their buffoon’s Brexit.

Lastly, Mr Speaker, I wish you and all the staff of the House a very happy recess. I wish the shadow Leader of the House, the hon. Member for Walsall South (Valerie Vaz), and the new Leader of the House a very warm time and hope that they enjoy themselves and have some time for relaxation. It is hot outside, but as the Government continue to open the doors of hell in their buffoon’s Brexit, it is going to get a lot hotter yet.

Mr Rees-Mogg: I may be the fifth Leader of the House since the hon. Gentleman took up his post, but from what I hear it seems that his question is the same regardless, so it does not make any difference who the Leader of the House should be. I therefore fear that the answer is going to be much the same. I would point out that the House of Commons predates the House of Tudor: it started in 1265, and the House of Tudor obviously began with Henry VII—

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): That’s wrong as well. It was 1341.

Mr Rees-Mogg: No, no. The hon. Gentleman is a very good parliamentary historian, but 1265 is when the burgesses came from the towns, as he knows perfectly well.

Anyway, on restoration and renewal, I had the privilege of serving on the restoration and renewal Joint Committee. It is extraordinarily important that the House of Commons is not only a beacon for democracy, as it was built to be in the 19th century, but a functioning, modern Parliament.

Finally, the hon. Gentleman will be reassured to know that he does not have to wait long: on Thursday 5 September we will be back here and we will have questions to the Department for Exiting the European Union. His wish is my command; it will be granted.

Justine Greening (Putney) (Con): I welcome my hon. Friend to his role, to which he is very well suited. He is obviously a student of the British constitution, so may we have a debate on the importance of parliamentary democracy and Governments respecting the will of parliamentary votes on all matters, including the wish of this House not to leave the European Union with no deal?

Mr Rees-Mogg: My right hon. Friend is well aware of how to obtain debates in this place, through the Backbench Business Committee and Adjournment debates. Mr Speaker was kind enough to give me an Adjournment debate only last week and is wonderfully accommodating—if I may pay a tribute to you, Mr Speaker—in ensuring that the House gets to discuss what it wants to discuss, which is important.

In relation to leaving the European Union, this Parliament voted for the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 that said we would leave. Its predecessor Parliament, which had an enormous commonality with this House, voted by an overwhelming majority for the article 50 Act, which also said we would leave. These two Acts combined provided that we would leave, under UK law, on 31 October 2019. Parliament debated, Parliament decided and parliamentary democracy requires that we deliver.

Ian Mearns (Gateshead) (Lab): I welcome the Leader of the House to his new role. I thought I was getting somewhere with his immediate predecessor, the right hon. Member for Central Devon (Mel Stride), on the issue of parliamentary time becoming available should Government business run short and whether the Backbench Business could be considered on those occasions and could backfill the business so that the House does not rise early and Members can vent the issues that they want to vent on the Floor of the House. I really do hope we can work together on that.

I echo the tributes to Paul Evans. We share the bus into work in the morning quite often so I know him quite well, and he has helped us on the Backbench Business Committee.

I wish you, Mr Speaker, everyone from all parties and all the staff of the House, particularly the staff and members of the Backbench Business Committee, a very happy and healthy recess. The members of the Backbench Business Committee have done a great service to the House in recent months, keeping the business of the House ticking over on many days.

Mr Rees-Mogg: May I pay tribute to the hon. Gentleman for his fine work as Chairman of the Backbench Business Committee? I may have received a generous promotion from the Prime Minister, but I have not gone native. I do believe that the Government should be held to account, particularly by Back Benchers, and that the issues that they want to debate ought to be debated—and the Backbench Business Committee ensures that that happens. As to the question of short business, I completely understand the point the hon. Gentleman makes. The only point I would make is that there is a concern that if business is not known in advance, people cannot prepare their speeches and remarks, but I am very happy to work with him to see whether there is a solution to this.

Sir David Amess (Southend West) (Con): I congratulate my hon. Friend on his appointment, thank his predecessor for today's summer Adjournment debate, and pay tribute to the retiring Serjeant at Arms, the Speaker's Chaplain and the retiring Clerk.

Will my hon. Friend find time for a debate today on benefits paid to people without sight? Mrs Jill Allen-King has pointed to an anomaly whereby people born before 8 April 1948, who were on the standard rate of the disability living allowance, are now not entitled to the lower rate of the attendance allowance when they retire.

Mr Rees-Mogg: I thank my hon. Friend for his question. He reminds me to pay tribute, too, to the retiring Serjeant at Arms, who is a very distinguished figure. He is also absolutely right to raise the matter that he does. Blind and severely visually impaired people clearly face significant challenges in living independent lives. Up until April 2011, the disability living allowance failed to reflect those challenges. The Government have put in place changes to rectify this, and I encourage him to seek an Adjournment debate, so that he can raise this particular concern directly with the appropriate Minister, but I will also pass on his concern after today's proceedings.

Tom Brake (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD): I really welcome the Leader of the House to his position, because the Liberal Democrats could not want for a better recruiting sergeant than him as we set up a contest between Victorian values and Liberal Democrat values. More seriously, will the Leader of the House make time available for the House to discuss his views on Northern Ireland and the checks on the Irish border—as we had during the troubles—how the Government can keep an eye on the border and be able to have people inspected and the impact that that would have on the Good Friday agreement?

Mr Rees-Mogg: I may be a better recruiting sergeant for the Liberal Democrats than the right hon. Gentleman, but I fear that that may not be a very difficult task. With regard to Northern Ireland and the border with the Republic of Ireland, the Prime Minister has made it clear that there will not be a border imposed by the British Government. The right hon. Gentleman is another fortunate man as there will be Northern Ireland questions on 11 September, and he can raise these matters directly with the relevant Minister.

Rachel Maclean (Redditch) (Con): I, too, warmly welcome the new Leader of the House. I was delighted that, on the steps of Downing Street, our right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made social care a priority. Does my hon. Friend back that, and will he use his efforts to bring forward this important legislation which affects so many carers and dementia sufferers up and down the country?

Mr Rees-Mogg: I am very grateful for that question, because before I was bound by collective responsibility, I wrote the foreword to a paper encouraging the Government to do exactly what the Prime Minister suggested yesterday. Therefore, before I was bound to say things that I am now not allowed to say, I was saying broadly what my hon. Friend would like me to say, if that is not unduly complex. There will be an Adjournment debate on social care on 4 September.

Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey) (Lab): May I welcome the hon. Gentleman to his place following last night's brutal events in Downing Street? He will know, more than most on the Government Benches, that the job of the Leader of the House is to be the voice of Parliament in the Cabinet, rather than just the voice of the Cabinet in this place. We are in a very volatile situation, with the threatened Prorogation of this place as a tactic to drive us out of the EU without a deal, when he and I both know that there is no majority for that in this House. Will he give me a pledge that he will take his duties to this House seriously and warn the new Prime Minister that that way will cause chaos?

Mr Rees-Mogg: I am grateful for the hon. Lady's question. She was herself a very distinguished shadow Leader of the House and she is somebody I have great admiration for in her appreciation for the Commons as an institution. I absolutely assure her that I take that part of my role extraordinarily seriously. I have perhaps a somewhat romantic view of the House of Commons—one I think I share with you, Mr Speaker—in that I believe it is our job to hold the Government to account, not simply to facilitate whatever the Government want to do. However, this House passed into law the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 and the article 50 Act, and we only speak our view by legislation. We do not speak our view by mere motion, and mere motion cannot and must not overturn statute law. If that were to happen, we would not have a proper functioning representative democracy; we would have an erratic, changeable and irregular system of government.

Sir Edward Leigh (Gainsborough) (Con): What a pleasure it is to welcome my hon. Friend to the Dispatch Box: a fellow Ultramontane Catholic. I am not sure that many people here know what that means, but my hon. Friend knows—perhaps luckily.

My hon. Friend has a firm grasp of history; perhaps some would say he is living history. Does he agree that so much of the work we do here depends on our being here in the Palace of Westminster? I do not want to pin him down because I do not want him to rule anything in or out at this very early stage, but is he aware that many of us believe that if we do have to leave this Palace, it should be for as short a time as possible; that when we return, it should be exactly as it is now; that our priority should be the safety of the building; and that we should care about heritage, particularly the heritage of Richmond House?

Mr Rees-Mogg: I share my right hon. Friend's admiration for the late Pope Pius IX. In terms of this House, what it represents and the symbolism of this building, what our Victorian predecessors did was to show, through their architecture, their belief in their democratic system and their confidence in our great nation. We should never do anything that undermines that. The idea that we should be in some modern office block in the middle of nowhere, or that we should fail to have the understanding and the glory of our democracy that this House, through its building, shows is one I utterly reject.

Mr Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): May I welcome the hon. Gentleman to his new job? We will watch his performance with great interest.

Can we rely on the hon. Gentleman to be a champion for justice for everyone, regardless of their background, wealth or connections? On 10 January 2018, Katelyn Dawson was killed and two other women were very badly injured when a white BMW crashed into a queue of people as Katelyn was going to school. She was 15 and an only child. Could we have an early debate on what is going on in the Crown Prosecution Service? It has been many months and now the Crown Prosecution Service has decided not to bring any charge against the driver, Mr Richard Brooke. He got off because the CPS thought he was going to argue insane automatism, which is increasingly being used by wealthy and well-connected people to get off charges when they kill people.

Mr Rees-Mogg: This is an issue of the greatest importance. These terrible events move anybody who hears about them. The death of a 15-year-old through a criminal act is invariably tragic. I absolutely believe that one of the founding principles of our nation is that justice is blind and there is equal justice for everybody, and that is something that all Members of Parliament should commit to. As regards a debate, the Chairman of the Backbench Business Committee will have heard the hon. Gentleman's appeal, which I am sure that many other Members of the House may want to support.

Mr Steve Baker (Wycombe) (Con): It is an absolute joy to see my imminently right hon. Friend in his proper place at the Dispatch Box, and of course I congratulate him. I know he will want to join me in congratulating our right hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Nicky Morgan) on her return to Government. Can he give the House any indication of when we can look forward to the eagerly awaited and anticipated, I am sure, election of the new Chair of the Treasury Committee?

Mr Rees-Mogg: That is a very important question. I threw my hat into the ring last time and it was thrown back at me very firmly. It is really important that our Select Committees have Chairmen in place. The matter will be dealt with in the normal way, but I would hope that it is dealt with urgently.

Ruth Smeeth (Stoke-on-Trent North) (Lab): This week, lots of children break for the summer holidays. For many, that is a joy and a pleasure. However, many parents will now have to pay for an extra 10 meals per week, per child that were provided through free school meals, and 20% of parents will go without a meal this week in order to do so. The Government have invested in a pilot scheme. May we have a statement in the first week back on how the pilots ran?

Mr Rees-Mogg: The hon. Lady is indeed right. This year, about 50,000 disadvantaged children in 11 local authority areas will be offered free meals and activities over the summer holidays, funded by £9 million from the Department for Education, following a successful £2 million scheme last year. She knows that there are means of obtaining statements or urgent questions to see that an answer is given, and no doubt you will reflect upon it, Mr Speaker, if such a request is made.

Mr Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con): May I welcome the new Leader of the House? He will know that his role, as has been said already, is to represent Parliament

to Government and to say things that Parliament wants said and not necessarily what the Government want to hear. We have had an extraordinarily long Session. We need to end the Session, to have a new Queen's Speech, to have new Opposition days, and, importantly, to have private Members' Bills days. Will the Leader of the House consider arranging a Queen's Speech in, say, November?

Mr Rees-Mogg: My hon. Friend may want to raise that question with the Prime Minister, who is making a statement later and who is the person who will advise Her Majesty on when the next Session of Parliament should begin. But obviously there will have to be a new Queen's Speech at some point. I believe that this is the longest Session since the Long Parliament of the 1640s.

Stephanie Peacock (Barnsley East) (Lab): My constituent Jackie Wileman was killed by a stolen lorry. The four men responsible had 100 convictions between them, yet will only serve between five and seven years. It is now nearly two years since the Government committed to raising the maximum sentence for death by dangerous driving, so will the new Administration make this a priority, and when exactly will the new Leader of the House make parliamentary time available for this?

Mr Rees-Mogg: These cases are absolutely terrible. I think I mentioned earlier an application to the Backbench Business Committee on this matter. The hon. Lady and the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr Sheerman) are coming together in feeling that such a debate is necessary and important, and I feel that that is absolutely the right way to go. I have every sympathy for families in this terrible, terrible situation who feel that the law is not helping them.

Mr Simon Clarke (Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland) (Con): In welcoming my hon. Friend to his place, may I say how welcome it is for this House to have a Ministry committed to leaving the European Union in all circumstances? On that point, can we have a debate on preparedness for all outcomes, including a no-deal Brexit?

Mr Rees-Mogg: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his question. I share his view that it is jolly good news that we have an Administration who are committed to leaving the European Union, which is exactly what the British people voted for in 2016 and, indeed, what Parliament legislated for. Preparedness is of great importance. He may find that there are some encouraging words from the Prime Minister a little later, which may pre-empt an immediate debate.

Luciana Berger (Liverpool, Wavertree) (Ind): Fourteen weeks today, we are due to leave the European Union, but with five weeks of recess and three weeks of anticipated conference recess, more of that time will be spent away from this place than here. The new Leader of the House told us that he believes in our parliamentary democracy. What plans does he have to recall Parliament, so that we can deal with the greatest issue to face our nation since the second world war?

Mr Rees-Mogg: Any visitor to the Chamber over the last few years would have heard hours of debate in this place on leaving the European Union. If they troubled

[Mr Rees-Mogg]

to wander to the other place, they would have heard even longer hours of debate on leaving the European Union. This is the most discussed subject that Parliament has managed in decades, and Parliament came to a decision when it legislated. I am sorry to repeat the answer, but I will have to carry on doing so. Parliament voted for the article 50 Act and the withdrawal Act. That set by law the timetable for leaving. That is the democratic decision of Parliament.

Sir John Hayes (South Holland and The Deepings) (Con): As the self-appointed shop steward of the regular attenders of business questions club, I welcome our many guests and, in particular, the Leader of the House, of whom I have always been inordinately fond, not least because I know that not everyone enjoys the benefit I do of a working-class upbringing.

The Leader of the House will know that taxi and private hire vehicle licensing has been a matter of profound concern, so much so that an enlightened former Transport Minister commissioned a report on that subject, which was published in September last year, with the Government response published in February this year. We have heard nothing since. It is vital that we reform taxi and private hire vehicle licensing, so that the concerns of those who drive taxis can be taken into account and the welfare and wellbeing of those who travel in them can be protected.

Mr Rees-Mogg: Was it not Disraeli who said that London taxis were the “gondolas of London”? I share that view. We are very lucky to have the taxi drivers that we have. I think that the shop steward of these sessions will find that—[*Interruption.*] Well, are most shop stewards not self-elected? I thought that that was how those things worked. My right hon. Friend will be able to raise that with the new Secretary of State for Transport.

Tracy Brabin (Batley and Spen) (Lab/Co-op): With more people self-employed than on the minimum wage, and more people self-employed than in the public sector by 2020, any Government worth their salt, and a Government who say they are the party for the people and working people, should know that putting the self-employed at the top of their agenda is vital. Can we have a debate in Government time on self-employed workers’ rights, and particularly maternity and paternity rights?

Mr Rees-Mogg: The great thing to remember is that the self-employed are the entrepreneurs of the future. They are the ones who create the new businesses and new jobs. It is a fantastically dynamic part of our economy. The hon. Lady’s question is well timed, because I am sitting next to the new Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, who will have heard her plea and will no doubt take it into consideration.

Robert Halfon (Harlow) (Con): I congratulate my hon. Friend on his wonderful new role. I know that, as well as liking the British constitution, he likes cutting taxes, so can we have a debate on axing the reading tax? It is incredibly unfair that people who buy books or magazines online have to pay 20% more than those who do not.

Mr Rees-Mogg: My right hon. Friend is a genius at getting debates in this place, so he hardly needs advice from me. He already has an Adjournment debate coming on 4 September, which I expect will be even better attended than this morning’s session. I feel that I am inadequate to advise him on how to achieve more debates, but his subject is indeed a worthy one, and I hope that his plea has been widely heard.

Kate Green (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab): The Leader of the House is known for his courtesy, so I am sure he will agree that language describing Travellers as an invasion or a disease, contrasting them with decent people or talking of them as a problem—all of which have been heard in this House in recent months—is deplorable. Will he arrange a debate, perhaps in Hate Crime Awareness Week after the recess, on how we can use language respectfully towards everybody in this country?

Mr Rees-Mogg: I thank the hon. Lady for her generous compliment. It really is important that we use language properly, that language is effective and that language is powerful. You, Mr Speaker, control how it is used in this House to ensure that it is orderly, but the general tone should be one of generosity and kindness, and I would always encourage that. I do not think a debate on language in Government time is likely, but as I have said, there are Adjournment debates, Backbench Business debates and Westminster Hall debates. It is a really important issue, and I would encourage and share the hon. Lady’s view that good manners go a long way.

Andrew Selous (South West Bedfordshire) (Con): May I warmly congratulate my hon. Friend on his new appointment? He is already looking like an old pro in the position. May we have an urgent debate on serious deficiencies in the enforcement of minimum wage legislation? A carer in my constituency is owed £63,000 in unpaid minimum wage, despite the Care Act 2014 requiring Luton Borough Council to have an effective monitoring process of the personal budget payments involved. Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs, as the enforcement agency, can take no action against the person cared for because she has no assets. How can my constituent get her unpaid minimum wage?

Mr Rees-Mogg: That is a very serious issue. Regrettably, I cannot comment on individual cases, but I am clear that careworkers provide essential support to some of the most vulnerable members of society, and it is essential that they are paid in accordance with the law, including the national minimum wage, for the work they do. This is a responsibility of local authorities, which should ensure that personal budgets are sufficient to deliver a person’s care needs, including making sure that they cover the cost of wages, and local authorities have a duty to monitor how personal budgets are spent. However, the Department of Health and Social Care will take this up with the local authority and ask it to investigate what sounds like a very serious and concerning case.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr Speaker: Order. I am keen to move on to the statement by the Prime Minister at or very close to 11.30 am, so the normal practice of accommodating

everybody will not apply today. However, participation will be maximised by short questions and the Leader of the House's characteristically pithy replies. Single-sentence inquiries are to be preferred.

Peter Kyle (Hove) (Lab): I express my congratulations to the Leader of the House on the new job. He has said already today that he will be the voice of this Chamber and that he will hold the Government to account. Will he therefore tell us what he feels about the appointment by the new Prime Minister, as his closest adviser, of somebody who has been found in contempt of this House? What will he do to hold him to account for that decision, and what does he feel about it?

Mr Rees-Mogg: Parliament did what it did. It passed its sentence; it did not use its ancient powers to imprison or fine the gentleman concerned, and it did not send him to the Clock Tower. Therefore, in effect, his conviction is spent, and I believe in the rehabilitation of offenders.

Mr Bob Seely (Isle of Wight) (Con): I welcome my hon. Friend to his new role. Ministers made a holding statement on the telecoms supply chain review this week, but Huawei and Chinese high tech were not part of that, or no announcement was made. Due to the seriousness of this issue, will the Leader of the House consider a debate in Government time so that the Government can outline options on the role of Chinese high tech in our critical national infrastructure? Apart from Brexit, this is one of the most serious issues we will face in the 21st century. Does he agree that we need more debate on it?

Mr Rees-Mogg: This is obviously an important issue, but the means of obtaining a debate are well known. I did express views on this before I was bound by collective responsibility, but I am currently waiting for the Government's review.

Mr Jim Cunningham (Coventry South) (Lab): Going back to the question from the right hon. Member for South Holland and The Deepings (Sir John Hayes) about the taxi regulations, the Leader of the House never answered the question. When is the Minister responsible going to bring those proposals to the House, because the Minister told us it was only a matter of parliamentary time? Will the Leader of the House find the time?

Mr Rees-Mogg: The hon. Gentleman knows that there are usual channels for finding time. Ministers ask for time for things to come forward, and these things have to slot into the overall parliamentary timetable. However, the commitment has been made, and the commitment will be honoured.

Vicky Ford (Chelmsford) (Con): I, too, welcome my hon. Friend to his new role. I know that his predecessor was looking at the online harassment that politicians sometimes face, especially women and those from certain ethnic groups, and was planning to engage with counterparts from other Parliaments across the world to see how they have addressed this issue to stop people being put off standing for Parliament. May I urge him to continue this important work?

Mr Rees-Mogg: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising that important issue, and it should distress us all that online harassment seems to affect one category of society more than others. It seems to affect women and ethnic minorities more than men, and it would be appalling if that deterred good people from coming into political life. I am extremely keen for my hon. Friend's suggestion to be looked at, and to try to work out how to lessen that problem, which is something we should all be worried about.

Mr Chris Leslie (Nottingham East) (IGC): Will the new Leader of the House say a little more about how he intends to champion the supremacy of the House of Commons? We have slipped into some bad habits recently—Opposition day motions have not been fulfilled by the Government, and other resolutions have been ignored by the Executive. If the House of Commons resolves something, will the Leader of the House ensure that that resolution is faithfully executed?

Mr Rees-Mogg: The hon. Gentleman's view of history is longer than mine. He said "recently", but I do not think 1972 is that recent. It was then that the House abrogated parliamentary sovereignty and decided to hand it over to what then became the European Union. I am glad to say that we have taken back control and that Parliament will be sovereign once again. Parliament is sovereign by law, not by mere motion. The last time it was sovereign by mere motion was when it issued ordinances under Oliver Cromwell. Do I wish to go back to that, Mr Speaker? No sir!

Henry Smith (Crawley) (Con): I warmly congratulate my hon. Friend on his appointment, and I welcomed the new Prime Minister speaking about investment in primary care yesterday on the steps of Downing Street. In Crawley, too many GP surgeries are at or over capacity. May we have an early statement on that issue?

Mr Rees-Mogg: I thank my hon. Friend for his kind words. He is right to raise this issue. GP practices provide a vital service to our local communities. We will continue to build on the recent changes to GP services in primary care, as set out earlier this year in the NHS long-term plan. That includes an extra £4.5 billion for primary care and community services, and up to 20,000 additional staff working in general practice over the next 20 years. I am sure that the Health Secretary will report back on that, which I hope will meet my hon. Friend's demand for a debate.

Gavin Newlands (Paisley and Renfrewshire North) (SNP): The Leader of the House is supposed to be a great defender of Parliament and parliamentary democracy, but in January he said:

"If the House of Commons undermines our basic constitutional conventions, then the executive is entitled to use other vestigial constitutional means to stop it, by which I basically mean prorogation."

Will the Leader of the House be Parliament's man in Cabinet, or Cabinet's man in Parliament?

Mr Rees-Mogg: You and I know perfectly well, Mr Speaker, that this constitution of ours, this precious vessel of our constitution, is bound by conventions, and it is overwhelmingly important that all those conventions are followed and obeyed. Such conventions are about

[Mr Rees-Mogg]

how this House operates, how the other place operates, and how the Executive operates, and they have grown up over time from our history and understanding of how we should be governed. It is risky to break one convention, because that leads to other conventions being taken less seriously.

Mr Marcus Jones (Nuneaton) (Con): I welcome my hon. Friend to his new position. Private building inspectors are a vital part of the construction industry, but through no fault of their own many now have a massive issue with renewing their professional indemnity insurance. Will the Government make a statement to confirm what they can do to support the reform of that important insurance?

Mr Rees-Mogg: I am well aware of that important issue and I will pass it on to the relevant Minister.

Janet Daby (Lewisham East) (Lab): The power to stop and search young people is viewed as useful in reducing serious youth violence. Will the new Leader of the House agree to a debate on that issue in Government time?

Mr Rees-Mogg: If Members would only bate their breath momentarily, the new Prime Minister will soon make a statement. He has already advocated ensuring that the police have our support for stop and search, and there may therefore be the opportunity to ask him about that in a moment.

Julian Knight (Solihull) (Con): As we break for some restoration and renewal during the recess, my constituents' lives are being blighted by two things: inconsiderate garden grabbing with no social purpose whatever, and the stealing of car parts to order. May we have a debate in Government time on those twin menaces, and on how we can reform the law to help my constituents?

Mr Rees-Mogg: It is very important that we always stand up for and help our constituents. The Chairman of the Backbench Business Committee is still sitting here paying close attention to what is being said. I am sure his Committee will consider my hon. Friend's request.

Colleen Fletcher (Coventry North East) (Lab): I recently met matrons at my local hospital in Coventry. We talked about a range of issues, including the Government's disastrous decision to abolish NHS bursaries, which they said had resulted in a 32% drop in applications to study nursing, thereby exacerbating the workforce crisis in our NHS, where we already have 41,000 nursing vacancies. Will the Leader of the House look for time to debate the problem of recruitment and retention in our nursing profession, and the need to introduce the NHS bursary?

Mr Rees-Mogg: The relevant Secretary of State has whispered in my ear, and I feel it should have a wider audience, that we have record numbers of nurses and record numbers in training. That is a significant success

of this Government. If we wish to have a debate on the successes and triumphs of this Government, I would be all in favour.

Chris Green (Bolton West) (Con): Will my hon. Friend provide Government time for a debate on the future of the northern powerhouse, because we need to: d, deliver on the vision; u, unite the talents across the north; and d, defeat the poverty of Labour's low aspiration? Will he reinsert the all-important energy to the northern powerhouse?

Mr Rees-Mogg: That is an absolutely brilliant point, which follows on from what I was saying. I think we should have days of debate on the wonderful successes of this Government. Some £13 billion has been spent on the northern powerhouse, and the Minister for the Northern Powerhouse is now attending the Cabinet. Triumph after triumph achieved by this Government and we have only had our new Prime Minister for 24 hours. It is absolutely amazing, but the issue that my hon. Friend raises is probably in the purview of the Backbench Business Committee.

Ian Paisley (North Antrim) (DUP): I congratulate the Leader of the House. He appears to be very well fitted to the role. I am very disappointed that in the first week back we do not have business with regards to a draft historical Bill on abuse for Northern Ireland. Will that be in the second week when we are back, as indicated by the Northern Ireland Secretary?

Mr Rees-Mogg: My hon. Friend should be aware that there will be Northern Ireland questions on 11 September, when he can raise that with the relevant Minister, but I accept that it is a really important issue.

Jeremy Lefroy (Stafford) (Con): May we have a debate on the importance of a commitment, from both the UK and the EU, to continue to allow musicians and artists to work without hindrance in each other's territories?

Mr Rees-Mogg: This is obviously of importance. We want to be able to ensure that cultural exchanges continue. I am sure that this is something that will be achieved by the Government.

Helen Goodman (Bishop Auckland) (Lab): I congratulate the Leader of the House, with whom I spent many happy hours in the Procedure Committee, where he championed the rights of this House. He perambulated around the question of Prorogation. To be absolutely specific, will he confirm that the House will be sitting each week, every week between 8 October and 31 October?

Mr Rees-Mogg: Mr Speaker, we have got perambulators and nannies into this session, which I think must be a first for questions to the Leader of the House. The issue of Prorogation is one that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has said is an archaic usage, but there will have to be a Prorogation before there is a new Session. This is the routine constitutional position, and I believe in maintaining the constitutional conventions.

Mr Speaker: One sentence. I call Bob Blackman.

Bob Blackman (Harrow East) (Con): Transport for London is currently consulting on building high-density multi-storey housing on car parks at stations across London. May we have a debate in Government time on the impact on commuters right across the whole of south-east England?

Mr Rees-Mogg: I understand that my hon. Friend is likely to be called later in the general debate on matters to be raised before the forthcoming Adjournment. It will be a golden opportunity to raise this subject.

Cat Smith (Lancaster and Fleetwood) (Lab): I do hope that recent kipper waving is not a red herring. *[Interruption.]* May I ask the Leader of the House when we can expect to see the Fisheries Bill back? *[Interruption.]*

Mr Rees-Mogg: I am frightfully sorry, Mr Speaker. I didn't hear a word.

Mr Speaker: Let's hear it again.

Cat Smith: I do hope that recent kipper waving has not been a red herring. When can we expect to see the Fisheries Bill back in this place?

Mr Rees-Mogg: Those kippers, I can assure the hon. Lady, were absolutely delicious. They were eaten by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister with gusto, showing his characteristic support for the British fishing industry. The hon. Lady knows that Bills come back through the normal channels, and all things will be well and all will be well, and all manner of things will be well.

Mr Speaker: Gusto eating is a challenge to even the most vivid imagination, but we will reflect upon that, I feel sure.

Steve Double (St Austell and Newquay) (Con): Earlier this week a group of local authorities representing rural areas formed a coalition under the title Britain's Leading Edge. Many of these areas have benefited from European funding. Once we leave the EU, will the Government continue their commitment to investing in these areas through the shared prosperity fund?

Mr Rees-Mogg: It is of course our money in the first place, which is recycled. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has whispered in my ear, "SPF", so yes, the money is there.

Gareth Snell (Stoke-on-Trent Central) (Lab/Co-op): When will the House have a chance to vote on their Lordships' amendment to the Trade Bill for participation in the customs union?

Mr Rees-Mogg: Why on earth would anybody want to do that?

Luke Graham (Ochil and South Perthshire) (Con): I welcome my hon. Friend to his place. Will he join me in congratulating the team at Sainsbury's in Kinross for getting the Perth and Kinross gold star for equality at work, and will he provide some Government time to discuss the Disability Confident and Access to Work programmes?

Mr Rees-Mogg: I extend my warmest good wishes to Sainsbury's in Kinross for its brilliant achievement. I think it might be a slightly niche subject for a debate on the Floor of the House of Commons, however.

Diana Johnson (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): Antisocial behaviour and crime have risen steeply since 2010, and in the first half of July, 23 emergency service workers were assaulted in Hull, so I was very pleased to hear that the Prime Minister last night announced that there will be 20,000 new police officers. Can we have a debate on when those police officers are actually going to be on the streets, where they are going to be in the country and whether they will be equally shared around?

Mr Rees-Mogg: May I wish the hon. Lady very many happy returns of the day? I understand that it is an auspicious day today. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will be making a statement. He has clearly made the extra 20,000 police an absolute priority. We need to ensure that everything is done to combat crime and ensure that people in Hull and everywhere else in the country are safe, but it may be sensible to ask my right hon. Friend later.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Order. We must now move on, but in thanking the new Leader of the House, I note that there will be many opportunities to question him about future business in the weeks and months ahead.

Priorities for Government

11.32 am

The Prime Minister (Boris Johnson): With permission, Mr Speaker, I shall make a statement on the mission of this new Conservative Government.

Before I begin, I am sure that the whole House will join me in paying tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May) for all that she has given to the service of our nation. From fighting modern slavery to tackling the problems of mental ill health, she has a great legacy on which we shall all be proud to build.

Our mission is to deliver Brexit on 31 October for the purpose of uniting and re-energising our great United Kingdom and making this country the greatest place on earth. When I say “the greatest place on earth”, I am conscious that some may accuse me of hyperbole, but it is useful to imagine the trajectory on which we could now be embarked. By 2050, it is more than possible that the United Kingdom will be the greatest and most prosperous economy in Europe, at the centre of a new network of trade deals, which we have pioneered. With the road and rail investments that we are making and propose to make now and the investment in broadband and 5G, our country will boast the most affordable transport and technological connectivity on the planet. By unleashing the productive power of the whole United Kingdom—not just of London and the south-east, but of every corner of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland—we will have closed forever the productivity gap and seen to it that no town is left behind ever again and no community ever forgotten.

Our children and grandchildren will be living longer, happier and healthier lives. Our kingdom in 2050—thanks, by the way, to the initiative of the previous Prime Minister—will no longer make any contribution whatsoever to the destruction of our precious planet, brought about by carbon emissions, because we will have led the world in delivering that net zero target. We will be the home of electric vehicles—cars and even planes—powered by British-made battery technology, which is being developed right here, right now. We will have the free ports to revitalise our coastal communities, a bio-science sector liberated from anti-genetic modification rules, blight resistant crops that will feed the world, and satellite and earth observation systems that are the envy of the world. We will be the seedbed for the most exciting and dynamic business investments on the planet. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. I apologise for interrupting the Prime Minister. There is far too much noise in this Chamber, and there are far too many Members who think it is all right for them to shout out their opinion at the Prime Minister. Let us be clear: it is not. The statement will be heard, and there will be ample opportunity, in conformity with convention, and as established by me over the last decade, for colleagues to question the Prime Minister, but the statement will be heard, and heard with courtesy.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, I applaud your intervention. I also think there is far too much negativity about the potential of our great country, as I think you will agree. Our constitutional settlement, our United

Kingdom, will be firm and secure; our Union of nations beyond question; our democracy robust; our future clean, green, prosperous, united, confident and ambitious. That is the prize, and that is our responsibility, in this House of Commons, to fulfil. To do so, we must take some immediate steps. The first is to restore trust in our democracy, and fulfil the repeated promises of Parliament to the people by coming out of the European Union, and by doing so on 31 October.

I and all Ministers are committed to leaving on this date, whatever the circumstances. To do otherwise would cause a catastrophic loss of confidence in our political system. It would leave the British people wondering whether their politicians could ever be trusted again to follow a clear democratic instruction. I would prefer us to leave the EU with a deal; I would much prefer it. I believe that it is possible, even at this late stage, and I will work flat out to make it happen, but certain things need to be clear. The withdrawal agreement negotiated by my predecessor has been three times rejected by this House. Its terms are unacceptable to this Parliament and to this country. No country that values its independence, and indeed its self-respect, could agree to a treaty that signed away our economic independence and self-government, as this backstop does. A time limit is not enough. If an agreement is to be reached, it must be clearly understood that the way to the deal goes by way of the abolition of the backstop.

For our part, we are ready to negotiate, in good faith, an alternative, with provisions to ensure that the Irish border issues are dealt with where they should always have been: in the negotiations on the future agreement between the UK and the EU. I do not accept the argument that says that these issues can be solved only by all or part of the UK remaining in the customs union or in the single market. The evidence is that other arrangements are perfectly possible, and are also perfectly compatible with the Belfast or Good Friday agreement, to which we are, of course, steadfastly committed. I, my team and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union are ready to meet and talk on this basis to the European Commission, or other EU colleagues, whenever and wherever they are ready to do so.

For our part, we will throw ourselves into these negotiations with the greatest energy and determination and in a spirit of friendship. I hope that the EU will be equally ready and will rethink its current refusal to make any changes to the withdrawal agreement. If it does not, we will of course have to leave the EU without an agreement under article 50. The UK is better prepared for that situation than many believe, but we are not as ready yet as we should be.

In the 98 days that remain to us, we must turbo-charge our preparations to ensure that there is as little disruption as possible to our national life, and I believe that is possible with the kind of national effort that the British people have made before and will make again. In these circumstances, we would of course have available the £39 billion in the withdrawal agreement to help deal with any consequences. I have today instructed the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to make these preparations his top priority. I have asked the Cabinet Secretary to mobilise the civil service to deliver this outcome, should it become necessary. The Chancellor

has confirmed that all necessary funding will be made available—[*Interruption*—£4.2 billion has already been allocated.

I will also ensure that preparing to leave the EU without an agreement under article 50 is not just about seeking to mitigate the challenges, but about grasping the opportunities. This is not just about technical preparations, vital though they are; it is about having a clear economic strategy for the UK in all scenarios—something that the Conservative party has always led the way on—and producing policies that will boost the competitiveness and productivity of our economy when we are free of EU regulations.

Indeed, we will begin right away on working to change the tax rules to provide extra incentives to invest in capital and research. We will now be accelerating the talks on those free trade deals, and we will prepare an economic package to boost British business and lengthen this country's lead, which seems so bitterly resented by Opposition Members, as the No. 1 destination in this continent for overseas investment—a status that is made possible at least partly by the diversity, talent and skills of our workforce.

I therefore want to repeat unequivocally our guarantee to the 3.2 million EU nationals now living and working among us. I thank them for their contribution to our society and for their patience. I can assure them that under this Government they will have the absolute certainty of the right to live and remain.

I want to end by making clear my absolute commitment to the 31 October date for our exit. Our national participation in the European Union is coming to an end, and that reality needs to be recognised by all parties. Indeed, today there are very many brilliant UK officials trapped in meeting after meeting in Brussels and Luxembourg, when their talents could be better deployed in preparing to pioneer new free trade deals or promoting a truly global Britain. I want to start unshackling our officials to undertake this new mission right away, so we will not nominate a UK Commissioner for the new Commission taking office on 1 December—under no circumstances—although clearly that is not intended to stop the EU appointing a new Commission.

Today is the first day of a new approach that will end with our exit from the EU on 31 October. Then I hope that we can have a friendly and constructive relationship, as constitutional equals and as friend and partners in facing the challenges that lie ahead. I believe that is possible, and this Government will work to make it so. But we are not going to wait until 31 October to begin building the broader and bolder future that I have described; we are going to start right away by providing vital funding for our frontline public services, to deliver better healthcare, better education and more police on the streets.

I am committed to making sure that the NHS receives the funds that it deserves—the funds that were promised by the previous Government in June 2018—and these funds will go to the frontline as soon as possible. That will include urgent funding for 20 hospital upgrades and for winter readiness. I have asked officials to provide policy proposals for drastically reducing waiting times for GP appointments.

To address the rising tide of violent crime in our country, I have announced that there will be 20,000 extra police keeping us safe over the next three years, and I

have asked my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary to ensure that this is treated as an absolute priority. We will give greater powers—powers resisted, by the way, by the Labour party—to the police to use stop and search to help tackle violent crime. I have also tasked officials to draw up proposals to ensure that in future those found guilty of the most serious sexual and violent offences are required to serve a custodial sentence that truly reflects the severity of their offence, and policy measures that will see a reduction in the number of prolific offenders.

On education, I have listened to the concerns of so many colleagues around the House, and we will increase the minimum level of per pupil funding in primary and secondary schools and return education funding to previous levels by the end of this Parliament.

We are committed to levelling up across every nation and region of the UK, providing support to towns and cities and closing the opportunity gap in our society. We will announce investment in vital infrastructure, full fibre roll-out, transport and housing that can improve the quality of people's lives, fuel economic growth and provide opportunity.

Finally, we will also ensure that we continue to attract the best and brightest talent from around the world. No one believes more strongly than I do in the benefits of migration to our country, but I am clear that our immigration system must change. For years, politicians have promised the public an Australian-style points-based system, and today I will actually deliver on those promises: I will ask the Migration Advisory Committee to conduct a review of that system as the first step in a radical rewriting of our immigration system, and I am convinced that we can produce a system that the British people can have confidence in.

Over the past few years, too many people in this country feel that they have been told repeatedly and relentlessly what we cannot do. Since I was a child, I remember respectable authorities asserting that our time as a nation has passed and that we should be content with mediocrity and managed decline, and time and again—[*Interruption.*] They are the sceptics and doubters, my friends. Time and again, by their powers to innovate and adapt, the British people have shown the doubters wrong, and I believe that at this pivotal moment in our national story, we are going to prove the doubters wrong again, not just with positive thinking and a can-do attitude, important though they are, but with the help and the encouragement of a Government and a Cabinet who are bursting with ideas, ready to create change and determined to implement the policies we need to succeed as a nation: the greatest place to live, the greatest place to bring up a family, the greatest place to send your kids to school, the greatest place to set up a business or to invest, because we have the best transport and the cleanest environment and the best healthcare and the most compassionate approach to care of elderly people.

That is the mission of the Cabinet I have appointed, and that is the purpose of the Government I am leading. And that is why I believe that if we bend our sinews to the task now, there is every chance that in 2050, when I fully intend to be around, although not necessarily in this job, we will be able to look back on this period—this extraordinary period—as the beginning of a new golden age for our United Kingdom.

[*The Prime Minister*]

I commend this future to the House just as much as I commend this statement.

11.48 am

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Lab): I welcome the right hon. Gentleman to his position and thank him for an advance copy of his statement.

No one underestimates this country, but the country is deeply worried that the new Prime Minister overestimates himself. He inherits a country that has been held back by nine years of austerity that hit children and young people the hardest. Their youth centres have closed, their school funding has been cut and their college budgets slashed, and with the help of the Liberal Democrats, tuition fees have trebled. Housing costs are higher than ever, and jobs are lower paid. Opportunity and freedom have been taken away. Austerity was always a political choice, never an economic necessity—[*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. I indicated that people would not shout down the Prime Minister. Precisely the same applies to the Leader of the Opposition. Don't try it: you are wasting your vocal cords and, above all, it won't work. The right hon. Gentleman will be heard and these exchanges will take as long as they will take, whatever other appointments people might have. The right hon. Gentleman will be heard. Stop it!

Jeremy Corbyn: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The right hon. Gentleman's predecessor promised to end austerity, but spectacularly failed to deliver. People do not trust the Prime Minister to make the right choices for the majority of people in this country when he is also promising tax giveaways to the richest and big business—his own party's funders. So can he now indicate when he will set out the detail of the exact funding settlement for our schools and for our hard-pressed local authorities and police, so that they can start planning now? We must also address the deep regional inequalities in this country. The northern powerhouse has been massively underpowered and the midlands engine has not been fuelled, so will the Prime Minister match Labour's commitment to a £500 billion investment fund to rebalance this country through regional development banks and a national transformation fund?

The right hon. Gentleman has hastily thrown together a hard-right Cabinet. I have just a couple of questions on those appointments. Given his appointment of the first Home Secretary for a generation to support the death penalty, can he assure the House now that his Government have no plans to try to bring back capital punishment to this country? And before appointing the new Education Secretary, was he given sight of the Huawei leak investigation by the Cabinet Secretary?

I am deeply alarmed to see no plan for Brexit. The right hon. Gentleman was in the Cabinet that accepted the backstop and, of course, he voted for it on 30 March this year. It would be welcome if he could set out what he finds so objectionable, having voted for it less than four months ago. Can he explain this flip-flopping? The House will have a sense of déjà-vu and of trepidation at a Prime Minister setting out rigid red lines and an

artificial timetable. There is something eerily familiar about a Prime Minister marching off to Europe with demands to scrap the backstop, so why does he think he will succeed where his predecessor failed?

However, I do welcome the Prime Minister's commitment finally to guarantee the rights of European Union citizens. It is a great shame that this offer has only been made now, more than three years after my party put that proposal before this House. Our friends, neighbours and family should never have been treated as bargaining chips, which has caused untold stress and worry to people who have worked so hard for this country and the communities that make it up.

Does the Prime Minister accept that, if he continues to pursue a reckless no deal, he will be directly flouting the expressed will of this Parliament? Industry, business and unions have been absolutely clear about the threat that that poses: no deal means no steel, no car industry, food prices dramatically rising and huge job losses. Make UK, representing much of manufacturing industry, says no deal would be "the height of economic lunacy".

Companies from Toyota to Asda have been clear about the dangers of no deal. Is the Prime Minister still guided by his "f*** business" policy? Those recklessly advocating no deal will not be the ones who lose out. The wealthy elite who fund him and his party will not lose their jobs, see their living standards cut or face higher food bills.

If the Prime Minister has confidence in his plan, once he has decided what it is, he should go back to the people with that plan. Labour will oppose any deal that fails to protect jobs—[*Interruption.*] We will oppose any deal that fails to protect jobs, workers' rights or environmental protections. If he has the confidence to put that decision back to the people, we would, in those circumstances, campaign to remain.

The office of—[*Interruption*]

Mr Speaker: Order. It will take as long as it takes. I have plenty of time; I am totally untroubled by these matters.

Jeremy Corbyn: The office of Prime Minister requires integrity and honesty, so will the Prime Minister correct his claim that kipper exports from the Isle of Man to the UK are subject to EU regulations? Will he also acknowledge that the £39 billion is now £33 billion, due over 30 years, and has been legally committed to be paid by his predecessor? This is a phoney threat about a fake pot of money, made by the Prime Minister.

We also face a climate emergency, so will the Prime Minister take the urgent actions necessary? Will he ban fracking? Will he back real ingenuity like the Swansea Bay tidal lagoon? Will he increase investment in carbon capture and storage? Will he back our solar industry and onshore wind—so devastated over the last nine years? Will he set out a credible plan to reach net zero?

I note that the climate change-denying US President has already labelled the Prime Minister "Britain Trump" and welcomed his commitment to work with Nigel Farage. Could "Britain Trump" take this opportunity to rule out once and for all our NHS being part of any trade deal—any trade deal—with President Trump and the USA? Will the Prime Minister make it clear that our

national health service is not going to be sold to American healthcare companies? People fear that, far from wanting to “take back control”, the new Prime Minister would effectively make us a vassal state of Trump’s America.

Will the Prime Minister ask the new Foreign Secretary to prioritise the release of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe and is he working with European partners to restore the Iran nuclear deal and de-escalate tensions in the Gulf?

The challenge to end austerity, tackle inequality, resolve Brexit and tackle the climate emergency will define the new Prime Minister. Instead, we have a hard-right Cabinet staking everything on tax cuts for the few and a reckless race-to-the-bottom Brexit. He says he has “pluck and nerve and ambition”; our country does not need arm-waving bluster; we need competence, seriousness and, after a decade of divisive policies for the few, to focus for once on the interests of the many.

The Prime Minister: I struggled to discover a serious question in that, but I will make one important point that it is worth making: under no circumstances will we agree to any free trade deal that puts the NHS on the table. It is not for sale. I remind the right hon. Gentleman that for 44 of its 71 years of glorious existence, the NHS has benefited from Conservative policies and Conservative government, because we understand that unless we support wealth creation, unless we believe in British business, British enterprise and British industry, we will not have the funds; unless we have a strong economy, we will not be able to pay for a fantastic NHS. That is a lesson that the right hon. Gentleman simply does not get.

I struggled to see the country in the right hon. Gentleman’s description of the United Kingdom today. The reality is that unemployment is, of course, down under the Conservatives to the lowest level since the 1970s. Crime is down a third since 2010. We have record inward investment into this country of £1.3 trillion. We have fantastic new electric car factories—*[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. Mr McDonald, you really are at times a reckless delinquent. Calm yourself, man. I know you get very irate because you feel passionately. I respect your passion, but I do not respect your delinquency. Calm yourself, man; take some sort of soothing medicament and you will feel better as a consequence.

The Prime Minister: They do not like the truth that more homes were built in this country last year than in any of the last 31 years bar one. Wages are now outperforming inflation for the first time in a decade. The living wage—a Conservative policy that I am proud to say I championed in London and that was then stolen by our wonderful Conservative Government and made into a national policy—has expanded the incomes of those who receive it by £4,500 since 2010. That is a fantastic achievement, and it is a Conservative achievement.

The right hon. Gentleman talks about trust and asks, “Who can you trust to run the Government?” How on earth? He asks about Iran—a right hon. Gentleman who has been paid by Press TV of Iran and who repeatedly sides with the mullahs of Tehran rather than our friends in the United States over what is happening in the Persian gulf. How incredible that we should even think of entrusting that gentleman with the stewardship of this country’s security.

Worse than that by far, this is a right hon. Gentleman who is set on an economic policy, together with the shadow Chancellor who was sacked by Ken Livingstone for being too left wing—*[Interruption.]* Quite rightly, he was sacked for fabricating a budget. He forged a budget—sacked for forging a budget. He would raise taxes on inheritance; he would raise taxes on pensions—*[Interruption.]* I am answering; I am telling you—*[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. Mr Lavery, you are another over-excitabile denizen of the House. Calm yourself; it would be therapeutic for you to do so. There is far too much noise on both sides of the House, and I fear that the noise on the Front Bench is proving contagious. I note that certain Back Benchers are becoming over-excitabile. They must restrain themselves. I know that the Prime Minister will, of course, be both passionate and restrained.

The Prime Minister: It is only with an effort that I can master my feelings here, Mr Speaker. The right hon. Gentleman would not only put up taxes on inheritance, pensions and corporations; he would put up taxes on income to 50p in the pound. *[Interruption.]* There he is, the shadow Chancellor—the forger of the budget of 1984, Mr Speaker.

Give the Leader of the Opposition a chance and he would put up taxes not just on homes, but on gardens. He speaks about trust in our democracy. I have to say that a most extraordinary thing has just happened today. Did anybody notice? Did anybody notice the terrible metamorphosis that took place, like the final scene of “Invasion of the Bodysnatchers”? At last, this long-standing Eurosceptic, the right hon. Gentleman, has been captured. He has been jugulated—he has been reprogrammed by his hon. Friends. He has been turned now into a remainer! Of all the flip-flops that he has performed in his tergiversating career, that is the one for which I think he will pay the highest price.

It is this party now, this Government, who are clearly on the side of democracy in this country. It is this party that is on the side of the people who voted so overwhelmingly in 2016, and it is this party that will deliver the mandate that they gave to this Parliament—and which, by the way, this Parliament promised time and time and time again to deliver. Indeed, the right hon. Gentleman and all his colleagues promised to deliver it. The reality now is that we are the party of the people. We are the party of the many, and they are the party of the few. We will take this country forwards; they, Mr Speaker, would take it backwards.

Mr Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford and Woodford Green) (Con): I unreservedly welcome my right hon. Friend to his place. Today the EU will have listened and realised that the days of supplication are over and that we are intent on a policy to leave the European Union. I urge him in the course of his attempts at the Dispatch Box not to be too unkind to his opposite number. The right hon. Gentleman has not just become a remainer: over the last three and a half years, he has been trying to remain again and again and again, despite his own party’s determination.

In the process of my right hon. Friend’s preparation to leave without a deal, if that were necessary, could he now not allow us to do this in private? Could he instruct

[*Mr Iain Duncan Smith*]

his right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to do all this now in public—week by week, to tell the world, the European Union and our colleagues that we are nearly ready, and then finally that we are ready to leave, if necessary, without a deal?

The Prime Minister: I thank my right hon. Friend very much for that excellent question and the point that he makes. It is vital now that, as we prepare for a better deal, a new deal, we get ready, of course, for no deal—not that I think that that will be the outcome and not that I desire that outcome. But it is vital that we prepare business, industry and farming—every community in this country that needs the relevant advice. As my right hon. Friend has wisely suggested, there will be a very active and public campaign to do so.

Ian Blackford (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP): I should welcome the Prime Minister to his place: the last Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. It is often said that the Prime Minister lives in a parallel universe—well, my goodness, that has been proven beyond any reasonable doubt this morning. In fact, it looked as if he was about to launch himself into outer space.

There are questions to be asked as to the mandate that the Prime Minister has for the office that he now occupies. He has been appointed not by this House, not by the people but by the Tory party. What have they done? It horrifies me that the new Prime Minister finds his position through such an undemocratic process. Indeed, it was the Prime Minister himself who called the system a “gigantic fraud” when Gordon Brown was parachuted into office, just like he was, 12 years ago. Scotland did not vote for Brexit, we did not vote for no deal, and we most certainly did not vote for this Prime Minister.

Will the Prime Minister accept the First Minister’s call this morning for an urgent meeting of the Heads of Government? Scottish Government analysis has shown that a no-deal Brexit will hit the economy hard, with a predicted 8% hit to GDP, threatening up to 100,000 Scottish jobs. Just this week alone, we have seen the International Monetary Fund, the Confederation of British Industry, the Trades Union Congress, the food and drink industry and the British Chambers of Commerce all warning of a no-deal Brexit. The Office for Budget Responsibility has revealed that a no-deal Brexit could lead to a plunge in the value of the pound and leave a £30 billion black hole in the public finances. What analysis has the Prime Minister made of no deal? When he was asked last week, he had no answer. He wants to drive us off the cliff edge and he does not even know the impact of the damage that will cause. This is the height of irresponsibility—economic madness driven by ideology—from the Prime Minister, supported by his new right-wing ideologues on the Front Bench.

A new deal from Europe is the stuff of fantasy. Time and again, Europe has made it clear that the withdrawal agreement is not open for negotiation. Last night, Leo Varadkar confirmed once again that it will not happen. The Prime Minister has no plan. He is full of bluster, but the consequences of his fantasy land will have devastating consequences. He is deluded. Let me warn the Prime Minister: if he tries to take Scotland and the

United Kingdom out of the European Union on a no-deal basis, we will stop him doing so. This House will stop the Prime Minister. We will not let him do untold damage to the jobs and constituents of our country. Parliament will stop this madness in its tracks.

The Prime Minister was elected by 0.13% of the population. He has no mandate from Scotland. He has no mandate in this House. Scotland has had a Tory Government for whom it did not vote for 36 of the past 64 years. The Barnett formula that protects spending in Scotland has been criticised by the Prime Minister, the Home Secretary and the Foreign Secretary. Will the Prime Minister today rule out changing the Barnett formula, or is Scotland under attack from this Prime Minister?

The whole internal Tory party crisis has been a democratic outrage. Scotland’s First Minister has been clear that she is now reviewing the timetable for a second independence referendum. Scotland will not stand by and let decisions be taken by charlatans on our behalf. I ask the Prime Minister to do the honourable thing: call a general election and let the people of Scotland have their say.

The Prime Minister: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his suggestion. I should point out that the people of this country have voted in 2015, 2016 and 2017, and what they want to see is this Parliament delivering on the mandate that they gave us, including him. I take no criticism of my election from the party whose leader, Nicola Sturgeon, replaced Alex Salmond without a vote, as far as I know. Did she not?

The right hon. Gentleman is completely wrong in his analysis and his defeatism and pessimism about our wonderful United Kingdom, which he seeks to break up, because if we can deliver a fantastic, sensible and progressive Brexit, which I believe we can, and the whole United Kingdom comes out, as I know that it will, what happens then to the arguments of the Scottish nationalist party? Will they seriously continue to say that Scotland must join the euro independently? Will they seriously suggest that Scotland must submit to the entire panoply of EU law? Will they join Schengen? Is it really their commitment to hand back control of Scottish fisheries to Brussels, just after this country—this great United Kingdom—has taken back that fantastic resource? Is that really the policy of the Scottish nationalist party? I respectfully suggest to the right hon. Gentleman that that is not the basis on which to seek election in Scotland. We will win on a manifesto for the whole United Kingdom.

Sir Edward Leigh (Gainsborough) (Con): Our history is littered with Prime Ministers being dealt an extraordinarily difficult hand but, by pluck and determination, finally winning through in Europe. To make it possible, though, every MP has to realise that this is no longer a conscience issue. We have to learn to compromise and vote for something that may not be the perfect solution for us personally but is best for our nation.

The Prime Minister: I thank my right hon. Friend very much for his remarks and for the spirit in which he made them. He speaks for many of us in saying that we need to get this done, we can get it done and we will get it done.

Jo Swinson (East Dunbartonshire) (LD): The 3 million EU citizens are our family, our friends, our neighbours, our carers, yet for three years they have been made to feel unwelcome in our country. They deserve better than warm words and more months of anxiety. They deserve certainty, now. The Prime Minister has made assurances, so will he back the Bill of my Lib Dem colleague Lord Oates, which would guarantee in law the rights of EU citizens? Or is he all talk and no trousers?

The Prime Minister: I congratulate the hon. Lady on her own election and join her in insisting on the vital importance of guaranteeing the rights and protections of the 3.2 million who have lived and worked among us for so long. Of course, we are insisting that their rights are guaranteed in law. I am pleased to say that under our settlement scheme some 1 million have already signed up to enshrine their rights.

Karen Bradley (Staffordshire Moorlands) (Con): I welcome my right hon. Friend to his place as Prime Minister and welcome the optimistic tone that he used in his opening statement. He has set out his priorities for Government, but will he consider two others? The people of Northern Ireland have been without a Government for two and a half years, and that has affected many, but most deeply it has affected those who were victims of historical institutional abuse and those who were severely physically and psychologically disabled in the troubles, through no fault of their own. Will he commit to deliver for those people?

The Prime Minister: I thank my right hon. Friend very much for what she has done. She has worked tirelessly to promote good government and the restoration of the Government in Stormont, and she has a record of which she can be very proud indeed. If and when Stormont is restored, it will be largely thanks to her hard work, efforts and diplomacy. I thank her very much. She is right to insist on the proper way of sorting out some of these very difficult legacy issues. I think it is common ground across the House that it is not right that former soldiers should face unfair prosecution, with no new evidence, for crimes or for alleged crimes, when the charges were heard many years ago. I thank her for what she has done in that respect as well.

Nigel Dodds (Belfast North) (DUP): In following the right hon. Member for Staffordshire Moorlands (Karen Bradley), may I also thank her for her public service to Northern Ireland? I warmly congratulate the Prime Minister on his appointment and thank him for the conversations that we have had, and we look forward to further conversations in the coming weeks to ensure that we can have a sustainable Conservative and Unionist Government going forward. The alternative is unthinkable in terms of national security and the Union of the United Kingdom, never mind the economic damage that would be inflicted upon this great nation of ours. I warmly welcome his positivity, his optimism; that is what this country needs. Does he agree that, in terms of our shared priority, the Union comes first, that we need to deliver Brexit with a deal, but that we must be prepared for no deal if necessary? We need to get the devolution settlement up and running, but let us

strain every sinew to strengthen the Union, get a deal to leave on the right terms and get Stormont up and running again.

The Prime Minister: I thank the right hon. Gentleman very much for all the co-operation and support that has enabled the Government of this country to carry on and to protect the people of this country from the depredations of the Labour party, because, frankly, that is what we would face were it not for his encouragement and his support. He is, of course, right in what he says about the primacy of the Union. He and I share the same perspective that we can do that by coming out as a United Kingdom, whole and entire, getting rid of that divisive anti-democratic backstop that poses that appalling choice to the British Government and the British people—to the United Kingdom—of losing control of our trade, losing control of our regulation or else surrendering the Government of the United Kingdom. No democratic Government could conceivably accept that, and I am entirely at one with the right hon. Gentleman.

Mr Owen Paterson (North Shropshire) (Con): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on getting off to a terrific start. His words yesterday outside No. 10 and again today will have brought real hope and inspiration to people and interests right across the United Kingdom. He touched on one of them just now. The common fisheries policy has been a biological, environmental, economic and social catastrophe that has ruined coastal communities and brought devastation to our marine environment. Some recent comments by Government Ministers have alarmed those fishermen that, perhaps, the negotiations will involve the CFP being used as a bargaining chip. Will the Prime Minister confirm to me that, on the day we leave, we will establish total sovereignty over the exclusive economic zone and all the resources within it, we will become a normal marine nation like Norway or Iceland, and, from then on, we will negotiate, on an annual basis, reciprocal deals with our neighbours?

The Prime Minister: I thank my right hon. Friend. Valiant for truth in these matters, as he has been for so long, he is, of course, quite right that we have a fantastic opportunity now to take back control of our fisheries, and that is exactly what we will do. We will become an independent coastal state again, and we will, under no circumstances, make the mistake of the Government in the 1970s, who traded our fisheries away at the last moment in the talks. That was a reprehensible thing to do. We will take back our fisheries, and we will boost that extraordinary industry.

Yvette Cooper (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab): The Prime Minister said in his statement that he had alternative arrangements for the border. I asked the Chancellor, the former Home Secretary, what those arrangements were and what the technology would be 17 times and he could not tell me. Can the Prime Minister tell me what the technology is and what the arrangements are, or is this just more bluster and guff?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Lady knows very well, it is common ground between the UK and indeed Dublin and the EU Commission that there are abundant facilitations already available, trusted trader schemes, electronic pre-registering, and all manner of

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ways of checking whether goods are contraband and checking for rules of origin, and they can take place away from the border. I want to make one point on which I think we are all agreed: under no circumstances will there be physical infrastructure or checks at the Northern Irish border. That is absolutely unthinkable.

Mr Richard Bacon (South Norfolk) (Con): It is great to have an optimist as Prime Minister. Once we have left the EU, can we please have more service plots of land, so that people can bring forward their own housing schemes? Will he encourage the housing sector and the new Housing Minister to meet, as soon as possible, the Right to Build Task Force, which has already, for the mere expenditure of £300,000 from the Nationwide Foundation, added 6,000 to 11,000 extra dwellings to the pipeline?

The Prime Minister: I congratulate my hon. Friend on the campaign that he has waged for so long. He and I have discussed this. I tried to steal his idea years ago. I support it unreservedly and I will make sure that the relevant meeting takes place as soon as possible.

Hilary Benn (Leeds Central) (Lab): The Prime Minister has set out his new Brexit policy, but did he notice that, yesterday, the Taoiseach said that any suggestion that a whole new negotiation could be undertaken in weeks or months is “not in the real world?” If Leo Varadkar is right and, as a consequence, the House of Commons votes in the autumn against leaving the European Union on 31 October without an agreement, what will the Prime Minister’s policy be then?

The Prime Minister: What the right hon. Gentleman has said is redolent of the kind of defeatism and negativity that we have had over the past three years. Why begin by assuming that our EU friends will not wish to compromise? They have every reason to want to compromise, and that is what we will seek—a compromise. I respectfully say to him, and indeed to all hon. and right hon. Members, that it is now our collective responsibility to get this done. Both main parties in this House of Commons know full well the haemorrhage of support that we face if we continue to refuse to honour the mandate of the people. I think that, if he talks to his constituents in Chesterfield—

Hilary Benn: Leeds Central.

The Prime Minister: I am sorry. Forgive me. I was thinking of the right hon. Gentleman’s father. His father, of course, was right.

If the right hon. Gentleman talks to his constituents in Leeds he will know that they want him to honour the mandate of the people, and that is what we will do.

Mr John Baron (Basildon and Billericay) (Con): I very much congratulate my right hon. Friend on assuming his role and on his cracking policies and appointments so far. Actions speak louder than words, and it says a great deal when the four great posts of state are held by descendants of immigrants, and we should take great pride in that. May I turn the Prime Minister’s attention very briefly to something that affects millions of people

in this country, and that is cancer. His predecessor introduced the one-year cancer metric at the heart of the cancer long-term plan in order to encourage earlier diagnosis. This could save tens of thousands of lives a year. Will he look at that and commit to continue with that proud policy going forward?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend for his question. The simple and short answer is yes, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health is only too happy to talk to him at his earliest convenience.

Liz Saville Roberts (Dwyfor Meirionnydd) (PC): Diolch yn fawr, Lefarydd. Data shows that the Prime Minister faces a binary choice: delivering Brexit on 31 October or maintaining his grip over the four nations of the United Kingdom. He can indulge in bombast and gesticulation all he likes, but the facts are irrevocable, so can he confirm to me, which is his heart’s desire: leaving the European Union or retaining the United Kingdom? He has to pick one, do or die.

The Prime Minister: Diolch yn fawr, Mr Speaker. My short answer to the right hon. Lady is that, of course, the people of the whole United Kingdom voted to leave the EU, and the people of Wales, to the best of my knowledge, voted emphatically to leave the EU, and that is what we will do.

Sir Oliver Letwin (West Dorset) (Con): My right hon. Friend will be aware that he and I do not exactly see eye to eye on the question of the likely consequences of leaving without a deal, but may I ask him to maintain his optimism about the possibility of achieving a deal and to recognise that there lies within this House, I believe still, a possible majority in favour of almost any sensible arrangement? I personally will certainly vote for any arrangement he makes for an orderly exit from the EU.

The Prime Minister: I thank my right hon. Friend, who has been zealous in his pursuit of arrangements to prevent the no-deal option. I share his desire not to get to a no-deal outcome. I am delighted that he is willing to put his shoulder to the wheel and work to find a solution that will bring us together across the House and get this thing done, because that is what the people want us to do.

Liz Kendall (Leicester West) (Lab): If optimism was all it took to get things done, I am sure that thousands of people would be spending this blisteringly hot and sunny day waltzing across the Prime Minister’s garden bridge and jetting off on holiday from Boris island airport. As it is, people need real solutions to their problems. Does the Prime Minister agree with me that fixing the crisis in social care requires an immediate cash injection as well as long-term funding reform, and a system that works for disabled adults as well as older people; and that, above all, it means deciding that funding cannot be left to individuals and families alone? We must pool our resources and share our risks to ensure security and dignity for all.

The Prime Minister: I thank the hon. Lady very much for her question. I agree very strongly with the thrust of what she says. I suggest it is high time that this House

again tried to work across parties to find a cross-party consensus about the way forward. That is absolutely vital. *[Interruption.]* If the Opposition are not interested, we will fix it ourselves, but I urge them to think of the good of the nation.

Dr Julian Lewis (New Forest East) (Con): I thank the Prime Minister for the letter that he sent to the Defence Committee earlier this month, pledging what he called “an absolute commitment to fund defence fully”.

Does he accept that events in the Gulf have cruelly illustrated the fact that the size of the Royal Navy is now way below critical mass? Will he join the Defence Committee in wishing to reverse the reckless reduction in defence spending by successive Governments from 3.1% of GDP in the 1990s to just 1.8% in like-for-like terms today?

The Prime Minister: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the campaign he has waged for many years to support our armed services. I share with him a strong desire to increase spending, particularly on shipbuilding, which not only drives high-quality jobs in this country, but is a fantastic export for the UK around the world. The ships we are building now are being sold for billions of pounds to friends and partners around the world. We should be very proud of what we are achieving.

Mr Pat McFadden (Wolverhampton South East) (Lab): Do the Government stand by the commitment they made in the joint UK-EU statement of December 2017:

“In the absence of agreed solutions, the United Kingdom will maintain full alignment with those rules of the Internal Market and the Customs Union which, now or in the future, support North-South cooperation, the all-island economy and the protection of the 1998 Agreement.”

The Prime Minister: Of course, that is the very trap from which it is now absolutely vital that we escape. As the right hon. Gentleman says, that 8 December document effectively commits the UK to remaining in regulatory alignment in the customs union. We believe—and it is common ground in Dublin, Brussels and elsewhere—that there are facilitations available to enable frictionless trade not just at the Northern Irish border but at other borders too, in order for the UK to come out of the EU customs union while doing a free trade deal. That is what we are going to achieve.

Richard Drax (South Dorset) (Con): I welcome my right hon. Friend to his post; I so welcome his enthusiasm. Would he come down to our seaside towns, which desperately need love and investment? He would be most welcome to come personally. May I ask him to keep a focus on the future of seaside towns and the vital role they play in our communities?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend. He is totally right to focus on seaside towns and coastal communities because too often they have been forgotten, as has their infrastructure. This new Government's programme is to unite this country with infrastructure, better education and technology to bring opportunity not just to cities around the country, but to rural and coastal communities as well.

Anna Soubry (Broxtowe) (IGC): But, despite all the optimism, if the Prime Minister fails to secure some magical, mythical new deal with the European Union, will he promise now at the Dispatch Box that the matter will return to this sovereign Parliament so that we can decide what happens next before 31 October? A simple yes or no will do.

The Prime Minister: This Parliament has already voted several times to honour the mandate of the people to come out of the EU, and that is what we should do. I think that the right hon. Lady herself voted to trigger article 50, unless I am mistaken. I would encourage her to stick by the pledge she made.

Anne Milton (Guildford) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that although money for schools is very welcome, further education and apprenticeships are probably the best enablers of social mobility, giving people a second or third chance? Will he ensure that apprenticeships and further education have the cash that they desperately need?

The Prime Minister: I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend for all the work that she has done in her career. She is absolutely right to raise the issue of further education and skills. Indeed, I had a long discussion on that very theme last night with the new Education Secretary, and that will be a priority of this Government. Yes, it is a great thing that 50% of kids should have the ambition to go to university, but it is equally important that other kids should acquire the skills that they need, which can be just as valuable and can lead to just as fantastic careers. It is vital that we invest now in further education and skills.

Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): The UK's air pollution is at illegal levels and scientists are clear that we need to do a lot more to address the growing climate crisis. Few will forget the Prime Minister's pledge to lie down in front of the bulldozers to stop the construction of a third runway at Heathrow airport. Luckily for him—luckily for us all—he is now at the steering wheel and can turn those bulldozers around. Will he do it? Will he scrap the third runway?

The Prime Minister: Of course, the bulldozers are some way off, but I am following the court cases with a lively interest because I share the hon. Lady's concerns about air quality and pollution. However, I would point out parenthetically that NOx pollution has in fact fallen by 29% under this Conservative Government. The hon. Lady did not point that out. I will study the outcome of the court cases with a lively interest.

James Duddridge (Rochford and Southend East) (Con): Angela Merkel has indicated that there might be some flexibility on the backstop. Does the Prime Minister believe, as I do, that the French and Germans are likely to put the EU under more pressure to be flexible?

The Prime Minister: We should approach these talks in the spirit of maximum optimism, although optimism seems to be a quality that is deprecated on the Opposition Benches. It is a well-founded optimism because common

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sense dictates that now is the moment for seriousness and compromise, and I think that is what we are going to find.

Mrs Sharon Hodgson (Washington and Sunderland West) (Lab): This morning's announcement of 12,500 job losses at Nissan worldwide is really worrying, although at this stage there is no indication that any of these job losses are going to be at the Sunderland plant in my constituency. But it does highlight the fragile nature of the automotive industry. This really should refocus our minds, therefore, on the existential threat that a no-deal Brexit would be to the automotive industry in the UK. Will the Prime Minister today rule out a no-deal Brexit and commit to an active, innovation-led industrial strategy that will protect our industrial towns and cities?

The Prime Minister: I will indeed commit to that approach, because I think that is the right way forward. If I may say so, Nissan in Sunderland is the most efficient plant in the world, and what a fantastic thing that is. Just in the past few weeks, as the hon. Lady will have noticed, BMW has announced a huge investment to build electric Minis at Cowley and Jaguar Land Rover has put £1 billion into electric vehicles in Birmingham. That, by the way, is how we will tackle the climate change issue—not with the hair shirt-ism of the Greens but with wonderful new technology made in this country.

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (The Cotswolds) (Con): May I warmly congratulate my right hon. Friend on lifting the mood of the nation? Will he look at the record amount of funds going into education, to address not only the funding going to further education but the distribution among the highest-funded and lowest-funded education authorities?

The Prime Minister: That is of course what we are doing. That is the nature of the pledge and the undertaking that we are making with the £4.6 billion that we have announced. The objective, as I think Members will know by now, is to lift per capita per pupil funding to a minimum everywhere of £4,000 for primary school pupils and £5,000 for secondary school pupils.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: I want to maximise participation and there is therefore a premium on brevity. I appeal to colleagues to be unselfish and to ask single-sentence questions without preamble so that they are also helping their colleagues.

Chris Stephens (Glasgow South West) (SNP): The phrase “workers’ or employment rights” was absent from the Prime Minister’s statement, so will he make a commitment now that EU workers’ rights will be protected in the event of Brexit?

The Prime Minister: Not only that, but under the freedoms that we will obtain we will be able, where necessary, to enhance workers’ rights in this country.

Maggie Throup (Erewash) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend look at helping to make the work of the 20,000 more police officers more effective by implementing preventive

measures such as restricting the number of properties being converted to houses in multiple occupation, which are undoubtedly a magnet for antisocial behaviour?

The Prime Minister: Of course it is vital that we look at prevention measures of all kinds. I am familiar with the problem that my hon. Friend raises and I will take it up with my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

Meg Hillier (Hackney South and Shoreditch) (Lab/Co-op): The Prime Minister has again given a long list of public spending commitments. I, for one, can see the difference between optimism and fantasy, so is the Prime Minister a fantasist or will he tell us now how he is going to fund these commitments?

The Prime Minister: Actually, the spending pledges I have made have been modest, so far. As the hon. Lady knows full well, they are well within the fiscal headroom that this country currently enjoys, and it is about time that that money was spent. If Labour Members are now opposing that spending—if they now think that we should not be putting another £1 billion into policing and another £4.6 billion into education—then now is the time to speak. But the Labour Front Benchers seem to have departed.

Sir Peter Bottomley (Worthing West) (Con): While waiting to vote a fourth time on a negotiated agreement with the EU27, will my right hon. Friend recognise the achievement of the past three years in dealing with abuse of residential leaseholds and lend his weight to making sure that we go on making progress so that leaseholders are not abused or exploited?

The Prime Minister: I am well familiar with the problem that my hon. Friend describes and the injustice that many leaseholders have been facing, and I side with him on that. I congratulate him on the campaign that he has run. We will make sure that we look after the interests of leaseholders who are, I think, being cheated at the moment.

Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey) (Lab): The sixth principle of public life reads:

“Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.”

Can the Prime Minister stand at that Dispatch Box and tell us whether, in his public life so far, he has maintained that principle?

The Prime Minister: I think that if the hon. Lady looks at what I have promised the British public and promised the electorate in my political career, and looks at what I have delivered time and time again, she will see that when I have said I would deliver X, I have delivered X plus 20, whether it was cutting crime in London, investing in transport or building more homes—more, by the way, than the Labour Mayor ever did. I am very proud of my record and stand and fight on my record.

Andrew Percy (Brigg and Goole) (Con): Can I urge my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to continue all the efforts the Government have so far been engaged in to secure and save a future for the British steel industry,

which is so important to the north of England? One way of doing that would be to commit quickly to HS3—Northern Powerhouse Rail.

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend for his advice. Yes, I am a huge fan of Northern Powerhouse Rail. I went up to Manchester airport and saw the plan. It is a truly visionary and exciting plan, and I think we should definitely be doing it. If I might remind him, it is not just rails in this country that are built by British Steel in Scunthorpe; it may be to the advantage of the House and the pessimists of the Opposition to know that the TGV in France runs on rails made in Scunthorpe as well.

Laura Smith (Crewe and Nantwich) (Lab): The Prime Minister recently appalled and offended many people when he criticised investigating historical child abuse as “spaffing money up the wall”.

What does he have to say to those who have suffered at the hands of predatory paedophiles, especially those who are still seeking justice, and will he now apologise?

The Prime Minister: This country is proud of its record as a world leader in fighting child sexual abuse, and under this Government we will continue to lengthen that lead.

Justine Greening (Putney) (Con): I hope the Prime Minister agrees that having a general election might be something that the Leader of the Opposition wants but it is not what the country needs and it will not resolve the Brexit deadlock. Will he bring back any Brexit plan, put it to this House and then put it to the people, because that is the way we can finally break the Brexit deadlock, unite the country, move on, and get on to fixing the real problems that Britain faces, not least improving social mobility and achieving equality of opportunity?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend and I go back a long way and she and I agree on so many things, but on this I must, I am afraid, respectfully disagree. Having a second referendum, which is now Labour’s policy—it was not before, but it is now the party of return or revoke—would be catastrophic for our Union because it would of course undermine our most important case that when you have a referendum, that deeply divisive and toxic event should only take place once in every generation. That was what we said to the people of Scotland. How could we look at them and say we could not have a second referendum in Scotland if we had another referendum on the EU in the UK? It is simply the wrong thing to do.

Stephen Timms (East Ham) (Lab): Given the welcome change of the Prime Minister’s recognition of the benefits of migration, will he bring forward the reconsideration system proposed by the former Home Secretary, now Chancellor, for overseas students falsely accused of cheating in the English language test by the US firm ETS so that they finally have the chance to clear their name?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has made me aware of the issue to which the right hon. Gentleman refers. I will make sure that we

write to him about what we are doing to address it. As he knows, I have a long-standing commitment to supporting the freedom of people of talent to come to this country. If he looks at my political record, I do not think, genuinely, that he will find anybody who has done more to champion the rights of immigrants to this city or to this country.

Mary Robinson (Cheadle) (Con): I welcome the Prime Minister’s commitment to infrastructure. In addition to his support for Northern Powerhouse Rail, will he consider looking at ways that HS3 can be constructed from the north, thus maximising the jobs in our region?

The Prime Minister: I have asked Doug Oakervee, the former chairman of Crossrail, to conduct a brief six-week study of profiling of the spend on HS2, to discover whether such a proposal might have merit, and I will ensure that I revert to my hon. Friend as fast as possible on its conclusion.

Bridget Phillipson (Houghton and Sunderland South) (Lab): Following today’s deeply troubling news from Nissan, has the Prime Minister spoken to the company about what impact this may have in Sunderland? Following his statement, what reassurance can he offer to the tens of thousands of workers in Sunderland and across the north-east whose jobs and livelihoods depend on Nissan’s continued success?

The Prime Minister: The automotive sector globally is suffering a contraction, partly as a result of the diesel crisis and the move to electric vehicles, and what is happening with demand in China; that is a fact. There is, as far as I know, no impact in Sunderland yet, but I draw the hon. Lady’s attention again to the massive investments that are none the less happening in our country, including in Oxford and Birmingham, with world-beating companies investing in British technology. It is worth billions of pounds, and we should salute it.

Vicky Ford (Chelmsford) (Con): I congratulate my right hon. Friend, welcome him to his job and wish him the best of luck in achieving an amicable agreement with the EU. Violent crime concerns many of my constituents. In Essex, we are already seeing the impact of the extra 360 police who have been added to the force, so I thank him for promising 20,000 more across the country. Will Essex get its fair share?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend. I want to pay tribute to the work of Roger Hirst, the police and crime commissioner in Essex, who is helping to deliver the numbers achieved. It is good news that we will have even more—20,000 more—and my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is working on that.

Stewart Malcolm McDonald (Glasgow South) (SNP): Why does the Prime Minister refuse point blank to answer any questions put to him about his relationship with the former Russian arms dealer Alexander Temerko or the owner of the *Evening Standard*, Evgeny Lebedev, who has written in glowing terms about President Putin and Assad? What exactly do they have on him?

The Prime Minister: I struggle to find a point in the hon. Gentleman's question. If he has an allegation that he wishes to make, I suggest that he sends it to me in writing, and I will be happy to respond.

David Tredinnick (Bosworth) (Con): I congratulate the Prime Minister on a brilliant start, and particularly his support of the health service. Is he aware that his counterpart in India, Prime Minister Modi, has oversight of two health Ministries: the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and the Ministry of AYUSH, which is for traditional and complementary medicine and has 7,000 hospitals? Will he ensure that the Health Secretary is in contact with AYUSH?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend and congratulate him on the heroic campaign he has waged to promote alternative medicines and therapies of all kinds. I feel sure that it would be to the benefit of my right hon. Friend the Health Secretary, who is not in his place—he has gone off to solve social care. I think it very important that we have an open mind about Ayurvedic medicine and other such therapies, but we should approach it on the basis of science first.

Steve McCabe (Birmingham, Selly Oak) (Lab): Does the Prime Minister's guarantee for EU citizens extend to EU children in the British care system? If so, how will he achieve that without changing the existing arrangements?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I believe it does. We will ensure that local authorities are aware of their responsibilities.

Robert Courts (Witney) (Con): I welcome the Prime Minister to his place and thank him for the passionate, optimistic defence of free market values that we have heard today. Will he look at the offer that we give our armed forces, in particular with a view to retention? May I also invite him to visit RAF Brize Norton, not only to thank them for the excellent hard work they do there but to see where we need a little bit of help?

The Prime Minister: I will be only too happy to visit my hon. Friend in Brize Norton; I have a feeling that I may be going there in the course of my duties anyway. I congratulate him on the campaign he wages and the interest he shows in our armed services, particularly the RAF. I will ensure that they get the pay they desire, and I believe that they are getting a new and improved pay settlement on Monday.

Sir Edward Davey (Kingston and Surbiton) (LD): Does the Prime Minister agree that the UK, Europe and the world face a climate emergency? If he does, what is his plan?

The Prime Minister: I am glad that the right hon. Gentleman asked that question because, as he knows, it is this party and this Government who are leading the world in setting a net zero target by 2050. There are people who do not think it can be done. There are all sorts of sceptics, pessimists and Britosceptics who think that this country cannot pull it off, but actually we can. We have cut carbon emissions in this country massively since 2010, and we will continue to do so. *[Interruption.]* The right hon. Gentleman says that it was his achievement.

I remind him that, even though the population of London expanded by 200,000 during my tenure as Mayor of London, we cut carbon dioxide emissions by 14% with new technology, and that is the approach we will adopt.

Helen Whately (Faversham and Mid Kent) (Con): I share my right hon. Friend's optimism for a deal, not least if we are fully prepared for no deal. As a Kent MP, may I ask him to ensure that those preparations will keep freight flowing through Kent's ports?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is right. It is vital that we give business in Kent and hauliers of all kinds the logistical support they need, and as she knows, a huge amount of work is already being done.

Alison McGovern (Wirral South) (Lab): It is quite clear that this is now a Vote Leave Government. Contrary to what the Prime Minister said, he has been clear about the possibility of a no-deal Brexit. I want to take him back to his words as part of Vote Leave. He said on 1 June 2016:

"There will be no change to the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic."

The day before the referendum, he said he wanted to reassure people that if they voted leave,

"there won't be a sudden change that disrupts the economy."

No change to the border and no sudden change to the economy—does he stand by his promises, yes or no?

The Prime Minister: Of course, because that is the most sensible way forward. As the House will have heard several times, this Government will under no circumstances institute checks at the border in Northern Ireland. As for a smooth and orderly departure from the EU, that is now in the hands of our friends and partners, and I hope that they will see sense and compromise.

Mr Shailesh Vara (North West Cambridgeshire) (Con): For decades, Members in this House across the political divide have been critical of other countries' democratic processes. Does my right hon. Friend agree that failure to deliver on the public mandate to leave the EU would ensure that our credibility on the international stage was irreparably damaged?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. It is a sad irony that the Labour party, which purports to be the party of the people, is now the party that seeks to thwart the will of the people, and it sends a terrible message around the world.

Deidre Brock (Edinburgh North and Leith) (SNP): What did the Prime Minister meet Cambridge Analytica about in December 2016, when he was Foreign Secretary?

The Prime Minister: I have no idea.

Andrew Selous (South West Bedfordshire) (Con): Luton and Dunstable University Hospital has a capital bid approved by the Department of Health and Social Care. Will the Prime Minister ask the Chancellor to look favourably on it?

The Prime Minister: Yes.

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): My constituents are not looking for handouts; they want to be able to stand on their own two feet. They are ambitious and want to get on in life and provide for their children, but just sometimes they have to rely on universal credit. As it is structured now, people do not get a penny for the first five weeks, unless they take out a loan from the Government. That loan puts them into debt from the moment they start on universal credit. Will the Prime Minister please, please look at taking away that five-week problem?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman, I am sure, knows that people can get a 100% advance on universal credit on day one, and as he knows—*[Interruption.]* Labour Members want to scrap universal credit, and I hear what they say, but the old welfare system kept people trapped in benefits. Two hundred thousand people are going to be lifted out of benefits and into work thanks to universal credit, and it has added massively to the incomes of 700,000 families across this country.

Trudy Harrison (Copeland) (Con): On the hottest day on record and with escalating tensions in Iran, does my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister agree that now is the time for a UK nuclear renaissance, and may I add that Copeland is the centre of nuclear excellence?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend, and she is entirely right: it is time for a nuclear renaissance. I believe passionately that nuclear must be part of our energy mix, and she is right to campaign for it. It will help us, by the way, to meet the carbon targets that the pessimists on the other side think are too ambitious.

Debbie Abrahams (Oldham East and Saddleworth) (Lab): I love our country, but what I love most about our country is the people—all the people. However, the reality, as all the evidence is showing, is that the richer are getting richer and the poorer are getting poorer, with those hit by austerity dying early. What is the Prime Minister going to do to address these inequalities now, not by 2050, or does taking back control mean that he is more interested in sustaining the wealth, income and power of the few, not the many?

The Prime Minister: I am afraid what the hon. Lady says is absolutely diametrically the opposite of the truth, because income inequality has in fact declined since 2010. *[Interruption.]* It has. The incomes of families on the living wage—a policy promulgated by this Government—have increased by £4,500, for those who are on it, since 2010, and wages are now rising faster than inflation for the first time in a decade. It is the Conservative party that is committed to higher wages and higher skills; the Labour party wants higher taxes and fewer jobs.

Bill Wiggin (North Herefordshire) (Con): Nowhere is enthusiasm and optimism more needed than in the agriculture sector, so may I welcome what the Prime Minister said in his statement about the future for food in this country?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend very much. He has been a doughty champion of food and farming in this country for many years, and he is quite right to be filled—suffused, as he is—with optimism about it.

Dr Sarah Wollaston (Totnes) (Ind): I warmly welcome the inclusion of social care in the Prime Minister's list of priorities for his Government. As he will know, there is the thorny issue of how we should pay for it. Two Select Committees of this House have worked together with a citizens' assembly to reach consensus on how we should fund this fairly. Will the Prime Minister meet me and the hon. Member for Sheffield South East (Mr Betts) to discuss how we reach a consensus and get it done?

The Prime Minister: I thank the hon. Lady, and I will of course make sure that I study the suggestions she has made in her reports. They will of course be taken into account as we come forward with a solution—a plan—for social care.

James Heapey (Wells) (Con): Given the busyness of the last few days, the Prime Minister may have missed the new leader of the Liberal Democrats saying that she would ignore a leave vote in a second referendum. Does the Prime Minister agree with me that campaigning for a referendum whose result you intend to ignore is pretty pointless?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend, and it smacks of tyranny. It smacks of tyranny. These people pretend to be democrats, yet their plan is to quash the will of the people time and time and time again.

Alex Norris (Nottingham North) (Lab/Co-op): Last September, the Government announced a report on the merits of safe standing at football games. Two months ago, Ministers confirmed to me that they have the report, but that Members could not see it. The Prime Minister says he is a plain speaker. Could he exercise some plain speech today, and release this report and get safe standing going at our football grounds?

The Prime Minister: I thank the hon. Gentleman for raising that very important point with me. I am informed that the issue of safe standing at football matches is currently under review, but clearly we take it extremely seriously.

Alberto Costa (South Leicestershire) (Con): May I say thank you to the Prime Minister? On his first day here in the House of Commons, he has given an unequivocal guarantee to EU nationals like my mother and father. That should have been three years ago by the previous Administration. Having met Mr Barnier last Friday, may I ask the Prime Minister, if he wants to take the country out on a no-deal basis, to confirm that he will do everything in his power to protect the 1.3 million British nationals living and working in the EU?

The Prime Minister: Of course. I thank my hon. Friend for what he has done to protect the rights not just, obviously, of his parents but of the 3.2 million—and of the 1.3 million UK nationals living and working in the rest of the European Union. It is self-evidently in the interests of our friends and partners on the other side of the channel that they should give symmetrical protections, and I am sure that they will. But I think the House would agree that it is also incumbent on us to look after the rights of the people who have lived, worked, dwelt among us and made their lives here, and that is what we are doing.

Stella Creasy (Walthamstow) (Lab/Co-op): Some unkind fellows have suggested that the new Prime Minister does not do detail, but I just heard him admit that we have already spent £4.2 billion as a country on stockpiling medicines, on lorry parks and on fridges in the event of no deal. He said that the Chancellor had confirmed that all necessary funding would be made available if we continued no-deal preparations. Can he put a figure on that number, because I am sure he would not come without an idea of what it is?

The Prime Minister: Of course, the hon. Lady is not quite right, because the figure she refers to is not the amount that has been spent but the amount that was allocated by the previous Chancellor of the Exchequer. I make a point that I think the House should reflect on in relation to this expenditure and what we are trying to do now in getting ready for a no-deal Brexit—not that we want it, but we must get ready for it. It is that, under any circumstances, in the next few years it will be necessary for the UK to extricate itself from the customs union and the regulatory orbit of Brussels. That will require changes in which it is important to invest, and that is what we are going to do now. That is why there will be a big public information campaign, and I am sure she will want to join in advertising the benefits of that campaign.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Order. I would like to accommodate everybody. That may not be possible, but I am going to try. Single-sentence questions—if people go beyond that, they will be cut off. It is as simple as that.

Colin Clark (Gordon) (Con): The Prime Minister visited Aberdeen and saw the successful oil and gas industry, which by delivering hydrogen can deliver net zero. Does he agree this industry is supporting 280,000 jobs he will get behind?

The Prime Minister: Yes, and I congratulate my hon. Friend on what he is doing to support our hydrocarbon industry in Aberdeen and thereabouts. Clearly, that industry has a great future, and it can be used additionally to help reduce our carbon footprint.

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck (South Shields) (Lab): As Prime Minister, the right hon. Gentleman's trademark bluff and bluster will not wash. He needs to be on top of the details, so can he now answer: what is in article XXIV, paragraph 5(c) of the general agreement on tariffs and trade?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Lady knows full well—not that we will get to that situation, and not that I wish to rely remotely on article 5(c)—we intend of course, if we have to, to confide absolutely in article 5(b), which provides ample—*[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. I do not know what the hon. Member for South Shields (Mrs Lewell-Buck) is looking so dissatisfied about. I am quite sure the Prime Minister would be able to quote it verbatim—in Latin—by 3 September, when the House returns.

Mr Simon Clarke (Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland) (Con): I thank my right hon. Friend for his commitment on free ports, which is fantastic news for Teesside. Can I just push him on one issue regarding our local industrial strategy, which is of course the maintenance of the current Government approach to the sale of British Steel? This is essential for providing investor confidence.

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend, and he can take it that this Government are going to leave no stone unturned to get a good solution for British Steel at Scunthorpe, at Skinningrove and elsewhere.

Catherine McKinnell (Newcastle upon Tyne North) (Lab): In the north-east, children and young people will be off school today, and they may well be watching this spectacle, but forgive me for not encouraging them to have faith in the Prime Minister's bluster and warm words, because the simple fact is that a no-deal Brexit puts at risk our 63% exports to the EU and therefore their families' jobs. Will he rule it out today?

The Prime Minister: I hope the children in her constituency that the hon. Lady describes will be able to learn from watching these proceedings that they are going to get more funding for their schools—£4,000 per pupil in primary schools, £5,000 per pupil in secondary schools—and I am sure that would be welcome news to them all.

Henry Smith (Crawley) (Con): The vast majority of people in my constituency who voted to leave welcome the Prime Minister's determination to deliver Brexit. Beyond that we welcome extra police numbers, because we share a concern about rising crime. When will we know the numbers for the different force areas?

The Prime Minister: I say to my hon. Friend that he will know them as soon as possible.

Chi Onwurah (Newcastle upon Tyne Central) (Lab): The Prime Minister talks passionately about unleashing the productive potential of the whole north-east—just as he did about freeing kippers, but without the detail. What three things does he admire most about the north-east, and how will a no-deal Brexit make it more productive?

The Prime Minister: I think the people of the north-east should be left to decide what they admire most about that fantastic region, and it would be patronising of anybody to say what they admire about any particular region of the UK. The north-east is the only region of the UK that is a net exporter—*[Interruption.]* Yes—I bet she didn't know that! The hon. Lady is not interested in economic success. We are interested in backing business and industry—*[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. We must restore some calm. I have been listening with rapt attention to the Prime Minister, but I do not want his arm to collide with the microphone. That would be analogous to a tennis player crashing into the net, which I know he would never do, knowingly or otherwise.

Bob Blackman (Harrow East) (Con): Across the country more young people are carrying knives, and knife crime has gone up. In his previous role as the excellent Mayor

of London, my right hon. Friend solved that issue. What action will he now take to solve it across the country, given that it will take time for the new police officers to arrive?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend for his campaign for safer streets in his constituency, and I was proud to work with him in London when we reduced serious youth violence by 32%. We reduced the murder rate by 50%—not even the pessimists and doubters on the Opposition Benches could contest that—and we kept that rate at fewer than 100 a year for four or five years running. We reduced knife crime in London with a very active policy of stop and search. I know Labour Members opposed that, but they were wrong, and we took thousands of knives—11,000 knives—off the streets of London. We saved lives across the city, and my hon. Friend can be proud of what he did to help that campaign.

Bambos Charalambous (Enfield, Southgate) (Lab): The Prime Minister has stated his commitment to increasing school funding, but this week we learned that his predecessor's announcement of a 2.7% pay increase for teachers will only be partially funded by the Government, and that schools will face budget cuts as a result. Will he demonstrate his commitment to schools by agreeing fully to fund that increase in teachers' pay?

The Prime Minister: The position is very clear. We have committed to a £4.6 billion package of extra funding across the country, and that is what we will do.

Mr Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con): Despite last night being the hottest night of the year, I slept soundly for the first time in months. Will the Prime Minister ensure that I and millions of others can sleep soundly in our beds?

The Prime Minister: I hesitate to do anything to disrupt my hon. Friend's nocturnal arrangements in any way, other than to say that I think the whole country can sleep soundly in the knowledge that we will come out of the EU on 31 October. We are going to get it done, deliver on the mandate of the people, and take this country forward in the way that I think it wants.

Peter Kyle (Hove) (Lab): Which workers' rights does the Prime Minister want to enhance that we are currently prohibited from doing by the EU?

The Prime Minister: That will be a matter for this House, and the hon. Gentleman should welcome that opportunity. If he is now saying that he does not wish to do anything to improve the rights of workers in this country, or that the entire corpus of EU law must remain whole, inviolate and untouched, that is why the people of this country are fed up with remaining in the EU—they want legislation for the advantage of the people of this country.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: The model of brevity from Hove must now be matched by that from Cheltenham.

Alex Chalk (Cheltenham) (Con): The Prime Minister's father is a great champion of the environment. Will my right hon. Friend continue that noble family tradition?

The Prime Minister: I certainly will, and I congratulate my hon. Friend on everything he does to promote the environment. It is amazing that thanks to the work of colleagues on the Government Benches, the environment and green issues are now seen as the agenda that we Conservatives lead on. We will continue with that, and make improvements to our environment that will be of immense value to the people of this country.

Luciana Berger (Liverpool, Wavertree) (Ind): Yesterday the Prime Minister started in the job that he always wanted. How will he guarantee that millions of people across our country do not see their employment end because we are hurtling towards a no-deal Brexit that does not command the majority of this House?

The Prime Minister: The answer is for the House of Commons to do what is sensible and right, deliver on the mandate of the people, and get Brexit done by 31 October. That is the right thing to do.

Bim Afolami (Hitchin and Harpenden) (Con): I welcome the Prime Minister's statement on increasing funding for education. Will he expand on what we might do to help those with special needs, not just in my constituency but across the whole country, who have considerable requirements?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is entirely right. He may have noticed that we announced policies to allow the establishment of schools for those with special educational needs, and in areas where local authorities need those SEND schools, we will fund them.

Jonathan Reynolds (Stalybridge and Hyde) (Lab/Co-op): The new Prime Minister has outlined a significant spending programme. The new Chief Secretary to the Treasury has already committed to Government debt falling every year, and we know that a no-deal Brexit would be a significant cost to the national finances. How are those three things compatible with each other?

The Prime Minister: The answer is that the spending commitments so far are really rather modest, and they can be amply financed by the strength of the UK economy, which the Labour party would jeopardise through its retrograde policies.

Mr William Wragg (Hazel Grove) (Con): Will schools get some of that welcome extra cash in this financial year or must they wait until the next year?

The Prime Minister: It is my intention for schools to get that extra cash as fast as it can be humanly expedited.

James Frith (Bury North) (Lab): Some 80% of children excluded from mainstream schools have special educational needs and disabilities. It is not enough simply to fund new specialist schools; we need mainstream education to support special educational needs and disability. What is the Prime Minister's plan for that? It ain't just about cash.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is entirely right. All schools need SEND funding, and that is part of the £4.6 billion programme that we have announced.

James Morris (Halesowen and Rowley Regis) (Con): Does the Prime Minister agree that, notwithstanding his commitment to increase capital funding to rebuild the NHS estate, we should focus on improving mental health care across our country? That will build on the work that I and other Members of the House have done over the past five years to ensure that we also deliver for those with mental health issues.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is entirely right. We should promote mental health in this country by giving businesses incentives to look after the mental health of their employees, and prevent the burden from falling so heavily on the NHS and social services.

Maria Eagle (Garston and Halewood) (Lab): The Prime Minister said that he wants to govern for the whole country, but in a previous role he accused my constituents of wallowing in their “victim status”, repeated offensive and proven untruths about the cause of the Hillsborough disaster, and called Liverpool “self-pity city”. Will he apologise from the Dispatch Box to the people of Liverpool for the offence he has caused?

The Prime Minister: I ask the hon. Lady to look at my political record and at what we have achieved. Look at what I have done, as a one-nation Conservative, to lift up and help with policies that are uniformly delivering better outcomes for the poorest and neediest in society. That is what I stand for, that is what I believe in, and that is what the whole Government will deliver.

Greg Hands (Chelsea and Fulham) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend welcome the findings of the alternative arrangements commission, led by me and my right hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Nicky Morgan)?

The Prime Minister: I do. They are, if I may say, a withering retort to the gloomsters on the Opposition Benches who say there is no solution and who begin the prospect of negotiations by saying that defeat is inevitable. That is not true. As my right hon. Friend has identified, the facilitations and the remedies do exist. What it takes now is the political will to get there.

Stephen Kinnock (Aberavon) (Lab): The Conservative party 2017 manifesto says:

“We need to deliver a smooth and orderly departure from the European Union”.

That phrase is repeated eight times in the document. Does the Prime Minister therefore agree with me that he has no mandate to deliver no deal?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman will know, since he is a keen student of the Conservative party manifesto, that the Government were committed both then and since to preparing for a no-deal outcome. Not that we want that. [*Interruption.*] I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Boston and Skegness (Matt Warman) who reminds me from a sedentary position that the policy was that no deal was better than a bad deal. We do not want it, but the way to avoid it is to prepare well for it.

Dr Caroline Johnson (Sleaford and North Hykeham) (Con): I congratulate the Prime Minister and welcome him to his role. Some 19% of my constituents still do not have access to 10 megabytes of broadband, affecting their business, educational and leisure opportunities. Will my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister commit, as he has done during the campaign, to delivering broadband to every one of my constituents?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend. She may have noticed that in the course of the recent election campaign I made it absolutely clear that we will accelerate the programme of full fibre broadband by eight years, so that every household in this country gets full fibre broadband within the next five years.

Andy Slaughter (Hammersmith) (Lab): Will the Prime Minister order an inquiry into the £76 million that was wasted paying management consultants to work on the “Shaping a Healthier Future” programme for north-west London, which the Health Secretary has now abandoned after nine years?

The Prime Minister: I can certainly say that the “Shaping a Healthier Future” programme for north-west London has not perhaps delivered the results that we wanted. I think the hon. Gentleman and I share a constituency interest, shall we say, in ensuring that we get the improvements to healthcare not just in north-west London but across the country. That is why this party and this Government are spending an extra £20 billion. That is why yesterday I announced new upgrades for 20 hospitals across the country, including some, I believe, in north-west London.

Mark Menzies (Fylde) (Con): I welcome the Prime Minister to his role and his commitment to infrastructure in the north of England. Will he commit to the Government continuing to invest in small projects across the north of England, such as the M55 Lytham St Annes bypass?

The Prime Minister: I lost count, in the course of the recent campaign, of the number of dualling schemes and bypasses that I seemed to commit myself to. I will certainly make sure that we invest massively in road. Although I believe passionately in mass transit, there is no doubt that for many people investment in improving our roads is absolutely essential for economic progress.

Marion Fellows (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP): The Prime Minister said that some may accuse him of hyperbole. I do not. I accuse him of getting his facts wrong. The First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, was elected by the Scottish Parliament in 2014, defeating Ruth Davidson by 51 votes. Will he apologise for getting it wrong?

The Prime Minister: I was relying on the very clear advice of a very distinguished colleague of mine. I will undertake to write to the hon. Lady with further and better particulars about the dispute that seems to have arisen between us about that point of fact.

Alec Shelbrooke (Elmet and Rothwell) (Con): My right hon. Friend, I know to my core, is a great one nation Conservative. In that spirit, will he find time in his very

busy schedule to take a close look at my six-year campaign to ban unpaid internships, which I am sure he agrees would bring great meritocracy to this country?

The Prime Minister: I absolutely endorse my hon. Friend's campaign. We should be a meritocracy and people should be able to access jobs not according to who they know, but according to their talents. He is entirely right.

Rachael Maskell (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): The office of Prime Minister is accountable to this House, so detail is needed. Exactly what changes to the withdrawal agreement does he believe he can achieve?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the hon. Lady. The answer, I think, was contained in my statement. She will have heard it, along with the House. As a first step—let me put it that way—we need to get rid of the backstop. I listened to the debate. It was opposed by people on all sides of the House. If our friends and partners will see their way around to doing that, I believe we would be well on our way to solving the problems.

Jeremy Lefroy (Stafford) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend support the establishment of a stand-alone UK investment and development bank, such as those that the Netherlands, Germany and France have even though they are also members of the European Investment Bank, which we are about to leave? Could one of the first investments be a giga battery factory in the west midlands?

The Prime Minister: Not only will I endorse that suggestion, but I invite my hon. Friend to meet my right hon. Friend the Chancellor at the earliest possible opportunity to discuss it.

Clive Efford (Eltham) (Lab): What does it say to the promises of restoring sovereignty to this House that the Prime Minister made when he was leading the leave campaign that he has appointed Dominic Cummings as one of his major policy advisers? Was he right to defy a Select Committee and not attend?

The Prime Minister: The Government are appointing a fantastic team that will take this country forward. It is absolutely astonishing: the hon. Gentleman talks of the campaign to leave the European Union; Opposition Members voted to trigger article 50. It is an utter disgrace that they are now trying to reverse that result.

Mr Marcus Jones (Nuneaton) (Con): I very much welcome my right hon. Friend's programme for government. As he employs an additional 20,000 police officers, can he ensure that county areas such as Warwickshire get their fair share?

The Prime Minister: Not only that, we must do much more to ensure that police in rural areas get out to victims of crime in a timely and efficient way. I know that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will be insisting on that as well.

Anneliese Dodds (Oxford East) (Lab/Co-op): If the Prime Minister actually cares about it, why did he devote only one sentence out of 61 sentences in his speech last night and only two sentences out of 97 in his statement today to the climate emergency?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for parsing and counting the lines in my speech. I can tell her that by what I have said today the House will know that we place the climate change agenda at the absolute core of what we are doing. By the way, she will also I think acknowledge that it is this party, by committing to net zero by 2050, that is not only leading the country but leading the world. This party believes in the private sector-generated technology which will make that target attainable and deliver hundreds of thousands of jobs. That is the approach we should follow.

Sir David Amess (Southend West) (Con): In this new spirit of optimism on the Government Benches, will my right hon. Friend tell one of his Ministers to organise a city status competition, so at long last Southend-on-Sea can become a city?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, I think I have no alternative but to answer in the affirmative to that question.

Ian Murray (Edinburgh South) (Lab): The Prime Minister has repeated that this United Kingdom will leave the European Union by 31 October with or without a deal. Will he tell the House what range of figures he is working to, as to the impact on GDP of any outcome?

The Prime Minister: That is why it is absolutely vital that we prepare for a no deal. After all, the more determined and the more capital our preparations, the less likely the risk of any disruptive or disorderly Brexit.

Tom Purslove (Corby) (Con): My right hon. Friend's commitment to 20,000 new police officers is very welcome, as was the now Chancellor's commitment to a new policing covenant. We have managed to get "Back Boris" over the line; when does he expect to complete the job on "Back bobbies"?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend. The answer is as soon as possible—certainly within the next three years.

Mr Chris Leslie (Nottingham East) (IGC): The Prime Minister surely does not agree with the Home Secretary about the return of the death penalty, does he?

The Prime Minister: I have the fullest admiration for the Home Secretary's policies on law. I do not support the death penalty, but what the people of this country want to see is proper sentencing for serious violent and sexual offenders—[*Interruption.*] I am glad to see some nodding from those on the Labour Benches. There are Members opposite who know where their constituents truly are on some of these issues, and they are right, unlike the current leadership of the Labour party. That is what we will do, but of course, we will also be pursuing all the preventive measures necessary to reduce our prison population and to pursue a humane and liberal approach at the same time.

Alan Mak (Havant) (Con): I congratulate the Prime Minister on his election. Britain is establishing itself as a world leader in the new technologies of the fourth

[Alan Mak]

industrial revolution. Will he support our small businesses and start-ups that create the wealth that funds our public services?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend for all the good work that he has done to promote investment in such start-ups. I look forward to further conversations with him about ways that we may encourage that investment.

Catherine West (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab): The Prime Minister says that he believes in the London living wage, yet so many cleaners in Whitehall are still not paid it. Will he commit today from the Dispatch Box that every single entry-level worker and cleaner in Whitehall will be paid the living wage, regardless of whether they work for the Ministry of Justice, the Department for International Development or any others?

The Prime Minister: I thank the hon. Lady for that important point. I have to say that—[*Interruption.*] The answer is yes. I was very proud when I was running London that we massively expanded the living wage. We made sure that it was paid not just by Greater London Authority bodies but by their contractors as well, and that is what we should be doing.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: I remind colleagues of the one-sentence imperative.

David Duguid (Banff and Buchan) (Con): May I welcome my right hon. Friend to his post? I also welcome the comments that were made earlier about the SNP's policy on fishing: to take us back into the CFP. Will he also confirm that as we come out of the CFP, we become an independent coastal state, only negotiating on access to our waters on an annual basis?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is completely right. I congratulate him on the vision that he has for promoting Scottish fisheries and for using the opportunity of coming out of the EU to build that extraordinary industry. He and I have discussed it and I think that we should be taking forward the plans that he suggests. It is quite dismal to listen to the SNP because, as I say, it would give back to Brussels control over our fishing. What kind of a manifesto is that? I bet the SNP U-turns on that before too long.

Pete Wishart (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): Why does the Prime Minister think he is so unpopular in Scotland? Just by him being Prime Minister, support for independence for Scotland rises to 53%. Is it all this Eton schoolboy bluster and buffoonery, or is it because he is prepared to take our nation out of the European Union against its will on a no-deal Brexit?

The Prime Minister: I think that possibly the reason why I seem to get a good reception in Scotland—which I did—[*Interruption.*] When I went to Aberdeen—I remember arriving and meeting some friends in Aberdeen airport—there was a very friendly reception throughout. It may be because the people of Scotland recognise that they have a commonsensical Conservative approach,

which would not hand back control of their fisheries to Brussels just as Scotland has regained control of its fantastic fish.

Giles Watling (Clacton) (Con): I thank my right hon. Friend for bringing some sunshine into this place. I invite him to come to the sunshine coast of Clacton, if he can put up with the 1 hour and 40 minute journey that it takes to cross the 69 miles. Will his Government please focus on infrastructure to places such as ours, which are so often overlooked?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend for the plea that he has put in. He has added the line to Clacton to the long list of infrastructure projects that I propose now to expedite. He is quite right, because our programme is to use infrastructure, education and technology to level up across the country, and that is what we are going to do.

Luke Pollard (Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport) (Lab/Co-op): Will the Prime Minister join me in opposing the early release of Vanessa George, the serial paedophile who abused babies and toddlers in Plymouth, especially as she still refuses to show remorse by naming which one of those babies she abused, filmed and circulated images of?

The Prime Minister: I understand why the hon. Gentleman was nodding to my answer earlier. It would be wrong of me to intervene in particular cases, but I think that he and I are at one in agreeing that people should serve appropriate sentences for serious crimes.

Ross Thomson (Aberdeen South) (Con): I know that my right hon. Friend, from his head to his toes, is a committed and passionate Unionist. Does he therefore agree that, as we leave the European Union on 31 October as one UK, and as powers come back to this country from Brussels, we can strengthen the bonds of our four nations?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes a powerful case. When we come out of the EU as a United Kingdom—whole, entire and perfect—the SNP will find that its guns are spiked and that the wind has been taken out of its sails, and that its sole manifesto commitment is a bizarre pledge to restore the control of Scotland's fish to Brussels. That is what it stands for. That is its programme and I am waiting for the U-turn.

Dr Rupa Huq (Ealing Central and Acton) (Lab): As London Mayor, the Prime Minister courted popularity with pledging an amnesty for illegal immigrants and his vocal opposition to Heathrow expansion. Now that he is in a position to do something about those two issues, is he a man of his word?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Lady will know very well, I have answered the question on Heathrow. I remain deeply concerned about the abilities of the promoters of the third runway to meet their obligations on air quality and noise pollution. I will follow the court cases with a lively interest.

As for the amnesty on illegal immigrants, it is absolutely true that I have raised it several times since I was in Government, and I must say, it did not receive an

overwhelming endorsement from the previous Prime Minister when I raised it once in Cabinet. I think that our arrangements, in theoretically being committed to the expulsion of perhaps half a million people who do not have the correct papers, and who may have been living and working here for many, many years without being involved in any criminal activity at all—I think that legal position is anomalous. We saw the difficulties that that kind of problem occasioned in the Windrush fiasco. We know the difficulties that can be caused and I do think—I will answer the hon. Lady directly—that we need to look at our arrangements for people who have lived and worked here for a long time, unable to enter the economy and to participate properly or pay taxes, without documents. We should look at it. The truth is that the law already basically allows them an effective amnesty—that is basically where things have settled down—but we should look at the economic advantages and disadvantages of going ahead with the policy that she described, and on which I think she and I share a view.

Chris Philp (Croydon South) (Con): Does the Prime Minister share Margaret Thatcher's belief in home ownership, and will his Government do everything they can, perhaps including implementing some of the stamp duty reforms that I suggested last week, to promote the home ownership dream?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend for everything that he has done to promote home ownership and the stamp duty reforms. I believe that in this fantastic capital city of Europe and of the world, stamp duty is choking the market at the moment. We need to think about the way it is working and to see what we can do to free it up and give more people the chance of home ownership.

Joanna Cherry (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): In 2012, when the majority of the Members of the Scottish Parliament wanted to hold an independence referendum, the Prime Minister's predecessor and friend, David Cameron, agreed the means to do so. Now that the same mandate exists, is he brave enough to do the same, or is he afraid that he will be the last Prime Minister of the United Kingdom?

The Prime Minister: I think that distinguished former Prime Minister's commitment was—and it was universally agreed—that the event in 2014 was a once-in-a-generation referendum, and that is the way it should be.

Mrs Maria Miller (Basingstoke) (Con): My right hon. Friend will know that under the Conservatives, record numbers of women are in work in this country. If we are to be successful post Brexit, we will have to make sure that we continue that. Will he join me in helping those 50,000 women a year who feel that they have no option but to leave their job because of pregnancy discrimination? Will he help me to enforce the law, so that more of those women can be productive members of society?

The Prime Minister: I thank my right hon. Friend for everything that she has done to promote working women and equalities of all kinds. I will certainly look at what we can do to alleviate the difficulties that pregnant women, in particular, face, and we will get on with that.

Tom Brake (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD): Crashing out with no deal would be an unacceptable outcome, damaging to our economy and undermining our future prosperity. That is the view of three Ministers in the Prime Minister's Government. Does he accept that there is no mandate for no deal, and that if he proceeds with no deal, it will be against the will of this House and of the people, and he will be solely responsible for the chaos that will ensue?

The Prime Minister: I wonder how many referendums we would have to have before the Liberal Democrats respected the result.

Rachel Maclean (Redditch) (Con): I have been here quite a while now, and the Prime Minister definitely has not reached his quota of 20 hospitals for upgrade, so does he agree that the Alexandra Hospital in Redditch and the Worcestershire Royal Hospital must be Nos. 1 and 2?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend for that very cunningly posed question. I think she may be fortunate, because I am given to understand that one of the hospitals in question serves the Chancellor's constituency as well.

Diana Johnson (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): I know that those in government have to make tough investment decisions, so I want to know which is the Prime Minister's priority: Crossrail for the north, fully electrified from Hull to Liverpool, or Crossrail 2 for London?

The Prime Minister: It is like asking a tigress to choose between her cubs. I refuse to choose.

Eddie Hughes (Walsall North) (Con): Will the Prime Minister commit to fighting on behalf of persecuted Christians worldwide, following the release of the recent Truro report?

The Prime Minister: I certainly will. I thank my hon. Friend for his question.

Wes Streeting (Ilford North) (Lab): The Prime Minister's carelessness and lack of attention to detail aided and abetted the Iranian regime in locking up a British citizen. I ask the Prime Minister to put right what he did so wrong, and take personal responsibility for ensuring the release of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe.

The Prime Minister: Of course, we work very hard to secure the release of Nazanin and all dual nationals who are held, in my view unfairly and illegally, by the Iranian regime. It is time that an innocent woman was released.

Robert Halfon (Harlow) (Con): We in Harlow are optimistic, too—optimistic that the Prime Minister will cut the cost of living for working people and invest in skills and apprenticeships—but we are particularly optimistic because he said yesterday that there would be 20 new hospital upgrades. Can we be optimistic about getting the new hospital in Harlow that we desperately need?

The Prime Minister: I think I had better be careful here. There will be 20 new hospital upgrades, and details of the programme will be announced forthwith.

Martin Docherty-Hughes (West Dunbartonshire) (SNP): Having been incarcerated for over 600 days now, and having made accusations of torture against the Indian state, Jagtar Singh Johal has, since incarceration, seen in post two Prime Ministers, three Foreign Secretaries and four Under-Secretaries, one of whom was suspended from their position. Can the Prime Minister assure my constituent, a UK national, that his Government, in making their trade deals with the Indian state, have my constituent's name at the top of the agenda? Will he seek a meeting with the Foreign Secretary, me and the Singh Johal family at the soonest opportunity?

The Prime Minister: I know that the Foreign Secretary will take up the case of Jagtar Singh Johal assiduously, as all previous Foreign Secretaries have done.

Rehman Chishti (Gillingham and Rainham) (Con): I very much welcome the Prime Minister to his place, and welcome his commitment to making religious freedom a key priority. That being the case, given that he supported the campaign on Asia Bibi from the Back Benches, and in the light of the report of the Bishop of Truro, will cases like that now be looked at differently by the United Kingdom?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend for the campaign that he managed on Asia Bibi, and indeed others. It is very important that our country sends a clear signal that we will provide a beacon for people facing such distress and persecution.

Kate Green (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab): Further to the Prime Minister's answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing Central and Acton (Dr Huq), will he commit his Government to lifting the ban on asylum seekers working if the state takes more than six months to resolve their case?

The Prime Minister: The Home Office is currently reviewing that matter, and we will make an announcement shortly.

Andrew Lewer (Northampton South) (Con): I was delighted that the Prime Minister spoke at the very earliest opportunity about adult care and the changes needed to it. May I commend to him particularly the joint report of the Health and Social Care and Housing, Communities and Local Government Committees, which I took part in, and which talks about insurance-type solutions as well as hypothecated taxes?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I do not want to prejudge what we will do, but we will put forward a detailed plan for how to deal with social care, and I hope it will attract cross-party support.

Dr Lisa Cameron (East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow) (SNP): Will the Prime Minister look closely at reversing UK Government plans to close East Kilbride's Centre 1 tax office, the closure of which would cause the loss of thousands of jobs in my constituency? Will he be true to his word today that no town will ever again be left behind?

The Prime Minister: I will make sure that the Chancellor writes to the hon. Lady about that matter at the earliest opportunity.

Helen Goodman (Bishop Auckland) (Lab): Single mums often come to my constituency when non-resident parents do not fulfil their duties. What is the Prime Minister's plan for tackling this problem?

The Prime Minister: We must work with our partners around the world to make sure that non-resident parents fulfil their duties. As the hon. Lady knows, there are conventions to insist on that.

Patricia Gibson (North Ayrshire and Arran) (SNP): I begin by thanking the new Prime Minister for all the good work he is doing to make the case for Scottish independence. How long does he honestly think he can set his face against the right of the sovereign people of Scotland to decide their own future?

The Prime Minister: As far as I can remember, in 2014 the people of Scotland had a referendum, and the hon. Lady's side did not prevail; the people of Scotland voted to remain part of the United Kingdom, from which there are many benefits—economic, political and geo-strategic. That is a great future for the people of Scotland, and one that I think will prevail.

David Hanson (Delyn) (Lab): To inform the debate, could the Prime Minister tell the House what the tariffs are under World Trade Organisation rules for sheep, planes and cars—the key industries in my constituency that will be damaged by a no-deal Brexit?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman knows full well, our intention is to make sure that there are no tariffs imposed, and that we leave with a zero-tariff, zero-quota outcome, which I am sure that he would support.

John Woodcock (Barrow and Furness) (Ind): There was no mention of defence in the Prime Minister's statement, and still less of nuclear deterrence. Does he recognise that we are in a race against time to build the new Dreadnought class of submarines in order to maintain continuous at-sea deterrence? Will he throw the whole weight of Government behind that vital task?

The Prime Minister: I admire the hon. Gentleman's commitment to a vital national asset that is, of course, made in his constituency. I only draw attention to the real risk that would be posed not just to the economy but to the security of our country, if it should ever be governed by the party that he has rightly left.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: One sentence of fewer than 30 words. I call Jack Dromey.

Jack Dromey (Birmingham, Erdington) (Lab): Yesterday, 50 representatives of 2 million workers in manufacturing came to Parliament to detail their grave and growing concerns over the threat of a no-deal Brexit. They asked whether the Prime Minister would meet them, so that

he could hear at first hand just how serious a no-deal Brexit would be for them. Will the Prime Minister agree to do that?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful, and I thank the hon. Gentleman for what he is doing to work with manufacturing industry. I give him my absolute assurance that we will do everything we can to protect just-in-time supply chains. As he may know, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster is now in charge of making those preparations. I am sure that he would be only too happy to meet the hon. Gentleman and the representatives that he mentioned.

Matt Western (Warwick and Leamington) (Lab): The Prime Minister famously said “F*** business” in the context of Brexit. Does he not accept that communities such as mine depend on manufacturing such as JLR? By logical extension, does he mean f*** my community?

The Prime Minister: People across this country will have heard me mention the JLR investment in Birmingham three times already today. It is a measure of this country's success that it continues to attract such fantastic investment from JLR, and indeed from other car companies, and that is because we have cut corporation tax, whereas the Labour party would put it up to the highest level in Europe. That is the risk posed to JLR and to many other businesses around the world.

Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP): Of course, as a result of this Prime Minister's Brexit obsession, the United Kingdom that the people of Scotland voted for in 2014 no longer exists, so can he confirm that he is both familiar with and supportive of the principles of the claim of right for Scotland?

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that I have given several times already today, which is that the people of Scotland had a vote in 2014, and they voted overwhelmingly to remain in the Union. They were absolutely right, and I see no reason to dissent from that view.

Alex Sobel (Leeds North West) (Lab/Co-op): The Prime Minister mentioned aviation. Norway has an aviation emissions plan that includes making all short-haul flights electric by 2040, and it includes research and development to achieve that. Does he have that scale of ambition?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman will have noticed that in my opening statement I mentioned electric planes.

Ian Paisley (North Antrim) (DUP): The Prime Minister will know that, in order to make the United Kingdom the home of electric vehicles, he will need to protect the intellectual property of those making the electric vehicles. Will he therefore step in and save Wrightbus—a company that he is very familiar with—which is facing significant economic hardship at present? Will he make that a priority?

The Prime Minister: It is a great pity, in my view, that the current Mayor of London—not a patch on the old guy—decided to cancel the contract with Wrightbus of

Ballymena, which has been of great value to the people of this country. I give the hon. Gentleman an assurance that we will do everything we can to ensure the future of that great UK company.

Daniel Zeichner (Cambridge) (Lab): Optimism is one thing, but pantomime is quite another. On what is likely to be the hottest day on record for the UK, it is astonishing that the Prime Minister is seeking to outsource tackling climate change to the private sector. Can he tell us one thing that his Government are going to do in the next month to tackle the climate emergency?

The Prime Minister: I will tell the hon. Gentleman one thing that we are doing: we have secured for this country the COP 26. We will be hosting the world climate change conference here in the UK, once again showing the world what UK technology and technological optimism can achieve.

Tommy Sheppard (Edinburgh East) (SNP): We know that the Prime Minister is opposed to a second Scottish independence referendum. That is not my question. My question is this: if the people who actually live in Scotland elect a Parliament in Edinburgh, and if by a majority that Parliament votes to consult people on their constitutional future, will he respect that decision—yes or no?

The Prime Minister: It was common ground across all parties, including the Scottish nationalists, that the referendum was a once-in-a-generation decision. That decision was taken in 2014, and that was the right answer.

Mohammad Yasin (Bedford) (Lab): I welcome the Prime Minister's commitment to invest in frontline healthcare. Bedford Hospital urgently needs funds in order to expand and meet the needs of our growing population. Will he give our hospital the money it needs?

The Prime Minister: We will of course make sure that the £20 billion extra that we have committed to the NHS goes to the frontline and to all hospitals in this country.

Mr Gavin Shuker (Luton South) (Ind): The central policy of the Government is now to deliver Brexit in October, including without a deal. As such, it is unclear whether the Prime Minister commands a majority in this House. Will he now do what the Leader of the Opposition will not do: prove his own political virility and table a motion of confidence for the House to vote on when we return?

The Prime Minister: The House of Commons has voted several times to honour the mandate of the people. It is the law of this country that we leave the European Union on 31 October. That is what democracy requires, and that is what we will do.

Alan Brown (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): Despite his Unionist bluster, the Prime Minister cannot deny his anti-Scottish sentiments, which are on the record books. As a gesture going forward, will he at least find the

[Alan Brown]

money to repay the £160 million of EU convergence uplift funding that was stolen from Scottish farmers by Westminster?

The Prime Minister: Had the hon. Gentleman been paying the slightest attention, he would have heard that I have pledged to restore the money to Scottish farming, and it is thanks to the Scottish Conservatives that we have done so.

Justin Madders (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab): In his statement the Prime Minister said that he wanted to close the opportunity gap, but two thirds of his Cabinet were privately educated, which is more than double the composition of his predecessor's first Cabinet. He is not leading by example, is he?

The Prime Minister: I think that what the people of this country want to know is what is the Government's programme for taking this country forward. I think that the contrast is between a Conservative party, which is the party of the people, and which wants to improve healthcare and invest in public services, and the Labour party, which would destroy the UK economy and ruin the livelihoods of everybody.

Mr Paul Sweeney (Glasgow North East) (Lab/Co-op): The Prime Minister says that he wants to leave no town behind and to unleash this nation's productive potential. If that is not just empty rhetoric, will he commit to saving the Caley railway works in Springburn in my constituency, which are due to close tomorrow? I want to see the railway works reopened as quickly as possible, so will he form a cross-Government taskforce to save them as quickly as possible?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman knows, business support is a devolved matter, so he should look to the Government of Scotland—the incompetent Government of Scotland—as his first port of call.

Peter Grant (Glenrothes) (SNP) *rose*—

Stephen Gethins (North East Fife) (SNP) *rose*—

Mr Speaker: What an invidious choice. I call Mr Peter Grant.

Peter Grant: The very limited guarantees contained in the EU citizens settled status scheme come nowhere near the promise the Prime Minister has previously made that no EU national will be any less favourably treated after we leave the EU. Therefore, as well as the settled status scheme, will he now guarantee the right to healthcare, pension rights, the right to leave and return, the right to bring over family, the right to vote and all the other rights currently enjoyed by EU citizens? And does he need to get permission from his Chancellor of the Exchequer before answering that question?

The Prime Minister: Those guarantees, as the hon. Gentleman knows, we are giving unilaterally, in a supererogatory way. Of course, I want to see a symmetrical response from the other side of the channel, but I think that we should be very proud of the steps that we are taking.

Stephen Gethins: This session has underlined what my constituents believe: that the Prime Minister does not have a clue what is he doing. Will he tell us how he responded to the Fife packaging company that had to write to him to explain that the kipper packaging rules are made in Westminster and have nothing to do with the EU?

The Prime Minister: It really is extraordinary that the Scottish nationalist party is returning to the issue of fish. It is now clear that its whole policy is not just to join the euro and submit to the whole panoply of EU regulations, but to hand over control of Scottish fisheries—Arbroath smokies, kippers and all—to the EU. That is its policy, and I would like to see it try to get elected on that.

Mr Speaker: Order. I thank the Prime Minister most warmly on this his debut outing at the Dispatch Box for his answers and his patience and courtesy, and for responding to 129 inquisitors.

Speaker's Statement

1.39 pm

Mr Speaker: Before we proceed with the next business, let me just say that, following the appointment of the right hon. Member for Loughborough (Nicky Morgan) to the Cabinet, I am expecting there to be a vacancy for the Chair of the Treasury Committee, a matter to which, if memory serves me correctly, the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr Baker) referred much earlier in our proceedings. I shall announce the arrangements for the election to this post alongside any further Select Committee Chair elections that may arise when the House returns in September. I hope that it will be possible to hold the election or elections in the second week of the September sitting; I hope that is helpful to colleagues who take a proper interest in the scrutiny function of our Select Committees.

Points of Order

2 pm

Lloyd Russell-Moyle (Brighton, Kemptown) (Lab/Co-op): On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: Yes, indeed. I will come to the hon. Gentleman, but I want to save him up; I do not want to squander him at too early a stage in our proceedings, so we will keep him on ice and come first to the point of order from Jenny Chapman.

Jenny Chapman (Darlington) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I would be grateful for your advice. If we exit the EU without a deal, we can no longer export millions of lambs slaughtered in the UK for consumption in the EU. This represents a third of the industry, and in this event if a wasteful cull of millions of lambs and breeding flock is to be avoided, arrangements need to be made now to store the meat safely. We do not have anything like the cold storage capacity needed to do this at the moment. Knowing this, on 17 July, I tabled a number of written parliamentary questions to the Government to establish what the plan is. Although distinct and tabled with advice from the Table Office, they were inexplicably grouped by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, and its answers tell me nothing other than that there are contingencies, but it will not answer my questions, which is what those contingencies might be. I would be grateful for your assistance, Mr Speaker, on how I can get the truth from the Government.

Mr Speaker: I am advised, although I do not know whether the hon. Lady is yet aware—a simple nod of the head would suffice—that she has secured an Adjournment debate on Tuesday 3 September on this matter.

Jenny Chapman *indicated assent.*

Mr Speaker: The nod suggests that she has seen her emails and is aware of that, although it does not satisfy her now. Well, that debate will take place and she will have the opportunity to explore these matters. In the meantime, what can she do? First, she can before the rise of the House table further questions, and it may be possible for there to be named day questions; I cannot say for certain off the top of my head, but that is possible. Secondly, although it may be suboptimal so far as the hon. Lady is concerned in the absence of an appropriate departmental Minister, she can either raise these matters herself among the matters to be raised before the forthcoming Adjournment—that is to say, for the benefit of those observing our proceedings, this afternoon in the debate almost immediately to start—or she can cajole, exhort or entice a right hon. or hon. Friend of hers to do so. That may be unsatisfactory, but it is better than nothing. She can also, of course, correspond with Ministers.

The Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr Robert Goodwill) *rose—*

Mr Speaker: But meanwhile, the hon. Lady has apparently excited the interest and attention of the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Mr Goodwill: Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. May I reassure the hon. Lady that we are well aware of the difficulties the sheep industry would meet with in a no-deal Brexit situation and we have a number of contingency plans in place? This is not something the Government are ignoring; we are absolutely on top of the job, and certainly I will be happy to meet her—and I hope that I will be the person to respond to the debate in September.

Mr Speaker: Well, I must say to those observing our proceedings that that is quite an innovative use by an occupant of the Treasury Bench of the point of order procedure, because that is not so much a job application but is rather a “please can I keep my job” application from the right hon. Gentleman, displaying an ingenuity and perhaps a cheekiness which may or may not avail him—only time will tell, but the puckish grin etched on the contours of his face suggests that at least he has not lost his sense of humour.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. As you are aware, the Government were found to be in breach of the arms export regime by the Court of Appeal. The Government have applied to the Supreme Court for a further, final appeal. A Minister told the House that they would review hundreds of applications, but I am told that in the application to the Court of Appeal the number of applications to be reviewed is significantly—almost half—lower than the number told to the House. However, the Court of Appeal documents are sealed and I cannot see them. Can you advise me, Mr Speaker, how I can best see whether what they are telling the Court of Appeal is the same as what they are telling Parliament? Normally, I would go through the Committees on Arms Export Controls, but four of our last meetings have been cancelled because they were inquorate. I also ask you, Mr Speaker, how we could pursue a system where the Committees on Arms Export Controls becomes a stand-alone Committee, as the Committee itself has asked.

Mr Speaker: I am not responsible for Select Committees or quite what the architecture is of individual Committees and how they might interact with each other—whether they are combined or whether there are separate. That is a matter for others, but what I would say to the hon.

Gentleman is that, if memory serves me correctly from perusal of the intended speaking list, he is intending to favour the House further with his dulcet tones in the course of the afternoon, and therefore he can draw attention to these matters. As to whether there is an incompatibility between what is said in the House by a Minister and what is lodged before a court, I know not, and that may be so, but even if it is so, it does not necessarily follow that anyone has been misled; it rather depends on what was said at the time. There may have been a guesstimate of numbers and that might have changed, but I do not know, so I reserve judgment on that. But what I would say is that the hon. Gentleman has ventilated his concern and if he aspires further to ventilate his concerns on these matters this afternoon, there is a reasonable prospect that he will have the chance to do so.

Mr Ivan Lewis (Bury South) (Ind): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. In a debate last week on High Speed 2, the Minister, the hon. Member for Wealden (Ms Ghani), was asked very directly whether any non-disclosure clauses had been included in redundancy agreements with former staff at HS2. She said on several occasions that no such non-disclosure clauses were included in those redundancy arrangements. A subsequent parliamentary answer to that debate confirms that, in fact, there were a number of such non-disclosure clauses in agreements with staff who were made redundant. Is there anything at this stage I can do, Mr Speaker, in terms of making the Minister accountable for the answers she gave during that debate?

Mr Speaker: Every Member is responsible for the veracity of what he or she says in this House. In the event that a Member discovers he or she has inadvertently misled the House, it is incumbent upon that Member to correct the record. That obligation applies across the House, and of course it applies to Ministers as well as to those who are not part of the Executive branch. I rather imagine that the hon. Member for Wealden (Ms Ghani) will have her attention drawn ere long to what the hon. Gentleman has said; if she judges it necessary to act, she will do so. If she does not, it is something that he will have to pursue by other means. I know that he would not expect me to be the arbiter of right or wrong, but I have tried to guide him procedurally.

Summer Adjournment

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

Mr Speaker: Before I call the hon. Member for Southend West (Sir David Amess) to open the debate, I am afraid I am obliged to inform the House that there must, with immediate effect, be a six-minute limit on Back-Bench orations. We will be led in this important mission by Sir David Amess.

2.9 pm

Sir David Amess (Southend West) (Con): Before the House adjourns for the summer recess, there are a number of points I wish to make. It is really good to see so many colleagues recognising that this is such a valuable debate.

The all-party parliamentary fire safety and rescue group will not shut up until sprinklers are installed in all high-rise buildings and the cladding issue is dealt with following the disaster at Grenfell, just as I will not shut up about city status until it is awarded to Southend-on-Sea. I am glad that the new Prime Minister has said we are going to get it.

Two of my constituents, Stephen and Rosalind Clifton, have paid full contributions for 47 years and, extraordinarily, now find that they do not qualify for a full state pension, so I want an answer from the Treasury Bench on that.

Recently, Mrs Margaret Tohill came to my surgery and told me that in January this year, her granddaughter, Maisie, died in her sleep from a sudden epileptic seizure at the age of 22. The condition is called sudden unexpected death in epilepsy or SUDEP. The charity SUDEP Action has been helping the family with their loss and is calling on the Government to do more to prevent such incidents. Specifically, it is calling for a Government inquiry into avoidable epilepsy deaths and a funded annual risk check for people with epilepsy.

I am very concerned about the number of constituents whose visit visas are being turned down. There does not seem to be any fairness in this. An Australian constituent of mine signed up to an organisation called Sopra Steria and paid £2,400 to try to get a visa. It was a complete mess and now they find they have lost their money and they are having to pay for access again.

Carl Beech—I mean, for goodness' sake! Harvey Proctor was my neighbour when I was Member of Parliament for Basildon. Leon Brittan died with his name being trashed, and there is Lord Bramall. The way the courts dealt with this matter just is not good enough. People can never restore their reputations, but there should be some compensation. My former colleague, Harvey Proctor, has lost everything, including his home and any future employment.

I recently had a meeting with the Schools Minister—I hope that he is still the Schools Minister—together with my hon. Friend the Member for Rochford and Southend East (James Duddridge), regarding primary and secondary school funding in our area. We are losing out to London's schools. Darlinghurst Academy has recently had a wonderful Ofsted report, and I congratulate Emma Nicholls, the executive head, and Mrs Beverley Williams, on all that they have achieved.

I was once a paid advocate for the Caravan Club, although I am not any more. It has advised me that two motor homes that are identical in almost every way can be charged either £265 or £2,135 in vehicle excise duty. This really needs to be looked at by the Treasury, and these vehicles should be classified as commercial vehicles. Recently, I parked my car on a meter but did not have my mobile phone—

John Woodcock (Barrow and Furness) (Ind): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir David Amess: Yes, but I just want to point out that the clock has not stopped. Okay—it has now.

John Woodcock: The hon. Gentleman is making a really important point. Is he aware that many manufacturers around the country, including Forge Europa in Ulverston, which makes lights for many motor homes, are deeply concerned by this proposed tax change?

Mr Speaker: If the clock was not functioning, it must have been because it was smiling on the hon. Member for Southend West (Sir David Amess), perhaps because it approves of his views on Southend city status. Who knows?

Sir David Amess: You are too generous, Mr Speaker. I did not want to deprive other colleagues of their time, but I thank the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (John Woodcock) for making that point.

Prost8 tells us that 12,000 chaps lose their lives as a result of prostate cancer every year. I congratulate Paul Sayer, a local constituent, on his work on this. We had a reception in the Jubilee Room that was attended by colleagues, and a new non-invasive treatment is now available.

Last weekend, I was in Albania supporting the National Council of Resistance in Iran and visiting the home of Mother Teresa, but I could not see a statue of Norman Wisdom. We really need to do more to support those people, and it was great to visit Ashraf-3 camp.

On ending the debt trap, I absolutely support *The Sun* newspaper's "Stop the credit rip-off" campaign. So many of our constituents are being tempted to get even further into debt, which is not satisfactory.

All colleagues apparently love Southend airport, but the residents of Wells Avenue are not too keen on the huge jets that are now pouring fumes into their back gardens. I am meeting them on Friday, when I hope we can deal with that matter.

I recently attended the Tamil sports day. They are wonderful people, but there is still concern about the people lost in Jaffna, and we need some reconciliation there.

The Smart Energy Partnership showcase is doing its best to help blind and partially sighted people to switch suppliers.

A local constituent called Kelly Swain is an absolute inspiration for what she has done for Young Minds to show how beneficial alternative therapies can support people with their various challenges.

[*Sir David Amess*]

Recently, I attended the hearing loss action day—I think I am beginning to need help with that myself—in Southend, and it was very good indeed in the way it was run.

Mrs Sharon Williams and the N-Act Theatre Company are touring Essex with shows that are trying to encourage young people to turn away from crime.

South Essex College has built a new facility in Stephenson Road, and it is doing a wonderful job with apprenticeships. Westcliff High School for Girls is now the computer hub for the whole of Essex, which is a wonderful achievement. It is a marvellous school.

The Lighthouse care home is a wonderful care home that is helping people with learning difficulties.

I recently visited the Refill Room, where Gemma and Alan are recycling products, and I support them.

I recently hosted the Bengal Pride awards in the House of Commons.

Jota Aviation is giving all sorts of opportunities to young people to go into the aviation industry.

Figure of Eight is helping people with learning difficulties, and we saw the unveiling of pictures by some of its pupils.

The South East Essex Schools Music Association festival was a wonderful celebration of musical talent at the Cliffs Pavilion in Southend.

The 150th anniversary of St Helen's Church was led by the Philippine community and was a wonderful day of celebration. The mosque open day in Southend was a great success.

Armed Forces Day was on 29 June, but it is so sad that Charles Benford has died today at the age of 100 before he could be awarded the freedom of Southend. That is such a shame.

Leigh Town Council's community day was a wonderful event.

I wish all colleagues, the Speaker, the Deputy Speakers, and all the servants of the House a very happy summer. I am looking forward to returning on 3 September and getting Brexit done.

2.16 pm

Sir Mark Hendrick (Preston) (Lab/Co-op): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Southend West (Sir David Amess), who as usual made reference to his wish to see Southend receive city status. It is a great status to have, and we were fortunate in Preston to receive city status in 2002 as a result of the Queen's golden jubilee. It was heavily contested and took place in jubilee year, so I am afraid he might have to wait until there is another jubilee year.

I stand here feeling bewildered following the statement from the Prime Minister about his plans for the future. The comments that we have heard today are comments that we have heard many times from the right hon. Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Boris Johnson), who is full of bluff and bluster, but there are many serious issues up and down the country, many of which are important topics being faced by those in my own constituency.

Universal credit continues to be a scourge for people in Preston, with something like twice as many claimants of jobseeker's allowance migrating to universal credit in the city of Preston. To me, this is an indicator of the state of the economy in many parts of the country. London will not be greatly affected by Brexit, but the people of Preston will be very hard hit by it, and the region as a whole will see a reduction of up to 12% in GDP. The less money people have in their pockets because of the transition to universal credit, the more difficult life is going to be for my constituents.

We have also seen serious poverty in many places, including my constituency. Something like 38% of children in Preston—that is nearly 8,000—are living in poverty. The Prime Minister says that the best way out of poverty is to have a job. Yes, that is the case, but 70% of children living in poverty live in a household where at least one parent is working. That poverty cannot be allowed to continue. We will expect the Government and the new Prime Minister to deal with that.

Another issue that has affected many of my constituents is the personal independence payment. The reassessments that have gone on in that area are absolutely ridiculous. People with serious disabilities and illnesses have been given zero points, and many of them—more than 50%—have to win on appeal. Again, this should not be allowed to continue, and I want to see the new Prime Minister and the new Government doing something about this.

I want to discuss foreign policy, because although there are many problems in my constituency, we have a multi-ethnic, multi-faith community that looks not just inwards to what is happening in Preston and in Lancashire but outwards to what is happening elsewhere in the world. There is continued dismay, anger and upset at what is going on in the occupied territories in Palestine.

On Monday, Israeli troops accompanied by bulldozers began ruthlessly demolishing homes in the Palestinian village of Sur Baher, close to the separation wall in the occupied west bank. Residents of the village's Wadi al-Hummus neighbourhood were shocked to see 16 residential buildings, which hold about 100 apartments, targeted on the pretext of security. Innocent Palestinians were watching as their homes were destroyed in front of their very eyes.

I first visited Palestine and Israel about 12 years ago. Then, there were about 15,000 to 20,000 settlers. Now I think there are around 100,000. This cannot be allowed to continue. The international community needs to take stronger action. In particular, we need stronger action by the United States. Unfortunately, under the current President, that does not seem as though it is going to happen any time soon.

I was also dismayed today when the Prime Minister talked, in answer to questions, about Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, who has been detained since 2016. How can this Prime Minister look in the mirror or sleep at night with a conscience, given the comments he made which have contributed to this poor woman's plight? The latest we hear is that she has been chained down and held as a prisoner. That is terrible, and it cannot be allowed to continue.

Another issue that is greatly affecting people in Preston is drug crime, which is rife in a deprived ward in my city. I recently met with local councillors from Deepdale ward, who witnessed horrific gang-related violence on

the streets in broad daylight while out canvassing at local elections. Young people and children are used to distribute illicit drugs on the street, and shockingly, this activity takes place in broad daylight within yards of school playgrounds. It is rife up and down the country, and many of us here know about county lines because we are experiencing them at first hand.

I want to speak about gambling not just by adults but by young kids and children. I am hearing about kids with mobile phones who have their parents' credit cards and are playing during lessons, gambling large sums of money—thousands of pounds, in many cases, of their parents' money. The Gambling Commission tells us that 55,000 11 to 16-year-olds have serious gambling addictions. The country is in a mess. We have a new Prime Minister and a new Government. Let us see whether they can deal with it.

2.22 pm

Jeremy Lefroy (Stafford) (Con): It is a great honour to follow the hon. Member for Preston (Sir Mark Hendrick). In Stafford, we, too, have the issue with county lines, which our police force is going after at the moment. I accompanied police on a raid just two weeks ago, when they managed to seize a considerable quantity of drugs, but that is just the tip of the iceberg. A lot more has to be done.

I want to start by talking about development, particularly unauthorised development. Later today, with your permission and your favour, Mr Speaker, I shall present a petition that I should have presented on Monday. It is about authorised development in Penkridge that should not have been authorised. The council and local people objected to it, but because, on a technicality, the council had slipped below the five-year land supply for a short period, the developer claimed that the council was in breach and that this totally unnecessary and unwanted development should therefore go through. We must listen more to local people on things such as this, not just have a tick-box exercise and permit developments that are long term and not wanted. This is in an area where we are building more than twice the national average in terms of housing. This is not about nimbyism at all.

I also want to point out the importance of the quality of new housing. Many of the new houses that are being built are not up to standard, and it is vital that that should be tackled, but not only that—we should go further, including with insulation. We should ensure that all new houses are built to the highest possible energy saving standards; that they have, where possible, integrated solar; that they have car charging points; and that they have the highest quality insulation.

My local hospital, County Hospital, has had its difficulties over the years, but I want to praise the work that it has done such that, in most weeks, more than 95% of people are seen, admitted, treated or discharged within four hours. That is one of the best records in the country and the hospital deserves great credit for that, but it is under consultation at the moment, and one of the issues is, again, the future of our emergency department. However, I am glad that the trust has made it clear that that department is secure. It has my absolute support in that. I will not tolerate the downgrading in any way, shape or form of the emergency department.

However, the stand-alone maternity department is at more risk. The reason is that people are not using it. This is one of those “use it or lose it” cases. I urge all those in my area who are talking with their patients—pregnant women—to say, “Look, there is this alternative.” Clearly, it has to be a safe alternative, which I fully understand, but I want that stand-alone maternity unit—

Bob Stewart (Beckenham) (Con): I know Stafford quite well. If those people are not using the unit, where are they going?

Jeremy Lefroy: Most women will be going to a consultant-led unit in Stoke, Wolverhampton or Walsall. I understand that, and they may have received advice from their GP on the issue—this has to be clinically led—but I very much value the stand-alone unit in Stafford and want it to continue.

We also have a problem with shortage of general practitioners in Stafford. In fact, there is a shortage across the country, so I welcome the new medical schools that are being opened. I am delighted that my wife, who is a GP, was up in Sunderland this week giving some training at the new medical school, which is about to be opened. I welcome the ones that are going to be opened in Chelmsford and other places.

I want to raise a few other issues, such as visas, including for foreign spouses and partners. Many people have come to my surgery with real problems in getting visas, including visas to visit, let alone visas for residence, and those issues need to be looked at more sympathetically, as does the issue of visas for visitors from Africa. Last week, the hon. Members for Glasgow North (Patrick Grady) and for Newcastle upon Tyne Central (Chi Onwurah) and I published a report on the difficulties that African visitors have in getting visas. These are Government officials and business people. I had one case recently involving the headmaster of a school in Ghana who was coming to visit his brother for a couple of weeks—a very distinguished man. Of course he does not want to stay in this country—he would much rather go back and teach his students in Ghana—but it has taken ages and he still does not have that visa. We must, must do better and I urge all Members to read the report that we jointly produced.

Turning to business, this is a minor matter, although not so minor for those affected by it—bailiffs. The behaviour of bailiffs has been considered by the House and new rules have been put in place. However, there is also the matter of fees. Sometimes, fees go up enormously—exponentially—over time. We should look at capping bailiff fees. I understand that bailiffs are necessary; their role is important in enforcing payment of debt, but it must be carried out in a reasonable manner.

We also need to look at the infrastructure for charging electric vehicles. We talk about needing to move to electric transportation. Quite frankly, the charging infrastructure is very poor. It is getting better, although not nearly fast enough, but the grid is simply not there to support it, nor is the generating capacity. I have asked questions about this in the past. I believe that we are too complacent. If we are to move to electric vehicles fast—we are making them in the west midlands and in Sunderland—we need the infrastructure to support that.

[Jeremy Lefroy]

Finally, two issues. First, I welcome the start, after about 30 years of discussion, of the African continental free trade area. This will be tremendous for the African continent, but also for all those such as the United Kingdom who wish to trade and invest far more with our friends and neighbours across the Mediterranean in Africa.

Secondly, I have recently had the pleasure of being appointed to the Environmental Audit Committee. We have heard that Natural England is grossly underfunded and cannot do the work that needs to be done on all these fantastic sites of special scientific interest, so I ask the Treasury to look carefully at restoring the funding that has been cut from Natural England.

2.29 pm

Nick Smith (Blaenau Gwent) (Lab): I will focus on the rise in pensions mis-selling and say why this growing problem needs an urgent response.

Just this week, an investigation by *The Times* found that £60 billion had been moved out of defined-benefit pensions in recent years. That is much higher than was previously thought. The Financial Conduct Authority says that most savers would be better off staying in defined-benefit schemes, but *The Times* says that a third of all transfers now exhibit red flags. Already, pensions mis-selling is costing savers £4 billion a year. Those are concerning figures; behind them are pensioners and families who have worked hard only to find that their pensions and pension pots have been put at risk by rogues.

South Wales was at the centre of a mis-selling crisis with the British Steel pension scheme two years ago. Steelworkers were aggressively targeted by unscrupulous advisers when deciding what to do about their pension options. At least several hundred of them received unsuitable advice, while the response of key regulators was halting and insufficient. I hope that the authorities and the police will take firmer action in future. This was a serious example of what can go wrong, but many of the underlying causes are still there.

The new Administration urgently need to do three things. They should get the regulators to improve their performance, legislate for tougher action against mis-sellers and protect hard-working people's life savings from the scammers and the swindlers. The Conservative-led coalition Government's attempt at pensions liberalisation a few years ago is starting to sour. This new Conservative Government must sort it out quickly.

2.32 pm

Bob Blackman (Harrow East) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Nick Smith), who raised an important issue that affects constituents across the country.

Before we rise for the summer recess with a spring in our step after the zinging performance by our excellent new Prime Minister, I wish to raise a number of issues for the Government to think about over the summer and for us to concentrate on.

During questions to the Leader of the House, I raised the consultation that is under way across a number of areas in London on Transport for London building

high-density, multi-storey housing on car parks attached to stations. That will dramatically reduce the number of car parking spaces available at the terminus of every single line in London and affect commuters right across the south-east who drive to a station, leave their car and use public transport to travel in. Equally, there is a concern that the properties that will be built will be rabbit hutches and will become the slums of the future, causing further problems.

Bob Stewart: Building is taking place on railway car parks in my constituency. That is pushing people out on to other local roads and clogging them up even more.

Bob Blackman: I thank my hon. Friend; that is clearly another impact.

That leads me to my next issue, which is the bus consultations that are going on in London. The proposals will increase the speed at which buses move around London, but reduce the continuity of service between buses and stations. Residents in my constituency will have to change buses twice to reach Northwick Park station, whereas currently they can get on one bus and reach the station on public transport. That is absurd.

I have raised before at questions to the Leader of the House the impact of the illegal occupation by Travellers of areas in my constituency. We had—I use my words carefully—an illegal occupation on Stanmore Lodge. They were then evicted and moved to Stanmore marsh, which once again is public land. They were removed from there and moved to Canons Park. They then moved to Hatch End and then Whitchurch playing fields. Harrow Council and the police worked quickly to remove them, but we need new laws that prevent illegal occupation from taking place. It is not only the illegal occupation that has an impact, but the clear-up costs after these people have left. That is left to the council tax payer to pick up, which is clearly grossly unfair.

We have a new Chancellor who, in a previous role in government, was very helpful to the victims of the Equitable Life scandal, but there is still unfinished business. The people who were scammed by Equitable Life are still owed £2.6 billion. I hope that the Chancellor will live up to his word and honour the Government's commitment to fund in full the settlement for those individuals.

I have raised the Vagrancy Act before. It is a disgrace that this country still has on the statute book the Vagrancy Act 1824, which criminalises people for being homeless. People should be helped into housing, not arrested because they have nowhere to live. I hope that the new Government will take action to remove it from the statute book and to ensure that prompt and proper action is taken against aggressive street begging, which is a real problem in this country.

My hon. Friend the Member for Worthing West (Sir Peter Bottomley), who is no longer in his place, has spoken about leasehold reform. The Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee has produced an excellent report—well, I was party to it and to the evidence—and we had a debate in this Chamber on the need for the reform of leasehold. The Government must take that up quickly and deliver.

There is also the challenge of financing local government, on which the HCLG Committee will publish a report shortly. We need to reform the financing of local government, because it is suffering from a lack of finance and a crisis in the provision of services. The basis on which any finance is provided to local government across the country is unfair, so reform is necessary.

I am delighted that shortly before my right hon. Friend the previous Prime Minister left office, the Government released the long-awaited prevention report, which contains action on smoking and obesity and a number of other measures. I am, as many people know, the chairman of the all-party parliamentary group on smoking and health, as well as an avid anti-smoker. We have to ensure that we become a smoke-free society as quickly as possible. At the moment, the ambition is too slow and we have to speed up the process. We can use the taxation system to discourage people from smoking and put a levy on the tobacco companies, which make millions of pounds of profit from a drug that kills people who use it in the way they intend. The burden on the national health service and smoking cessation services could be paid for by that levy if we were bold enough to implement it.

I attended the recent rally in Ashraf in Albania with my hon. Friend the Member for Southend West (Sir David Amess) and I hosted a meeting in this place on human rights in Iran, at which one of the guest speakers was Richard Ratcliffe. I have said previously in the House what an honourable man he is in his suffering. He has been deprived of having his wife beside him and his child is not able to share family life, but he is diligent in trying to ensure that his wife is released from prison and returned to her family. Given the situation arising in the Gulf, we need to make every effort possible, but the reality is that what we need is regime change in Iran and the end of the theocracy.

What is going on in Sri Lanka right now for the Muslim minority is a disgrace. Those people need protection and they need support from this Government. I trust that our new Foreign Secretary will provide it.

As we rise for the summer, some people may be going on holiday. On Monday, I shall be assembling my work experience team of students, who will find out what it is really like to be an MP during the vacation. I look forward to that and to assisting—

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Lindsay Hoyle): Order. I ask all Members, if they take an intervention, please to try not to use the extra minute. We are really struggling; the time limit will now go down to five minutes.

2.39 pm

John Grogan (Keighley) (Lab): It is a great pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Harrow East (Bob Blackman), who spoke with great authority about a large number of international issues, as well as about his local buses; I always instinctively trust a Member of Parliament who knows about his local buses. It is also a great pleasure to take part in a debate started with such panache by the hon. Member for Southend West (Sir David Amess).

It was Lord Hague of Richmond who said that early-day motions in this House were “parliamentary confetti”. Although he is a distinguished Yorkshireman,

I disagree with him—for me, they are the bread and butter of our Parliament. I want to bring to the attention of the House, before we adjourn for the summer recess, three early-day motions that just happen to be in my name, which the House may have missed while other things have been happening over the last few days.

Early-day motion 2649 calls for a review of the Heathrow expansion decision. It is supported by nearly 30 hon. Members—including some Labour Front Benchers, which I was pleased to see; I hope that it will be supported by the Labour leadership. Things have changed over the past year: we have declared a climate emergency, and we now have a target of net zero. In the north of England, it has become very apparent that, given our net zero target, any expansion of Heathrow will choke off any possible expansion of routes in the north of England. The Prime Minister famously said that he would sit down in front of the bulldozers to stop Heathrow expansion. I am not asking him to do that, but I do think that a review is the least that we can expect.

Alex Sobel (Leeds North West) (Lab/Co-op): My hon. Friend and neighbour is making an excellent speech. It is vital that we cancel the third runway at Heathrow and that we share the reduction in aviation emissions right across the country, so that we do not play airports against each other.

John Grogan: My hon. Friend makes a good point. There is express provision for such a review in the Planning Act 2008, so it would not be difficult.

I move on quickly to early-day motion 2650, which is about commercial local radio and Bauer. Although it stands only in my name at the moment, I am confident that at least a dozen MPs will sign it overnight. It deals with an important issue of commercial local radio, to which two things have happened in recent years. The market has consolidated: Global and Bauer now own over half the market. Furthermore, Ofcom has weakened the regulations so that local radio stations now have to have only three rather than seven hours of local content on a weekday and local content can come from regional centres; it need not come from the area of the franchise.

Bauer is trying to buy over 30 local radio stations in four different groups. The good news is that yesterday the Competition and Markets Authority stood up to it and said that there was a clear competition case to answer. There will be a phase 2 investigation of these possible purchases of Bauer's. The fear must be that local advertisers will be taken out of the market, all the advertising will become national and Bauer will follow Global in closing local studios; Global has already closed 10 local studios. If the purchases go through, Bauer will own exactly 80% of the Yorkshire commercial local radio market: 16 of 20 stations. I fear for stations such as Stray FM, which covers part of Keighley constituency. I fear that, ultimately, programmes will be made just from Leeds and London.

The third early-day motion to which I want to draw attention, Mr Deputy Speaker, may be to your taste: it is to do with cricket and football World cups and free-to-air TV. It is EDM 2608. One thing that the retiring Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport did in his last few days in office was to announce for the first time in about 20 years additions to the list of events

[John Grogan]

that must be shown on free-to-air TV. He said that he wanted a consultation on future women's World cups and future women's FA cup finals and that they should be listed just as the men's events are. Some 11 million people were inspired by the football World cup this year, and that will now also be true for future women's football World cups: women will have equal status with men when it comes to great sporting events. The right hon. and learned Gentleman also suggested that the Paralympics should be added. I would like his successor to go further and to add the cricket. We cannot just have one game every 15 years, courtesy of Sky and its owners Comcast—at the very least, England internationals in the cricket World cup and in the T20s, as in Australia, should be free to all the nation, to inspire them.

Finally, I want to preface an early-day motion that is not yet on the Order Paper but will be in September. It is to do with the private security industry. One of the great benefits of being an MP is that, courtesy of Mr Speaker, we can see in the new year on the Terrace. I was coming to do that last year and met Mr Michael Thompson, who turned out to be from Keighley. He was outside the Palace. I kept in touch with him over the months that followed. He told me that the firm he was working for, 24/7 Security, have not paid a lot of people—not just on that occasion but on others, including the Leeds festival and so on. The security industry is very heavily regulated for the individual security guards but not when it comes to the contracting companies. Under the Private Security Industry Act 2001, there is provision to have such regulation of the contracting companies. I hope that, as we approach the 20th anniversary of the Act, we will review the situation.

Finally, I wish you a happy summer holiday, Mr Deputy Speaker. Particularly in view of the county of your loyalty, I wish you a happy Yorkshire Day on 1 August next week.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Lindsay Hoyle): Lancashire will always be there first.

2.45 pm

Fiona Bruce (Congleton) (Con): In just over one hour, the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission, which I have the privilege of chairing, will be publishing its latest report—a substantial and groundbreaking one, entitled “The Limits of Consent: Prostitution in the UK.” That is not a subject often considered in this place. We need to. The whole basis of the report is that many of the women drawn into prostitution—often through trafficking but also by other means, and often very young—are abused and suffer abject sexual exploitation.

Those women deserve our compassion, practical help and support and must not fear criminalisation under our complex, confusing and inconsistently applied laws. Those laws need reform. We need to penalise those who exploit, coerce and abuse others in this area, but not those who are themselves exploited. The recommendations in our report are clear and I am pleased that Conservatives are leading on this human rights issue. We need to reduce the demand for prostitution by creating a new criminal offence of paying for sexual services—by criminalising the trade, but making it absolutely clear

that those personally abused in this way will not fear being treated as criminals. If anyone is under any illusion as to what the trade really means and its links with organised violent crime, drug and people trafficking and international money laundering, they need only read our report.

By creating a new offence, we will help to halt human trafficking into this country by making it a less attractive destination for those who engage in the heinous organised international trade in human beings for the purposes of prostitution. We can strike a spoke into the wheel of modern-day slavery and challenge and call to account the often violent and degrading sexual exploitation associated with the trade. Sadly, all these crimes are still growing in this country. It is indeed a heinous trade. I have heard it said, “You can sell a drug once, but you can sell a girl a thousand times.” I heard of one trafficked girl who decided one day that she would count how many men were sent to abuse her; after 100, she stopped counting.

The experiences in other countries support our proposed approach. The UK needs to be at the forefront of this human rights work. Our report is different from others in this policy area because it gives in-depth consideration to the questions of principle around prostitution that are often neglected—questions such as: what does it mean to make a free choice? Is prostitution inherently harmful? What does sexual consent really mean in the context of prostitution? We found more agreement on these issues than one might first expect from a superficial reading.

The report, which is the fruit of more than a year of research and inquiry, meticulously weighs the evidence in favour of and against different legislative models and solutions. I pay tribute to the lead commissioner on the report, Luke de Pulford, and thank those who gave their time to help draft it. I also pay tribute to the many survivors of prostitution and the dozens of concerned interest groups that gave evidence to us. I thank in particular one remarkable woman, the brave survivor Rachel Moran. I implore colleagues to read her book “Paid For: My Journey Through Prostitution”, which tells her heart-scorching personal story. I challenge any colleague then to deny that these abused women, and some men, need our effective help, and need it now.

In the coming months, I shall bring forward a private Member's Bill to strengthen the law around sexual consent and end the demand for prostitution in this country—an approach that I know has cross-party support. If enacted, the Bill will repeal criminal sanctions against prostituted people while creating a public sector duty to enable those caught in prostitution to exit, and to give them safe homes, health help, support and protection, as well as the educational skills that so many never have the chance to develop because frequently they are drawn into prostitution in their early teenage years. Our report can be found at Scribd.com. I ask for support from all colleagues from all parties in this endeavour.

2.50 pm

Mary Glendon (North Tyneside) (Lab): It is an honour to follow the hon. Member for Congleton (Fiona Bruce), who, through her care, compassion and faith, does so much good work in this place.

I speak first as the co-chair of the drugs, alcohol and justice cross-party group and as a member of the all-party group on alcohol harm. Earlier this month, a major review revealed that one in 10 people in a hospital bed in this country is alcohol dependent, and that one in five is doing themselves harm by drinking. In response to the review Professor Ian Gilmore, chair of the Alcohol Health Alliance, said:

“More than 80 people die of alcohol-related causes across the UK every day, and there are more than 1 million alcohol-related hospital admissions every year in England alone.”

We urge the Government to prioritise reducing the harm that alcohol causes. They need to take action and introduce targeted, evidence-based measures, including minimum unit pricing to raise the price of the cheapest, strongest alcohol products.

The massive burden that alcohol puts on the NHS highlights the need for the urgent adoption of measures presented in the alcohol charter, which was launched by the drugs, alcohol and justice group and the all-party group on alcohol harm and is supported by more than 30 organisations. However, the Government have not produced their promised alcohol strategy. They have postponed ministerial meetings to discuss the charter and barely mentioned alcohol in their new prevention Green Paper. I very much hope that the new Prime Minister, the new Chancellor and, indeed, Ministers across Government, including from the Department of Health and Social Care, the Home Office, the Ministry of Justice and the Department for Education—they all have a part to play—will adopt a more enlightened approach. A serious, joined-up approach based on the charter recommendations could reduce the blight of alcohol harm significantly.

Let me turn to other issues. Together with colleagues from across the House, I have raised the issue of access to the drug Spinraza for patients with spinal muscular atrophy. Yesterday, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence published its final guidance on the drug. There is good news for those patients who will soon start to access the drug through the managed-access agreement, which must be implemented quickly and fairly, but it is disappointing that it does not include full access for SMA types 1, 2 and 3. We look forward to further clinical evidence being gathered, with a view to future positive changes being made to the managed-access agreement eligibility criteria. NICE and NHS England can expect continued pressure for those changes from MPs, as well as from patients, carers and clinicians—in fact, from all those involved in Muscular Dystrophy UK, TreatSMA, and Spinal Muscular Atrophy UK. The objective is access to Spinraza for all who need it, and the campaign will continue until that goal is reached.

Finally, I am sure the whole House will join me in congratulating Depaul on its 30th anniversary, which was celebrated in the Lords yesterday. Depaul runs fantastic services for homeless young people in North Tyneside and throughout the UK. Its work is guided by the belief that no matter what they have been through, young people can reach their potential if they have a safe, stable home and a support network that they can depend on. When the House returns, I will carry on working with Depaul UK to make the case for more Government investment in homelessness prevention, such as the Nightstop volunteer host service, and for a fairer welfare system in which young people do not have

to wait five weeks for their first universal credit payment and in which local housing allowance is unfrozen and is worth at least the 30th percentile of local rents.

I wish everybody an enjoyable and fruitful time during the summer. I do hope that everyone finds time to pursue some relaxation during this recess.

2.55 pm

Douglas Ross (Moray) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for North Tyneside (Mary Glindon).

May I begin by putting on record my thanks and, I am sure, the thanks of all Scottish Conservative colleagues here in Westminster, Holyrood and across Scotland for the sterling service of the previous Scottish Secretary, my right hon. Friend the Member for Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale (David Mundell). He has been a staunch supporter of Scotland and the Union, and really was Scotland's man in the Cabinet. I know that his successor, my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries and Galloway (Mr Jack), will continue that work, but my right hon. Friend certainly made me and my colleagues who joined this place in 2017 feel extremely welcome. We valued his support—no one more so than me for his efforts to get the Moray growth deal over the line. I read an article by the Scottish journalist, Stephen Daisley, today in which he said that my right hon. Friend's time in office as the Scottish Secretary was the longest since Lord Lang. He was appointed by David Cameron to the shadow Cabinet 13 and a half years ago, which meant that he was the longest serving Scottish spokesperson for either party since Willie Ross served under Harold Wilson, and that is a commendable record.

Stephen Kerr (Stirling) (Con): There would not be a Stirling and Clackmannanshire city region deal without the former Secretary of State either, so I put on record my grateful thanks to him too.

Douglas Ross: I appreciate that comment from my hon. Friend.

May I also use this opportunity in the House of Commons today to thank another person for sterling service, and that is Clare Russell who will shortly retire after 14 years as the Queen's representative as Lord Lieutenant of Banffshire? In those 17 years, she has organised more than 40 royal visits, the last of which was for the Earl and Countess of Forfar to visit Glenfiddich Distillery in Moray. Over and above the royal visits that Clare Russell organised and participated in, she has been part of countless community events throughout Banffshire. She is always ably assisted by her husband, Oliver.

The Lord Lieutenant of Banffshire was presented with the Commander of the Royal Victorian Order by Her Majesty in 2018 and a few years earlier received an honorary degree from Aberdeen University. I want to say from these Green Benches that the people of Banffshire are extremely grateful for the commitment and dedication that Clare Russell has shown to our area and for the 17 years of great service. We are also extremely grateful to her for everything that she has done to promote Banffshire and for being the Queen's representative in our area.

[Douglas Ross]

I also want to use the time available today to mention once again our armed forces, who are an integral part of the Moray community. Time and again, I mention RAF Lossiemouth and our brave men and women who serve there, and, of course, those at 39 Engineer Regiment in Kinloss at Kinloss barracks. Tomorrow, I will be joining them in Grant Park in Forres where there will be an Operation Trenton medals parade. The regiment will march down Forres high street and assemble in Grant Park. I hope that this great weather that we are currently having will continue for the men and women who will receive their honours tomorrow.

A slightly negative point that I feel I must bring to the attention of the Chamber today is the closure of the East Beach bridge in Lossiemouth. This is an extremely popular beach in Lossiemouth where I enjoy taking my family and our dog for a walk. Indeed, I even train on the dunes sometimes at East Beach, but, yesterday, after a report from the public, Moray council carried out an inspection and the bridge was closed. It was estimated just on Tuesday this week that 3,500 people cross that bridge in a single day, and the East Beach at Lossiemouth attracts tourists all year round. I hope that we can find an immediate solution to these problems, and that the UK Government, the Scottish Government and private investors can get involved to ensure that the bridge reopens as quickly as possible. It is such an important attraction to the area, and there are real concerns from the business community that its closure could affect tourism in the area. I spoke to the chairman of Lossiemouth Community Council, Mike Mulholland, this morning and was told that there would be an emergency meeting at 12 o'clock this afternoon to get an update from the council. I worry that there will not be an immediate solution, but we all must work together to try to get the bridge opened as quickly as possible.

Finally, in the last few seconds I want to mention the great community spirit in Moray. Just last week I visited the baby bank that has been set up by Susan and Ian Sutherland, who collect clothes and the other goods that people require for young babies and distribute them in the local community. The project originally started in their dining room and has now moved into premises in Urquhart. Those people are doing great work, and I praise them and all the volunteers in Moray who do outstanding work throughout the year.

3 pm

Mrs Madeleine Moon (Bridgend) (Lab): People who have watched this House during this Session might think that all we do is talk about Brexit, but we have also been addressing the absolute disaster that universal credit is proving to be and the devastating effect it has had on too many families. We have also been very engaged with the issue of many seriously ill people receiving the wrong personal independence payment assessments. Many of these people are terminally ill and some have got zero points at assessment. I am still battling against failed assessments and it is totally unacceptable. My Access to Welfare (Terminal Illness Definition) Bill has not been able to move forward because we have not had ongoing sitting Fridays. That is really frustrating.

Another issue we face is that of the bereavement benefits lost by children and their parent when the person they lost was not married to the child's mother or father. It is absolutely shocking. We were promised that that would be resolved, but we are still waiting. There is also the matter of child trust funds, some 2,700 of which are dormant in my Bridgend constituency, with claimants who did not even know they had a trust fund waiting for money that could change their life. What are we going to do to make that possible?

The devastation of Brexit has led to the closure of the Ford plant in my constituency, with the loss of 1,700 jobs there and 12,000 job losses at Ford across Europe. I am not involved in the meetings between Westminster Ministers and Welsh Assembly Ministers, yet it is to me that people come to know what is happening. Can we have access to the relevant people for my constituents and those of my colleagues in the south Wales region whose families are terribly worried about their future? Those who work in small and medium-sized enterprises are also devastated. We need to know what is going on, with regular feedback.

Earlier today, the Leader of the House talked about the important role the Foreign Office plays in protecting British citizens when they are abroad. My constituent John Tossell left his hotel on 17 June wearing a T-shirt, shorts and open-toed sandals, with €10 in his pocket. He disappeared. He was last seen going for a swim near the Windmill hotel in Argassi on the island of Zante. Can anyone who is going to Argassi on holiday please look out for this man? Will they look at their holiday photographs and let his family know if they have seen him? Also, will the Foreign and Commonwealth Office agree to keep the family aware of what is happening in the investigation throughout the summer?

Bridgend is a great place with great people, great hospitality and the best further education college in the United Kingdom. If anyone is wandering into Wales, I suggest they visit Porthcawl, where we have sea, sun, surfing, sandcastles, strolling on the prom and probably the best Italian ice cream in the whole of Wales. Our lifeboat, which is one of the busiest in the UK, keeps people safe in the water; hon. Members would be amazed at how many people on this island nation have no understanding of the risks of going into the sea. Our National Coastwatch Institution is absolutely superb. It is possible to walk from Newton bay down the River Ogmores, along a local nature reserve and right around the coast to the site of special scientific interest at Kenfig. It is an amazing opportunity to visit Wales and see the wonderful life that we are determined to protect and to ensure remains a part of the European Union. I will certainly be doing my best, when the House comes back, to ensure that that continues.

We all have to thank all the staff of the House—especially the catering staff who keep us going, the Doorkeepers who keep us informed and the security staff who keep us safe, but also the guides who show our visitors around the place. I also want to thank my staff, both in my Bridgend office and my Westminster office, because none of us would get through the volume of work without them.

3.4 pm

James Cartlidge (South Suffolk) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mrs Moon), but also bittersweet, because, like her, I will be talking about the closing of an automotive plant in my constituency. She knows, as I do, what that entails for constituents.

In fact, I had not intended to speak, but this morning I received by letter what is for my constituents a bitter blow regarding the Delphi diesel plant in Sudbury. In June 2017, Delphi Technologies, which is a large multi-billion-dollar American corporation listed on the New York stock exchange, confirmed that its diesel plant in my constituency will be closing with the loss of around 500 jobs, phased until 2020. Later that year, I set up the South Suffolk taskforce, including the local authority and the local enterprise partnership, to look at how we could try to encourage a buyer for the site to keep it on an industrial basis so that we could protect those jobs, because the key thing about them is that they are highly skilled and nearly all are held by people who live in the vicinity of the plant, so they are very precious to our local economy.

Interestingly, we then had sessions of the taskforce where representatives of Delphi sat in front of us and told us that it was also their priority to keep the site for industrial use. In fact, in October last year I received a letter from Delphi that said:

“Regarding the future of the site, I can confirm our preference for the site to remain an industrial one and we have already invested significant sums to create an industrial assessment report to support this.”

But since then there has been a period with no engagement from the company and almost no communication unless, basically, I kicked off, threatened to talk about it in the Chamber and so on. Eventually, this morning, we received another letter; some of us had been starting to think, “Are their plans still the same?” It says:

“We intend to sell to Charterhouse Property Group...We understand that Charterhouse’s intention is to clear the site following our vacation in order to facilitate the necessary remedial works.”

In short, the site will be bulldozed and every job lost. That is the position as of today. Extraordinarily, the letter goes on to say:

“We note that the draft Local Plan has been published on the Council’s website and is due out for public consultation imminently. Following our initial review there appears to be no provision for the redevelopment of this site. The scale of the site—standing at 22 acres—provides your Authority with a significant opportunity to prioritise brownfield redevelopment as part of the overall spatial strategy avoiding the need for unnecessary development on greenfield land.”

It concludes by saying:

“In parallel to this, we would ask you to engage with”

Charterhouse Property Group

“so that it maximises the prospects of obtaining planning consent for a future use of the site.”

This is a company that is not engaged—that has basically shown a blank face to us in recent months—and then, on concluding that it is going to sell the site for property development, entirely residential, has realised that it needs the support of the stakeholders on my taskforce, most notably the planning committee. I find this quite extraordinary. When I first heard that the company had instructed a commercial agent last October,

I “mystery shopped” the estate agent. I simply said to it, “I represent a large number of people with an interest in the site”, which was factually correct, asked if the site was going to be sold for residential development, and was told, “We consider all bids.” At this point, I challenged Delphi on its intentions, and it continued to say that its priority was industrial use.

My position is, first, that our planning authority should stand firm. If a planning application comes in, it should reject it as being out of policy and say that this site should remain for jobs and employment because it is absolutely key to our local economy. I say both to Delphi and to the property development company that were their application to be rejected—which, as we know, happens in the system these days—and they appealed with all their legal power and the rest of it, I would have no hesitation in asking for it to be called in by the Secretary of State, because, I can confirm to the House, we have had interest from companies that want to buy the site for industrial use—for new technology. One was from a company that has strong links to China regarding bringing forward electrical automotive technology. The truth is that companies like that do not have the muscle of the property developers, and in this case Delphi has decided that it wants the biggest bang for its buck.

I recognise that Delphi has offered excellent terms of severance, and the staff who are leaving do so with contracts that many newer employees in companies would envy, if we are honest. But the fact is that we have a Government, as we heard today, who want to see us pushing forward with investment in new technology. When we have an employment site with brilliant staff, which is the asset in this case and the reason why people have been interested in it, we should be looking to maximise the potential for the local economy, rather than selling to the highest bidder and leaving the site vacant for years as we go through the courts with applications for commercial and residential development. I hope we can still have a mixed-use site that maintains employment, and if Delphi wants to do that, I will work with it.

3.10 pm

Mr Ivan Lewis (Bury South) (Ind): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for South Suffolk (James Cartlidge). Like the hon. Member for Southend West (Sir David Amess), I want to raise the issue of avoidable deaths as a consequence of epilepsy. This issue does not get enough focus in the House. It causes a great deal of distress, for obvious reasons, to many families.

There are 21 epilepsy deaths each week in the United Kingdom. The organisation SUDEP Action does an excellent job in not only supporting bereaved families but highlighting this issue. What we want from the Government is an inquiry into avoidable epilepsy deaths; a funded annual risk check for all people with epilepsy; local training, so that all frontline professionals have greater awareness of this issue; and a willingness that has not been present for a number of years for Ministers to meet SUDEP Action and Members of Parliament to address these issues. A remarkable woman in my constituency called Lynn McGoff lost her daughter Samantha Ahearn 10 years ago to an avoidable epilepsy death. She has raised more than £45,000 for SUDEP Action, and she is a great advocate and campaigner for

[Mr Ivan Lewis]

this cause and many others. Her courage, and that of the many people like her who turn personal tragedy into campaigns, is an inspiration to us all.

As we speak here today, there is a real risk that the English Football League is about to give Bury football club notice that it will have to leave the league due to a series of administrative issues. I want to use this speech to ask the English Football League to sit down with me, my hon. Friend the Member for Bury North (James Frith) and the club to do everything we can to prevent that from happening, because it would be a devastating blow to the town of Bury.

When we come back, I hope to be in a position to confirm that we have submitted a bid to the Government for a new secondary school in Radcliffe in my constituency. It is a scandal that that community has not had a secondary school for well over 10 years, but we are making tremendous progress in submitting a bid to the Government, and I hope the Government will look upon it favourably. Likewise, for Prestwich precinct, we are making a bid to the town centre fund administered by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

I want to touch briefly on the issue of antisemitism. It is important to say that this has ruptured the relationship between my former party and large sections of the Jewish community, and the consequence is that the majority—this is not an exaggeration—of Jews in the United Kingdom fear that they would not feel welcome in this country if my former party, under its present leadership, were to win an election. I therefore ask those who are still members of that party in this House to understand the impact of that on people's everyday lives and their duty to send different messages to the Jewish community in this country from those they have been sending in recent times. That is a very serious issue.

I also want to raise the matter of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe. I had the privilege of meeting her husband Richard, as many others did, outside the embassy. The way Iran has behaved is scandalous. Whatever we say about wanting to stay part of the nuclear deal, Iran is a rogue state. It continues to fund and encourage terrorism around the middle east and then, despite this country staying in the nuclear deal, it imprisons and treats Nazanin in the most appalling manner. We should use every opportunity in this House to condemn the Iranian regime and say that we will not take our eye off the ball until she is released.

I want to raise the question of HS2. What I have discovered in recent weeks about HS2 is shocking. It seems that a significant number of former senior staff were made to sign non-disclosure clauses, as part of redundancy notices, because they had brought it to the attention of the company's senior management that they were not providing accurate information to this House about the true costs of HS2. People were marched off premises and made redundant purely because they were whistleblowing and saying that this House and the public were being misled about the cost. I urge the Government and the Department for Transport to come totally clean and to be transparent about this issue, because if they do not come clean, we will drag out of them this information about what I believe is a public scandal.

May I welcome the new Prime Minister's commitment to come forward with a fundamentally new plan for social care? This is one of the great public policy challenges of our time. Elderly people and their families, as well as disabled people and people with mental health problems, are being let down. I hope that the new Prime Minister is genuine in his commitment finally to bring forward, on an all-party basis, a radical plan for the reform of social care.

3.15 pm

Stephen Kerr (Stirling) (Con): I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for Bury South (Mr Lewis). I was deeply impressed by what he said about antisemitism, and also about whistleblowing. I am the co-chair of the all-party group on whistleblowing. Just a couple of weeks ago, we produced a significant, I believe, report entitled "The Personal Cost of Doing the Right Thing and the Cost to Society of Ignoring it". In that report, we call for a review of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998. It was passed 20 years ago and was groundbreaking at the time, but it is well past the date for it to be reviewed. The hon. Gentleman highlighted a case in point where the Act should be protecting whistleblowers but does not. The report also makes the case for an independent office for the whistleblower.

I was enlivened—I think the whole Chamber was—by the exciting, energetic and enthusiastic performance of our new Prime Minister earlier today. Had I taken my turn and bobbed for two and a half hours, I would have asked my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to commit to taking seriously the recommendations arising from the review that Lord Dunlop will produce later this year. It is very important for the sake of our Union that the United Kingdom Government update their structures and configuration to make them fit for the post-devolution Britain we live in.

I would like to raise the lack of any ministerial statement on the shocking rise in drugs-related deaths in Scotland, the highest per capita death rate in Europe. It is beyond my reasoning why Home Office Ministers were so reluctant to come here and make a statement on this important subject. I would like a meeting with the new Leader of the House to discuss how the Government respond to matters relating to Scotland in general. The sovereign Parliament of the United Kingdom must surely have an interest in all aspects of life in all parts of these islands.

Every Friday and Saturday, I spend time doing the thing I enjoy most about this job, which is speaking to my constituents, most frequently on their doorsteps. I am struck by the things that concern my constituents—not the things that fill up column inches of the national newspapers or the hours of ongoing, 24-hour rolling television news but the things that fill the columns of the *Stirling Observer* and the airtime of Central FM and Stirling City Radio. Those are the things my constituents care about, so let me mention some of them very quickly.

Since I was elected, I have been involved in a campaign to increase the number of Changing Places. Changing Places are toilets and changing facilities for people with a wide range of disabilities. They are fully equipped with showers, hoists and changing tables to make it possible for families caring for family members and

others who suffer from severe disability to enjoy the facilities that we all—those of us who are able-bodied—take for granted. I opened a new Changing Places facility in my first few months as an MP, at the Blair Drummond safari park, working with Gary Gilmour, the manager there. It really brought home to me the effect that these facilities can have on individuals and the families who need them. They enable them to enjoy a day out without anxiety about the hygiene and care of the people they love.

I am working with Stirling shopping mall manager, Gary Turnbull, because it would like to have a Changing Places facility there. I am also working with the centrepiece of Stirling's sports village, the Peak, and Active Stirling, because it would like a Changing Places facility, as well as with the McLaren Leisure Centre in Callander—led by its chairman, David Moore, and manager, Trish Thompson—which is planning a Changing Places facility soon. I want to pay tribute to the local area access forum, under the chairmanship of Robert Dick. It does so much to highlight these issues, and so much more, and I pay full tribute to it. I hope that Ministers will consider looking at policy on these issues. Why is it not required that these facilities are installed at motorway service stations and other key public facilities that make such a difference to the quality of people's lives?

I pay tribute to Grant Wallace, a local driving instructor, and to local Councillor Martin Earl, who saved the Callander test centre from the clutches of the DVLA, which wanted to shut it down and save £2,500. Together with Mark Griffiths they came up with a novel solution so that Callander could retain its DVLA test centre and also make that saving. I also pay tribute to Valerie Brand from Buchlyvie, who managed to change the route of the C12 bus so that people in rural Stirling had access to a proper bus service, and to Donald and Alicja Fraser who set up a transport scheme in Killin to ensure that people could access appointments at hospitals and other far away medical facilities. Rural communities are often forgotten, but they should not be.

I would like to mention many other things, but one success story involves my constituent, Helen Bovill, who was concerned about the state of a public walkway. She got in touch with her councillor and her MP, and things changed. That is the kind of civic volunteering responsibility we have in Stirling, which makes it the greatest place in the United Kingdom to live.

3.20 pm

Susan Elan Jones (Clwyd South) (Lab): It is a pleasure to follow all colleagues who have spoken in this debate. This year marks the 75th anniversary of the D-day landings in Normandy, and although many Members of the House—and, indeed, outside it—are far more qualified to speak on that issue than me, I wish to use my role as co-chair of the all-party group on charities and volunteering to thank those voluntary organisations that exist to support veterans and their families, including current serving personnel.

The Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund marks its centenary this year. It was set up by Lord Trenchard with donations from the public, and it still supports veterans, serving personnel, and their families. All support is tailor-made, but the charity provides assistance in 12 key areas: financial assistance with day-to-day living

costs; unemployment, retraining and resettlement support; help with housing; disability adaptations and aids round the home; mobility equipment; care costs; support for carers; wellbeing holiday breaks; help with funeral costs; benefits advice; housing and care advocacy; emotional health and wellbeing, and so much more.

Like many of the finest charities, the fund works in partnership with others, including case working organisations such as SSAFA and the Royal Air Forces Association, which have direct contact with those who need their assistance. Every serving member of the RAF voluntarily donates half a day's pay to the fund, and last year it spent £21.4 million on supporting beneficiaries, meaning that more than 55,000 people received RAF Benevolent Fund support.

I have chosen to mention that fund today because it wants more beneficiaries. This year, the charity launched a new campaign—Join the Search. Change a Life—to raise awareness of the fund, and to find RAF veterans and their families who have fallen off the radar and help them before it is too late. It is concentrating specifically on the national service generation. There are currently 1.5 million people in what is described as the RAF family, three-quarters of whom are over 65. Worryingly, the benevolent fund estimates that up to 300,000 members of the RAF family could be in need of support, with about 100,000 of those in urgent need.

The benevolent fund wishes to double the number of people it supports and ensure its sustainability for years to come. I am pleased and privileged to raise the matter in the House. We never know who reads these debates in *Hansard*, follows them in the media or watches BBC Parliament, but we know there are a lot of such people. If only a few of them are able to get in touch with the Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund and help someone in need, my small contribution to today's important debate will have been worth it.

3.24 pm

Stewart Malcolm McDonald (Glasgow South) (SNP): I begin by agreeing with the hon. Member for Stirling (Stephen Kerr) on the seeming inability of the House to react to the news about Scottish drugs deaths. There has been a cross-party effort this week from Scottish Members of Parliament to get this issue on to the Floor of the House. Sadly, that has not happened, but I am sure that he and many on the Opposition Benches—not least my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow Central (Alison Thewliss)—will press to draw the attention of the House to this issue at some point.

I want to talk not about anything or anyone hyper-local to my constituency, but about a woman from Russia. Her name was Elena Grigorieva and she was butchered to death at the weekend by thugs in St Petersburg. She was an extraordinary and brave woman. She was an unrelenting defender of civil and human rights. She was a thorn in the side of the thugs in Red Square in Moscow and she was a staunch proponent of LGBT rights, which is not easy in that country. She was killed at the weekend by what can only be described as complete and utter cowardice. I believe that her memory will live on and many people who knew her will keep making the case for human rights and civil rights in that country, which so badly needs them.

[Stewart Malcolm McDonald]

Elena Grigorieva was also a great believer in Ukrainian sovereignty. She was a great opponent of President Putin's behaviour in Ukraine, not least the illegal annexation of Crimea and the illegal terrorist activities he continues to fund and co-ordinate in east Ukraine. As we have a new UK Government and all the disaster that undoubtedly will flow—I hear the word “Opportunity” from the Treasury Bench; I am sure those on the Government Benches disagree with me—I appeal to Members not to forget Ukraine, because it has to fight every single day for its independence and its sovereignty. It has just entered uncharted political territory. An entirely new Parliament was elected earlier this week. The governing party, under President Zelensky, managed to achieve a majority for the first time since independence in 1991. It should also be noted that it has elected its first ever ethnic minority Member of Parliament in the country's history. That is a bit like the Scottish National party in 2011, which achieved a majority in our country for the first time and elected the first ever ethnic minority Member of the Scottish Parliament.

Ukraine requires our support and I encourage the fraternal support of Members of this House through the all-party group on Ukraine. It is undoubtedly a testing ground for the hybrid war that is creeping and crawling more and more into western democracies, including our own. It is incumbent on all of us to understand that; it is not enough to stand up and thump one's chest about how terrible President Putin is and say all the right things that you read in *The Times* that morning. We must also understand what that interference might look like in the form of Russian oligarchs and their money in this country. This week, the United States House of Representatives announced that it will be looking into the use of Russian oligarch money in UK political parties. That is a damned sight more than what is happening in this Parliament. We will be letting the electorate down if we do not grapple with that issue after the recess.

Finally, I say to you, Mr Deputy Speaker, and to all the staff of the House, all the Members here present, and those who are already enjoying their gin and tonics on the train or on the terrace, I hope they enjoy the summer.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Lindsay Hoyle): There are certainly no gin and tonics in this Chamber, may I add.

3.29 pm

John Woodcock (Barrow and Furness) (Ind): What a pleasure it is to follow such a compelling speech from the hon. Member for Glasgow South (Stewart Malcolm McDonald). It is to his great credit and of great use to the House that he raised the issues that he did. The plight of Ukraine is too often forgotten about entirely or put to one side by the whole of the west, and this Chamber no less. He is absolutely right to raise the highly suspicious death of Elena Grigorieva. The brutality of the way that she was clearly targeted speaks volumes about the threat to those who are prepared to speak up in Russia and the danger that they put themselves in by speaking up for human rights or by opposing Putin's

regime. We must do more in this Chamber and in this country to oppose the lawlessness and dictatorial nature of that regime.

In this final debate before recess, I want to raise very serious concerns about the current conduct of my hospital trust, the University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust. Many Members will unfortunately be familiar with the way that the trust was engulfed in a scandal regarding maternity and neonatal deaths over a number of years and with the incredibly difficult process of drawing the culture in Morecambe Bay from being one of the suppression of the truth—of closing ranks around practitioners—into openness. The effort to do that had to be led by grieving families, in the main.

The Kirkup report in 2015 was groundbreaking and had the full support of the former Health Secretary, the right hon. Member for South West Surrey (Mr Hunt), who is now returning to the Back Benches. It drove forward patient safety and transparency right across the NHS, so it is of huge concern that very serious concerns and allegations are now surfacing about the neurology department in Morecambe Bay and about the way that, it seems, the trust is treating a man who was a very highly respected consultant for many years within that department. He felt forced to retire a number of years ago and this week, he published a book, “Whistle in the Wind: Life, death, detriment and dismissal in the NHS—A Whistle-blower's Story”. I urge the Minister to get word to the Health Secretary to instruct his officials to read that and perhaps to look at it personally. The author makes deeply alarming allegations of malpractice over several years, a number of which concern consultants who are still working in that department. He details a process where he was, in his view, singled out over a period of 10 years, accused anonymously of racism and felt forced to leave the trust.

It is right that these allegations are treated fairly and without prejudice to either side, but what is not right is the way that the trust is seemingly not learning the lessons of transparency. It is refusing FOI requests made by our brilliant local newspaper, which has led the way on this matter. We all owe a debt of thanks to Amy Fenton, a reporter who is just not taking no for an answer. She is being told time and again that she cannot have information from the trust. The Health Secretary must look at this, and I hope that he will come back to us when the House comes back in September.

3.34 pm

Mr Paul Sweeney (Glasgow North East) (Lab/Co-op): It is a pleasure to follow so many thoughtful and interesting speeches on all aspects of public service in our constituencies and further afield. Bringing matters of concern before the House, and considering their further debate in the House, is the best expression of public service.

There are matters of urgency that often do not get a hearing in this House, so it is particularly pleasing that I have been fortunate enough, in the past two days, to ask two successive Prime Ministers within 24 hours whether they would commit to saving the Caley railway works in Springburn. Unfortunately, I had a fob-off response from both. It is absolutely shameful that this Government have not offered to make any constructive or proactive effort on this issue. The hon. Member for Boston and

Skegness (Matt Warman) mouths “It’s devolved” from the Treasury Bench; let me point out the nuances of the devolved arrangements.

There is an ongoing effort to market the site to international investors. That could involve the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, but interestingly BEIS does not wish to engage in that effort, or to collaborate with the Scottish Government. I condemn the Scottish Government for their inaction, which is for entirely different reasons, but the UK Government could certainly add their efforts to a combined, collaborative approach. I am dismayed that the Prime Minister and his predecessor had neither the wit nor the tact to offer that to the campaign. It would become anyone who aspires to lead the country to seek to work in collaboration with all parts of all Administrations across the United Kingdom to achieve this objective.

Stephen Kerr: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the best strategy for preserving the Union would be to banish “devolve and forget” for good?

Mr Sweeney: I could not agree more, to put it succinctly.

There needs to be much more effort to collaborate across Governments. Where different aspects of problems can be solved at different levels of government, that ought to be discussed collaboratively and efficiently, rather than people simply mouthing “It’s devolved” and abrogating any sort of responsibility. That is not acceptable, frankly.

In Springburn, there is a long-standing tradition of railway engineering excellence that goes back to the dawn of the railway age. It is the railway metropolis of Scotland. It once exported half the world’s locomotives to all parts of the world. People look at the Finnieston crane in Glasgow—that great icon of the city’s skyline—and think it is to do with shipbuilding, but it was entirely to do with taking locomotives down to the docks to load them on ships and export them all around the world. I had the idea of bringing one of the old locomotives back to the Caley works and restoring it to working condition. Unfortunately, the Scottish Government did not entertain that solution.

In the next few days, we hope to have a meeting with the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity in Scotland, but of course, that will be closing the door after the workers have left, which is a great shame. We need to come around rapidly and create a cross-governmental taskforce at UK and Scottish Government level to reopen the Caley railway works quickly. I hope to work constructively, and in a spirit of collaboration, with all Governments in all parts of the UK to achieve that objective. I hope that Members on the SNP and Government Benches here are receptive to that.

That is just one example of how we can bring a local issue to national prominence through agitating here for a solution. Hopefully that nuanced expression of what could be done has been heard by those on the Treasury Bench. We can look forward to correspondence on this in the next few days, and hopefully can pull together a plan to save the works and restore them to production as quickly as possible.

There are many other wonderful aspects of my community, which is why I am so proud to represent it in Parliament. Often, there is innovation in the face of

adversity; I think many Labour Members could reflect on the same theme. In the wake of a decade of austerity, many people are rising to the challenge of trying to help their community. Public services have been extracted, statutory responsibilities have been reduced, and there has been further erosion of the public realm and public service, which is a great shame, but the situation has also brought out the best in people and brought about great innovation. There is an opportunity for the Government to identify where people on the ground are innovating and doing very well indeed in offering really productive and efficient services to their community. We can perhaps think of those services as benchmarks and templates that could be scaled up to national level.

We could look more effectively at what is done very well locally. I have a couple of examples. I recently worked in the constituency with a local community activist, Susan Wilson, who is a local community champion in Tesco’s by day, and does a lot of other voluntary work outside that. She is a real dynamo in the community. She works with the Allotment Angels in Reidvale. That is part of the Include Me 2 Club, a fantastic charity that helps adults with additional support needs and disabilities. It helps many local people, including people from sheltered housing and a homeless man who, as a result of his voluntary work on the allotment, was recently able to find a job building a wonderful community garden. That is a real exemplar of fantastic community innovation in the face of adversity.

Chris Stephens (Glasgow South West) (SNP): Will the hon. Gentleman also congratulate Susan Wilson’s mother, Jan O’Neil, who has done some great charity work, including raising £99,000 for the ACCORD hospice? That is celebrated in an early-day motion that has been launched today.

Mr Sweeney: I welcome those sentiments and commend the family, who are certainly a tour de force. Susan’s mother was also able to attend the recent garden party, which she thoroughly enjoyed. It was a fantastic opportunity. I hope that the hon. Gentleman and I can both welcome them to the House of Commons in the near future to celebrate their great success in the community. That is just one example of the fantastic and inspiring work that we often discover as Members of Parliament—having lived in an area our whole lives, we then discover so many wonderful hidden nuggets of excellence that we would never previously have thought existed.

Another such example is Glasgow’s No. 1 Baby and Family Support Service, which sprang up in response to much of the poverty that young parents find themselves in as a result of the benefit cuts and sanctions that we have seen the Government implement in the transition to universal credit. It is looking at setting up community baby banks so that necessary equipment and facilities can be made available. People can then come and access vital supplies, such as nappies, and even share prams. Those are expensive items that are only really needed for a temporary period, so it makes total sense to exchange them. It is a wonderful service that has been developed there, and I often wonder why on earth we do not invest in making it a national system. It would be much more efficient and environmentally friendly. We should be looking to our communities for examples of excellence that can then be turned into Government

[Mr Sweeney]

policy. Those are just some of the wonderful ideas that I see sprouting up. Often adversity and necessity are the mother of invention, and I think that we should learn from that in the midst of our communities.

This has been a wonderful opportunity, not much longer than two years since making my maiden speech, to bring these great examples of community resilience to the Floor of the House of Commons. I intend to keep working as hard as I can to help my constituents in the face of adversity, such as the closure of the Caley, and to promote the excellent ideas that are carried out within the community. Hopefully we can do a little bit, as MPs, to improve lives and improve our country one step at a time.

3.42 pm

Stephen Timms (East Ham) (Lab): I am pleased to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow North East (Mr Sweeney), and I commend the work that he has described, not least his campaign to save the Springburn works.

Years ago, as a Minister in the Treasury and the then Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform, I played my part in encouraging universities to commercialise their superb research outcomes. I think that was the right thing to do, but there is growing evidence that in some very prestigious institutions that approach can go badly wrong.

My constituent Sunil Purushothaman qualified as a doctor at Guy's Hospital in 1998 and worked as a doctor for two years. Fascinated since childhood by electronics, he was very interested in its medical applications, so in 2000 he started a PhD at Imperial College, supervised by Professor Christofer Toumazou, who is now regius professor of engineering at Imperial. My constituent came up with the idea of using a common electronic device for DNA testing. Professor Toumazou thought it was a good idea but told my constituent that in order to obtain a PhD under his supervision, under the terms of what he called a "pipeline agreement" that he had with Imperial College, my constituent would have to write a patent for the new idea and to vest it in Professor Toumazou's company.

My constituent has since discovered that there was no such pipeline agreement and that obtaining a PhD did not require him to write a patent application, still less to vest it in Professor Toumazou's company. However, he felt that he had to do as he had been told, and so he did. Initially his idea was just a vague idea, but it proved to be a very good one and in 2004 he demonstrated it successfully. The demands of delivering it were immense, and it took Mr Purushothaman six very stressful and demanding years. He obtained his PhD in 2006.

In August 2003, Professor Toumazou arranged the establishment of a company, Suniseq Ltd, subsequently DNA Electronics, to commercialise my constituent's idea. Professor Toumazou instructed him to raise investment of £50,000 to buy the rights to his patent from Toumaz Technology. A third of the shares in DNA Electronics were vested in Mr Purushothaman.

On completing his PhD, Mr Purushothaman finally left Imperial in March 2006. He was due to start GP training a few months later, but instead, tragically, he suffered a nervous breakdown brought on by the strain

at Imperial. He was unable to work at all for over 10 years. He continued to receive demands from DNA Electronics, addressed to him as shareholder, adding to the pressure he was under. So in 2010 he handed all his shares over to the company, receiving no payment at all for them, and he agreed to have his name taken off a European patent of his work, leaving Professor Toumazou as apparently the main author. My constituent was in fact the sole author of that work.

Mr Purushothaman's invention achieved immense commercial success, which continues, for DNA Electronics, and great wealth and numerous awards and honours for Professor Toumazou. My constituent has had no benefit from his invention at all. Robbed of a promising career, he has endured over a decade of hardship.

The central problem was that Imperial College's intellectual property policy specifies, rightly, that any IP created by its students should be vested in the first instance in the college. In the case of Mr Purushothaman's invention, that never happened; it was vested instead in Professor Toumazou's company. That should never have happened.

I have been writing to the provost of Imperial about this for over four years, but he has never been willing to meet to discuss it. Professor Toumazou's behaviour has been a disgrace, but has led to him being showered with wealth and honours. And I am sorry to say that Imperial has facilitated a shameful cover-up.

Anyone planning pioneering scientific work, even at an institution as reputable as Imperial, needs to be aware of what can go wrong. Students' IP should be protected. A change in the law, in my view, is going to be needed.

3.47 pm

Lloyd Russell-Moyle (Brighton, Kemptown) (Lab/Co-op): I rise today to talk about the academisation of two schools in my constituency: Moulsecoomb primary school and Peacehaven community school. They are at opposite ends of my constituency and in different local authorities, one Labour-controlled, one Conservative-controlled.

Moulsecoomb primary school has had a total funding cut of £388,000, equivalent to £595 per pupil, since 2015, and in the last 12 months it has lost 11 staff, predominantly support staff. Moulsecoomb primary school is in an area of multiple deprivation and has risen to many challenges, including having great expertise in special educational needs provision, but unfortunately it does not fit into the Ofsted checkboxes.

Two years ago, the Ofsted inspectors came and rated the school "requires improvement", so with the Labour-led local authority, the local community and the fantastic new head we went to work implementing all the Ofsted recommendations. I can say that, its performance in terms of almost all the indicators and results has improved, and all the recommendations of that previous Ofsted report have been implemented. But when Ofsted inspectors returned a few months ago, they rated it "inadequate" because for some reason it did not fulfil their new box-ticking exercise; the goalposts had been moved and the school now has an enforced academisation order. I have a message to those Ofsted inspectors that went to Moulsecoomb: "Frankly, I think you were inadequate and I think you should go back and reinspect—not you individuals; we should get a new bunch to come instead."

This academisation is opposed by all groups on the council in Brighton and Hove—the Labour administration, supported by the Greens, and the Conservative opposition—so this is not a party political issue; this is an issue of justice and fairness, of which Moulseccomb school has been robbed.

Peacehaven community school has had an even greater crippling cut: £1.2 million, equating to £627 per student. This is a school that we opened up in 2001 after a long campaign by my predecessor—my Labour predecessor, I might add—and the community. When I went to school, we were shipped over 10 miles up the road to the local secondary school, Priory School. Now, having a local secondary school in the community is so important. This school's Ofsted rating is still "good", but the county has used a devious device. Because the results dipped for one year, it has put forward an interim executive board. It abolished the governing body without consulting the parents or the co-operative trust that owned the school. The co-operative trust is opposing the academisation that is now being forced upon it by the county.

Since the executive board has taken control, we have had five headteachers in five years and results have worsened, rather than improved. Swale Academy Trust, which has of course supported the executive board, has set the framework to enable it to take over the trust. It has bullied the trust board to a stage at which it is threatening legal action against a legitimate trust that is holding out because it wants to consult the parents. This kind of academisation is totally wrong, and it is happening because East Sussex County Council is running a bare-bones statutory budget. The Conservative-led council is now doing only the minimum under the law, and it is unable to support the schools in that local area that it needs to support. We have garnered support from other local secondary schools that will support Peacehaven in its improvement and transition, but nothing has happened and we are not listened to. The staff have resorted to balloting on a strike, and I am supporting the National Education Union and the GMB in those actions.

I beg Ofsted to come back and re-evaluate Moulseccomb Primary School and I beg the Secretary of State to rescind the order or at least allow a parent ballot on the issue. In regard to Peacehaven Community School, I beg East Sussex County Council to stop its love-in with Swale, which has failed the school, and to allow the school to be returned to the community where it belongs. The reality is that the academy programme is a failed programme set up by a previous Government, and we now need to reverse them all.

3.52 pm

Wes Streeting (Ilford North) (Lab): Our new Prime Minister urges us to embrace a spirit of optimism, so I am going to meet him in that challenge as chair of the all-party parliamentary group on taxis. I have good news for the Government, who lack a majority and find it difficult to legislate: this is one area where they would find cross-party support if only they would bring forward the Bill we have been waiting for. When I was first elected as the Member for Ilford North in 2015, we set up the all-party parliamentary group on taxis because it was clear to those of us who represent significant numbers of London taxi drivers and licensed private hire drivers

that there is a wild west in the regulation of the taxi and private hire industry. It allows unfair and anti-competitive practices, and also puts passenger safety at risk.

We embarked on a programme of consultation and engagement with stakeholders right across the industry in order to come up with our report on the future of the taxi and private hire industry, which made a compelling case for reform. It was so compelling that, although the Department for Transport itself did not quite embrace the report, it was at least persuaded to commission its own report. An independent committee led by Mohammed Abdel-Haq, a great guy, produced a thorough and comprehensive report that said pretty much exactly what our report had said. So a cross-party report has made the case for reform and the Department for Transport is also making the case for reform—a case that was accepted by the now former Secretary of State for Transport and two successive Ministers, the right hon. Member for South Holland and The Deepings (Sir John Hayes) and the Under-Secretary of State for Transport, the hon. Member for Wealden (Ms Ghani)—yet we still have no legislation.

So, in the spirit of this debate and in the spirit of optimism our Prime Minister tells us to embrace, I am optimistic that my speech will be heard by those on the Treasury Bench and that we will see legislation in the autumn. More than 1,000 of my constituents and their families are looking to the Government to act and I will be relentlessly on their case after the summer. I am afraid, though, that that is where my optimism about our new Prime Minister ends.

Let no one imagine that the heat has gone to my head and I am now persuaded that our new Prime Minister is ready to take our country forward in the way that he suggests. He urges us to judge him on his record. Well, that is what my right hon. Friend the Member for Warley (John Spellar) might describe as a target-rich environment.

I am afraid that the record of the Prime Minister as Mayor of London is not one to be proud of: millions of pounds wasted on a garden bridge that was never built; millions of pounds wasted on a cable car with no passengers; huge amounts of taxpayer money wasted on a vanity project, Boris island airport, which never even made it past the artistic licensing phase; the water cannon that he purchased but was never able to use; the fact that crime, including violent crime, rose before he left office; the ticket office closures; the bluff, bluster and bombast, which we saw so heartily represented at the Dispatch Box today; and a carelessness and lack of attention to detail, which have left a British citizen languishing in an Iranian prison, not because—let us not make excuses for the Iranians—the actions of the previous Prime Minister's Foreign Secretary led to her detention, but because this Prime Minister, through his careless disregard for briefing and his careless use of language, aided and abetted the Iranian Government in making her suffering and the injustice she is experiencing last that much longer. It is totally appalling.

I am afraid that optimism is no substitute for a plan. In the unlikely event that the Prime Minister were minded to keep his pledge to lay in front of the bulldozer at Heathrow airport, I would be the first to volunteer to drive it. I am afraid that in the Prime Minister and in what we heard from the Dispatch Box today there is no plan for our country. In fact, the spending commitments

[*Wes Streeting*]

he made on schools, health and so many other areas of public policy were not about a vision for the future; they were an admission of nine years of failure—school cuts, NHS cuts, police cuts, and every single one imposed by the party he leads and most of which he voted for once he was elected to this place.

We will judge this Prime Minister on his record. It is not a record to be proud of. It does not inspire confidence in his ability to lead our country. It is not a change of Prime Minister that we need; it is a change of Government.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): I am delighted to hear the hon. Gentleman speak so well for the all-party parliamentary group on taxis.

3.57 pm

Jim Fitzpatrick (Poplar and Limehouse) (Lab): I am delighted to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford North (Wes Streeting), for whom I have so much respect.

I want to raise several issues briefly. The first is electric scooters. There is a Transport for London/Greater London Authority consultation on these illegal items. The Paris Mayor recently tightened regulations, not only because these scooters have been littering the streets of that great European city, as well as others which have licensed them—we see the same happening in London now, with more cycle hires available—but because in Paris they have killed five people and seriously injured more than 300, according to reports. We saw our own tragic first casualty recently in London.

The police, unsurprisingly, are not making this a priority. We need more clarity, and extending a licence to such scooters would be regrettable. The penalty for using e-scooters on land other than private land is a £300 fine and six points on a licence. For drivers who have recently passed their test, a six-point penalty means a driving ban, which means they have to pass their test again. That needs more publicity.

On leasehold, the hon. Member for Worthing West (Sir Peter Bottomley), co-chair of the all-party group on leasehold reform, got a positive answer from the new Prime Minister earlier. We have a full programme of Government promises on ground rents, the right to manage, the ban on leasehold houses being sold, service charge and refurbishment cost protection, banning events fees and introducing commonhold. The previous Secretary of State engaged the Law Commission and the Competition and Markets Authority, and we await the Best report, which is due out at the end of this month. Hopefully, we will see the first legislation soon.

On connected matters, the hon. Member for Southend West (Sir David Amess), who opened the debate, covered cladding and sprinklers. On the Government's £200 million, which they have made available to the private sector, questions are still being asked about how to apply for the money, when it will be available and who will be able to access it. An update on progress with that, as well as on the failed non-ACM cladding which is being tested this summer by the Government, would be very welcome.

On ombudsman issues, recently I had an Adjournment debate on the accountability of housing associations. I raised the lack of clarity about the role of the local government and social care ombudsman and the housing

ombudsman in holding housing associations to account. This week, I had a very good meeting with Mr Michael King, the chair and ombudsman at the local government and social care ombudsman organisation. I am grateful to him for clarifying the position for me.

Mr King advised me that the Government had introduced an ombudsman Bill in 2016, which would have merged some of the ombudsman services, but that it was a casualty of the 2016 referendum and the 2017 general election. Since then, Wales and Northern Ireland have gone down that route. Indeed, they have gone further and included the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman in the same service. I would be grateful if the Leader of the House's office could advise me whether the Bill might reappear at some point to streamline and strengthen ombudsman services, which hold to account so many public services and servants in England on the public's behalf.

In the past two weeks, we have seen the refreshed road safety statement, which is very welcome. However, it has initiated another two-year study on a graduated licensing scheme and targets to reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured on our roads, which inevitably means more delays in making progress on those issues.

On deaf issues, news on the British Sign Language GCSE has gone quiet, which I hope means that work is being undertaken. We are still awaiting an outcome on deaf access to NHS services, bursaries for teachers of the deaf and other issues.

We also await an outcome on better support from the Department for International Development for small charities in the UK that are doing such great work across the world.

Following the Prime Minister's statement, I look forward to more support for my local authority, Tower Hamlets, and our local schools, which are both suffering from years of severe cuts, and to the extra police officers to address antisocial behaviour, although I am not hugely optimistic that we will get all that.

As a Labour MP, I want to say that I am embarrassed and ashamed at my party's response to the antisemitism allegations against us. I do not think we will get past this until the Equality and Human Rights Commission inquiry reports.

Finally, we know that we are not going on holiday for six weeks—it is the summer recess. One colleague in this debate last year finished her speech by saying "Happy holidays," which was not entirely helpful. I wish everybody associated with the Palace, including all colleagues, a decent break during the summer recess.

4.2 pm

Lyn Brown (West Ham) (Lab): I usually use this debate to talk about very local issues. Today I want to deviate a little, because many of my constituents have written to me about their concerns for people who live elsewhere in the world and their fear that our voice might be silenced or muted because of Brexit and our pursuit of trade deals.

My constituents have pointed out Trump's obsession with walls and putting children in cages, and his insidious support for the damaging and highly dangerous great replacement conspiracy theory. They asked, "What did we do in response?" Well, we gave him a state visit.

There are concerns about other powerful countries too, like China. As we know, more than a million men, women and children are in detention camps, based on their ethnicity and their Muslim faith. Families have been torn apart by the state, children from their parents. Credible reports say that detainees are forced to swear oaths of allegiance, renounce their religion and learn Mandarin in place of their mother tongue. Some reports even talk of summary execution and the harvesting of organs.

Our Government have recognised that human rights abuses are happening today on a huge, almost unimaginable scale. Uyghur Muslims fear a genocide. Why have we not taken targeted steps? Frankly, we do not need more words. It is clearly a business. We could identify those who develop racist software to identify the targets. We could identify those who are building the camps. We could refuse them contracts with the UK, couldn't we? We could speak up much more strongly about Hong Kong as well, couldn't we? We could address the increasing fear of Hong Kongers that their free society is just slipping away. We could help—but we have not, and I fear that we will not because China might move away from free trade, and we need that free trade now as a substitute for what we are losing.

I fear that it is the same with Modi's Government. On 17 June, when the new Indian Parliament was being sworn in, members of the ruling party chanted the Hindu nationalist slogan "Jai Sri Ram" whenever a Muslim representative stood up to take their oath. It was an attempt to intimidate and delegitimise those elected representatives based on their religion. Those words could simply be an expression of faith, but they have been twisted into something horrifying.

Since then, there have been repeated Islamophobic attacks, accompanied by that same chant. On 22 June, Tabrez Ansari was tied to a pole, beaten and abused by a crowd in the open. He cried and begged for mercy. After the crowd were done with Tabrez—after they had forced him to repeat their slogan and taken yet another step to erase his difference—the police took him into custody. Reportedly, he was refused medical help. His family members were threatened with similar beatings and not permitted even to see him until, four days later, he died of his injuries. There have been many further attacks. A Hindu video is being shared, with the lyric:

"Whoever doesn't say Jai Sri Ram, send him to the graveyard."

Frankly, that is the language of genocide.

As hon. Members will know, I could go on. I wanted to talk about Bolsonaro's Brazil, Saudi Arabia and our arms deals as well. To be entirely honest, it seems to me that FCO Ministers, many of whom I deeply respect, have raised human rights issues in terms just vague enough not to cause trouble. What is our role in this new world if we swallow our words and turn away when we see persecution escalating, risk to lives and liberty, and possible genocide on the horizon? How will this new Government show us that they are not cowards, they are not distracted and they are not restricted because of Brexit?

4.7 pm

Anneliese Dodds (Oxford East) (Lab/Co-op): It is always a pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member for West Ham (Lyn Brown). I was very disturbed to

hear about the testimony that she mentioned, but equally I am pleased that she has voiced it in this House. I am sure that everyone heard it and was appalled by the details.

I rise to speak today because the House declared a climate emergency on 1 May. If anything, that emergency has become ever more evident over recent days. While we have been in this House, outside in our country the temperatures reached a record-breaking 39°. I pay tribute to all those emergency services who have been helping people to deal with the heatwave. They have been active in Paris as well, which has just itself reached a new record of 41°. In the Netherlands and Belgium, national records for temperature have already been broken this year.

In fact, over the last 19 years, five new records have been broken for summer temperature in Europe, going back to 1500. Think about that: the five hottest summers in Europe since 1500 have occurred just in the past 19 years. But my constituents tell me that what we have experienced here in Europe is as nothing compared with the experience of many of their families in the global south. Two years ago, people living in the Punjab had to put up with temperatures of 52°. Farmers in Jamaica have been experiencing drought after drought after drought, and children living in Bangladesh are becoming more malnourished as extreme weather event follows extreme weather event.

Just yesterday, three scientific studies were published that showed that the temperature changes we are currently experiencing are happening faster and more intensively than at any point over the past 2,000 years. What has been our response? Well, Parliament is about to adjourn. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Poplar and Limehouse (Jim Fitzpatrick) that we will still be working, but Parliament will not be sitting. In any case, since 1 May it has felt like business as usual.

I have talked to lots of children and young people in my constituency about the climate crisis. In fact, many of them have come to speak to me during mass lobbies on the topic in this place. I know how concerned many of them are about the crisis; in fact, many of them at local schools have been producing posters with their views about the environmental crisis. I find it heartbreaking to see their images of the climate breakdown—of what they think it will be like if we do not act—but I am inspired by their passion and determination to do something about it.

Those children and young people, and their parents, have been asking me to ask questions in this place on their behalf. Those questions include things like: why are we still building homes in this country that are not zero carbon? Why are we spending only 2% of our transport budget on cycling and walking? Why is part of our aid budget still going towards supporting fossil fuel-based technologies in the global south? Why have we seen feed-in tariffs abolished and a block on onshore wind? Why are we denying our country the benefits of the 400,000 extra jobs that would come from a green new deal?

When we return to Parliament, I hope it will not be to the chaos of an impending no-deal Brexit, but even more fundamentally it must not be a return to business as usual. When we come back at the beginning of September, it must be to a legislative programme that meets the aspirations of those children and young people

[Anneliese Dodds]

and their parents, that faces up to the climate crisis, and that actually embodies the meaning of the term “emergency”: a situation that demands an immediate response.

4.11 pm

Rachael Maskell (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): It is an honour to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford East (Anneliese Dodds) on the issue of the climate emergency. A climate emergency is not a headline to hide behind; it is a call for action. After the hyperbole we heard earlier today, I fear the lack of detail and strategy to address the really important issues that face us as a nation at this time. In fact, I found the whole experience this morning chilling in respect of the direction our country is going in.

It is not about a performance, as Government Members highlighted, but about solving the real crises that we face in our country at this time. That is why I turn to the issue of jobs in my constituency. We are at a crossroads in York. Unless we get things right, the future generation in my constituency will not have the opportunities that past generations have had. We have been so fortunate that, throughout the decades and the centuries, York has been a place of good employment. We know from the evidence in Jorvik that back in the Viking days York was a centre of trade. Throughout the Anglo-Saxon years York was a real nucleus for the people who came to our city. We are about to do the biggest excavation in the country, that of Roman Eboracum, to look into the history of our city, knowing its importance back in those days. In the medieval period, York was, after London and Norwich, the third largest city, with trade again at its heart. The railway industry brought high-quality jobs to York. The chocolate industry employed 18,000 people at its peak and served the world.

Today, York is marked by so many insecure, low-paid jobs, particularly for women and for the women who work part time in our city. York has one of the lowest-waged employment offers for people, including in the hospitality and retail sector that dominates our city. I stand here today because I want to see good inward investment in our city. Shamefully, the local council and the Government are not calling in the decision on the York Central partnership, with the opportunity having been put on hold.

In the HS2 debate the other day, I heard of the opportunities that the project is bringing to my colleagues in Birmingham: 33,000 jobs at Curzon Street station alone; and 77,000 jobs at the Birmingham Interchange. York Central sits on the route of HS2, the east coast main line, the trans-Pennine route and cross-country routes. It will be a major transport infrastructure interchange in the north, and yet the planning is for only 6,500 jobs, most of which will be consolidating jobs that already exist in our city.

We have the biggest brownfield site development opportunity in the whole of Europe. It covers 400,000 square metres, only a fifth of which will be dedicated to an enterprise zone. This is about shutting off the opportunities for inward investment in the growth areas of our city, such as the biotech industry, the railway industry and digital railway for the future. There is also the digital, media and creative sectors, in which York University is a

lead player. It is vital that we lift the aspirations of young people in our city so that they can see the opportunities that are there for them, instead of shutting off the inward investment that our city urgently and desperately needs.

Some 2,500 homes will be built on that brownfield site. To buy one of those homes will cost between 11 and 19 times somebody’s wage. For the people in my city, that is completely unaffordable, so we know that those homes will be bought by outside investors and by people who will use them as second homes because York is such a lovely place in which to live—I have already described its history. But York must be about the local people and about giving them the very opportunities that their predecessors have had in our city.

There is so much to attract people to our city, but unless we get the infrastructure right, make the right decisions on the economy and create jobs for local people, our city will remain out of kilter and one of the most inequitable cities in the United Kingdom. My plea to Government is to pause planning decisions and put the economic opportunities of our local communities at the heart of every planning decision, so that we can rebuild our country for the people that it is there to serve.

4.16 pm

Siobhain McDonagh (Mitcham and Morden) (Lab): It is a true pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member for York Central (Rachael Maskell), who spoke so passionately and knowledgeably about her constituency. In my contribution, I wish to highlight two incredibly important services both for my constituency and for the wider area.

The National School Breakfast Programme provides free breakfasts to 1,775 schools in our country, feeding 280,000 children each school day. I am lucky enough to have 10 schools in my constituency in the scheme: Bond; Lonesome; Liberty; St Marks; William Morris; St Peter and Paul’s; Cricket Green; St Thomas of Canterbury; Melrose and the SMART Centre. Some 1,530 children benefit from this scheme each day in Mitcham and Morden, but thousands of others also benefit. An independent study suggests that every child in a school on the scheme gets two months’ extra learning in reading and maths. Not only are the children fed, which helps them to concentrate, but their behaviour, their punctuality and their attendance improves. Mrs Kennedy, headteacher at St Marks Primary School, says:

“We cannot imagine being without this initiative, having seen the impact it has on our pupils, their energy levels and consequently their ability to access morning lessons. We often have a number of pupils in our school who have no recourse to public funds as well as those who qualify for pupil premium and having something to eat in the morning has really made a difference. We’ve also seen a significant improvement in punctuality as well as overall attendance.”

This scheme is paid for from the sugar tax. There is currently £123 million of sugar tax money at the Treasury waiting to be spent. This scheme ends in March 2020. Would it not make so much sense to allocate some of the money that is already there to extend this brilliant scheme?

Shooting Star Chase children’s hospice is a hospice for babies, children and young adults with life-limiting conditions that works throughout the county of Surrey

and 15 London boroughs. A few weeks ago I received a letter suggesting that the hospice would have to halve the number of families in my constituency who received respite care. I put the letter away and woke up in the middle of the night thinking, “How? Surely this is an easy thing to raise money for.” There are brilliant local people and businesses in my constituency who raise money for this hospice, including Paul and Irene Strank at Paul Strank Roofing. Even Simon Cowell raises money for Shooting Star. However, it will still have to halve the number of families who get respite support. That is because demand has increased by 38% this year alone. Costs are also up due to good things such as Agenda for Change, so more money has to be spent on staff.

The hospice is having a problem fundraising. Businesses do not want to commit to funding due to Brexit, and personal giving is down. The hospice needs £11 million a year, with only £690,000—or 5%—coming from the NHS. Adult hospices get around 30% of their funding from the NHS. Shooting Star has been spending its reserves year on year, and this is crunch year. It has had to deny 250 families access to respite care from November, and it has had to limit the children it can care for to those with a prognosis of 12 to 18 months; and that is happening right now.

Mr Jonathan Lord (Woking) (Con): I am grateful to the hon. Lady for making an excellent speech. I had a meeting with the chief executive officer of Shooting Star within the last few days. The situation is urgent and important. If the Government cannot give the money, surely all the clinical commissioning groups in the area could give £100,000 or a couple of hundred thousand pounds to put this charity back where it belongs, serving the young children of our counties.

Siobhain McDonagh: As the hon. Gentleman will be aware, although I am highlighting and he has met with Shooting Star, funding is an issue for all children’s hospices. The only way in which those 250 families can get the respite care they need from the hospice is by receiving £400,000 from the £14 million that the NHS has identified for children’s hospices in 2023-24. I regret to say that these children will be long passed by that date.

This is not money that is going to be saved by the Government or the taxpayer if we do not give it to the hospice, because the next port of call for these 250 families will be the CCGs or our hard-pressed local authorities’ social services departments. These families need respite in order to care for their children, and they will get it from somewhere. The Government’s choice and our choice can be to use Shooting Star Chase to get great care at a subsidised cost, or it can be to put more pressure on more public services and spend more taxpayers’ money on poorer quality care.

4.23 pm

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): It is always a pleasure to speak in this debate before the forthcoming adjournment or in any Adjournment debate, but that is just by the way. I thank Mr Speaker for setting time aside for this debate, which means that I can discuss an issue that is very close to my heart: the worth of the land and its value to society.

I live on a farm, and rent out acreage to neighbours and working farmers. I am proud of the land that I inherited from my father and will pass on to my sons and grandchildren. I am also an Ulster Scot and I am very fond of the Ulster Scots language, culture and history, so I want to quote four lines of an Ulster Scots poem entitled “On Slaimish”:

“Whar nicht-wantherin Orr dreamed yit, for a’
The bitter wakkenin o ninety-echt:
This lan that cried the dreamers bak, for
This is hame.”

No matter how far in the world we may go, or wherever our talents and abilities may take us, for those of us who hail from Ulster one thing will always remain: our hame—our home—is the land.

I have been a member of the Ulster Farmers’ Union for approximately 35 years, and I agree with its assessment of agriculture in Northern Ireland. It has said:

“Agriculture is one of Northern Ireland’s most important industries. As a whole, the agri-food industry turns over more than £4.5 billion every year and supports one in eight jobs in the UK, making it a cornerstone of Northern Ireland’s economy and farmers play a key role in this. Currently, there are over 25,000 farm businesses in Northern Ireland producing the wide variety of raw materials needed by processors and retailers to meet the demands of consumers. Farming in Northern Ireland is not just a job but it is a way of life and we are extremely proud of our family farming structure. Rural communities here are extremely close knit and farmers and farming families are at the heart of these communities. When you compare Northern Ireland to the other UK regions, and in fact the rest Europe, we are definitely a region that punches above its weight when it comes to farming.”

For young farmers, farming is in their blood. While I greatly admire this, I have concern for their future, because the research is very clear. The Farm Safety Foundation suggests that 81% of young farmers believe that mental health issues are the biggest hidden problem facing farmers today. The foundation’s research also shows that a farmer takes his or her life every week across the United Kingdom. A 2012 UK study of psychological morbidity of farmers and their partners and spouses based on 784 face-to-face interviews at agricultural shows found a higher risk of psychiatric disorder compared with non-farmers. There have been other reports across the world. There were interviews with dairy farmers in New Zealand, and in 2015 a national survey of mental health in Canada told us that it is not just a Northern Ireland or a United Kingdom issue and problem but a global one. It is a lonely life, and it is certainly a calling, to be a farmer.

We should appreciate the industry that is the foundation of agrifood, with a turnover of some £4.5 billion in Northern Ireland alone, and the impact that farming has on the wider economy. For every £1 that a farmer puts into the economy, £7.40 is gained, so farming is clearly the engine room of the economy. About 75%, or 1 million hectares, of Northern Ireland’s countryside is farmed in some way. This industry is vital for the Northern Ireland economy, employing more than 3.5% of the total workforce—well above the UK average of 1.2%.

It is my belief that we must—please excuse the pun, Madam Deputy Speaker—plant our support firmly behind the farmers and the farming community. This truly is the lifeblood that runs through my constituency and, further, through the Province as a whole. It is also what helps to sustain the UK. We must be proud of our

[*Jim Shannon*]

land, provide support for those who tend our land, and ensure that we are good stewards of our land through sensible farming. I love seeing the patchwork of fields as I drive into work daily, and I see the fallow fields as a nod to the fact that there must be sensible farming as well. I love seeing the nests in the farmers' hedges flourishing as they encourage biodiversity and plant life. I stand as a proud Ulsterman in this Chamber—proud of my culture and heritage, proud of my belief system, and proud of the land that I so gratefully call “hame”. It is ours in trust for the next generations, and we must be good stewards of it. The decisions in this place must impact on that stewardship. I trust that it will be wise stewardship from here right down to the very soil in my constituency.

I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and your fellow Deputy Speakers, for your kindness, patience and understanding for me in this House—

Mr Lord: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Jim Shannon: Yes, okay.

Mr Lord: I think the hon. Gentleman will find that it might buy him an extra minute. He is a great spokesman for the farmers of Northern Ireland and his constituency. We have enjoyed Westminster Hall debates together, including on this topic. Would he like to take this opportunity to thank the outgoing Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs for all his fantastic work over the past couple of years and to wish our new Secretary of State well in that very important role for all our farming communities?

Jim Shannon: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention and for giving me that wee bit of extra time, but I am very conscious that I want to be fair to everybody else as well. Yes, I would endorse that. I thank the outgoing Minister for all his work and commitment and wish the new one coming in every success and happiness.

I thank the security staff, those in the Tea Room, and all those who are committed to making our jobs and lives here just that wee bit better. I greatly appreciate the opportunity as a Back Bencher to be active in this place. I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I give a big thank you to the people of Strangford for the privilege of being their MP and serving them energetically and consistently in this wonderful seat of democracy, the House of Commons.

4.28 pm

Chris Stephens (Glasgow South West) (SNP): It is always a pleasure to lead from the Front Bench for the SNP on what some people call the debate on the summer Adjournment but others call the whinge-fest. It was led superbly by the hon. Member for Southend West (Sir David Amess). I was pleased that his campaign to make sure that this debate took place was a success. However, it is the first time I have heard him make a speech that did not mention his complaints about the rail service in Southend. Perhaps his campaigning over the years has been a success, because that was notably absent from his address to the House.

I see the Lord Commissioner of Her Majesty's Treasury, the hon. Member for Horsham (Jeremy Quin), in his place. As he may recall, he responded to my maiden speech with his maiden speech four years ago. As he has the responsibility of ending this debate, perhaps he could do so Alice Cooper-style, by declaring that school's out for summer. If he does not, that responsibility should lie with you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I want to make a serious point. As a number of Members have said, for too many of our citizens across these islands, the summer period is not one of joy; it is one of poverty. The Work and Pensions Committee and the Education Committee are conducting a joint inquiry into some of the issues around that. It troubles me to hear that there are supermarkets and stores in the UK that bin school uniforms. This is a one-off cost for many people in our society, and it can be very expensive, because some schools are very selective about where school uniforms can be purchased. It is a concern that some stores are doing that. I will meet some stores in the next few weeks, to ensure that they provide a service to those who are very much in need. I hope that all Members will take that up in our recess.

I want to mention other issues that are the responsibility of the Department for Work and Pensions, the most alarming of which is the figures published by the Independent Age charity on the lack of take-up of pension credit. In Glasgow South West, £9.6 million a year is being lost by people who are entitled to and should claim pension credit. I will be organising some events in my constituency, but I ask those on the Front Bench to engage with the Department for Work and Pensions to see what they can do to ensure that those entitled to pension credit take it up.

A number of Members have raised their concerns about universal credit. I ask the new Government to look positively at the Universal Credit Sanctions (Zero Hours Contracts) Bill. It is incredible that someone on universal credit who gives up a zero-hours contract or decides that it is not for them can be sanctioned, whereas those on legacy benefits would not be. Zero-hours contract work does not suit a lot of people, and it is ridiculous that people can be sanctioned as a result of giving up a zero-hours contract job.

It is time that the Government address the major injustice that affects 1950s-born women in accessing their pensions. I hope that the new Government will look positively at this issue, which has been going on for far too long. I pay tribute to all the campaigners who are looking for pensions justice.

I recall that in last year's summer Adjournment debate I referred to the blond hero who walked out on his female leader. It looks like he has been successful. However, I do not believe he will be too successful if he carries on the way he has in the last 24 hours. We had the “red wedding 2”, or the Cabinet reshuffle. We had the Trumpesque performance this afternoon. There were a lot of questions—129, I think—and no answers.

There are a lot of things that the new Prime Minister needs to sort out, and one of the first is the Home Office's visitor visa situation, which, as the hon. Member for Stafford (Jeremy Lefroy) pointed out, is ludicrous and unjust. The fact that religious workers and clergymen who are trying to come to the UK are being denied a visitor visa is an absolute disgrace.

What is also a disgrace is Home Office contractor Serco in Glasgow trying to evict 300 asylum seekers. Why? Because it is losing the contract at the end of September. Serco thinks it is perfectly reasonable to make 300 asylum seekers homeless and leave the local authority to pick that up. It is a concern of mine that some Members of this House had dinner in this building with those from Serco at a time when 300 asylum seekers could be thrown out on to the streets. I hope the Government will look positively at the Asylum Seekers (Accommodation Eviction Procedures) Bill, which was launched this week, and I hope hon. Members will look positively at signing early-day motion 2636 in that regard.

There has been an absence in the Prime Minister's statements in the last 24 hours about workers' rights and employment rights. That was perhaps no surprise given the industrial action taking place in various Departments at the moment. I hope that he will instruct the new Secretaries of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, as well as Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, to address these industrial disputes, which have been going on too long. It is quite clear that the outsourcing companies really need to be hauled in and told to behave themselves. We have a dispute in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, where it is clear that people have to wait six weeks to be paid their wages—if they were on universal credit, they would be paid quicker. Why is the Department that is responsible for enforcing employment law allowing an agency to try to bust an industrial dispute? I hope the Lord Commissioner will take that up with those Departments.

I want to thank the hon. Member for Stirling (Stephen Kerr), who is no longer in his place, for raising the issue of drugs deaths in Scotland. It really is a shame that no urgent question was taken on this and that there was no Government statement. This is a very serious issue, and one that needs to be debated calmly and maturely. It is a pity that hon. Members have been denied such an opportunity.

I want to thank all the staff, who on many occasions take impertinent questions from me, and I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and the other Deputy Speakers. I also want to pay tribute to a group that has not yet been mentioned, which is our constituency office staff. In my experience the constituency office staff right across these islands are excellent and professional, and they help each other out. I want to pay tribute to the Glasgow South West constituency office staff: Roza Salih, Dominique Ucbas, Anthony McCue, Scott McFarlane, Mary Jane Douglas and Keith Gibb, and I wish a happy retirement to Dr Joe Murray. They have all done a fantastic job in the last year for Glasgow South West constituents.

Mr Lord: Will the hon. Gentleman join me in thanking our citizens advice bureaux for the work they do? I visited Citizens Advice Woking on Monday, and the staff and volunteers there do an absolutely amazing job, which is obviously supplemented by our own office and constituency office staff. As we go off on recess, most of our constituency staff and our citizens advice bureaux will carry on working hard on behalf of our constituents, and we owe them our thanks and support.

Chris Stephens: Yes, and in closing, I thank them too. I do joint surgeries with Citizens Advice, Money Matters and other organisations, and the hon. Gentleman is correct. Over the coming weeks, they have a very important job and responsibility. I want to wish all right hon. and hon. Members a happy recess.

4.38 pm

Cat Smith (Lancaster and Fleetwood) (Lab): It is always a pleasure to speak in the debate on matters to be raised before the summer Adjournment. I welcome the Lord Commissioner of Her Majesty's Treasury, the hon. Member for Horsham (Jeremy Quin), to his new post and to his debut at the Dispatch Box. This is probably one of the nicest debates in which to have the pleasure of making his debut appearance at the Dispatch Box.

Madam Deputy Speaker, you were very clear that I certainly should not go above 10 minutes in my contribution. Given that there have been 25 speakers in this debate, I will not have enough time to do justice to the diversity of the issues that have been raised, so hon. Members will please forgive me for not taking interventions to allow time for the Minister to have his time at the Dispatch Box.

I thank the hon. Member for Southend West (Sir David Amess) for his efforts in securing this debate and for being such a regular attender at such debates. I thoroughly enjoy his contributions in them.

My hon. Friend the Member for Preston (Sir Mark Hendrick) was the first Member to rise to speak on my side of the House, and it was a pleasure to have a fellow Lancashire Member speaking in this debate. At the time, there was also a fellow Lancashire Member in the Chair—the right hon. Member for Chorley (Sir Lindsay Hoyle). I would like to take up the issues my hon. Friend the Member for Preston raised about crime in Lancashire. I know his local councillors are out—day in, day out—especially the newly elected Councillor Pav Akhtar, who is committed to campaigning every day. In reality, Lancashire has lost 754 police officers since 2010—the seventh biggest loss in the country—and I hope that the recent announcement will mean that Lancashire gets a fair deal when we learn where the 20,000 new police officers will go.

The hon. Member for Stafford (Jeremy Lefroy) spoke about the emergency department in his constituency. He might be interested to know that I texted a family member who is one of his constituents, and they completely agreed with his comments on the matter, which have gone down well in his constituency. The hon. Gentleman also spoke about electric vehicle charging points, and I pay tribute to Lancaster City Council for its work on that issue. In the past two months it has opened five new electric vehicle charge points in its car parks, helping people to make that transition.

My hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Nick Smith) spoke about pensions mis-selling, and called on the Government to do more to protect our constituents. The hon. Member for Harrow East (Bob Blackman) spoke about the criminalisation of people for being homeless, and I agree that no one should be criminalised for that. My hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (John Grogan) rattled through a lot of different issues in his short allocation of time, including the three

[Cat Smith]

early-day motions that he has tabled. I agree with his analysis of early-day motion 2649, because if we are to declare a climate emergency, we must at the very least review whether Heathrow expansion is compatible with that. I share my hon. Friend's concerns about the domination of the commercial radio market by Global and Bauer, and the loss of local radio, and I pay tribute to those who work for Beyond Radio and Radio Wave in my constituency. They keep my constituents informed about local issues, and ensure that not all our news is dominated by Liverpool, Manchester or London.

The hon. Member for Congleton (Fiona Bruce), who is no longer in her place, raised the important issue of abused women and the need to protect them from exploitation. She described some interesting proposals concerning important issues, and I know she has much support among Labour Members on such matters. My hon. Friend the Member for North Tyneside (Mary Glindon) noted that every day 80 people die from alcohol abuse, and I support her call for minimum unit pricing. The hon. Member for Moray (Douglas Ross) raised various issues, including the baby bank in his constituency, and I wondered whether he saw the powerful Channel 4 documentary last autumn, which brought that issue to my attention. My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow North East (Mr Sweeney) also mentioned baby banks, and it is a dire state of affairs if this country needs baby banks as well as food banks.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend (Mrs Moon) mentioned child trust funds and dormant accounts that hold money for young people in this country. I call on the Government to do more to help young people to access money that is rightfully theirs and could be truly life-changing. My hon. Friend the Member for Bury South (Mr Lewis) mentioned avoidable deaths due to epilepsy, although he did not mention an issue that I know he cares passionately about: sodium valproate and the effect it has on pregnancies. I pay tribute to his constituent, Emma Murphy, and my constituent, Janet Williams, who are tireless campaigners on that issue. I know that justice for them is not far away.

The hon. Member for Stirling (Stephen Kerr) spoke about the need for more Changing Places facilities, and I pay tribute to Lancashire County Councillor Lizzi Collinge who champions that issue in the red rose county. I know she will continue to campaign on that and many other issues in our local area.

My hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd South (Susan Elan Jones) mentioned the 100th anniversary of the Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund, and I hope that her raising that in the House will help other veterans to find that source of support, as well as inform hon. Members so that we can signpost our constituents towards that help.

The hon. Member for Glasgow South (Stewart Malcolm McDonald) agreed with the hon. Member for Stirling about drugs deaths, and I support their call for a statement on that in the autumn. Indeed, it is in the spirit of these debates to find agreement across the House on many issues.

The hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (John Woodcock) mentioned the University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust, and the book published today by Peter Duffy, a whistleblower who was unfairly dismissed by the trust. I pay tribute to

Peter's work, and hope that the Health Secretary will take an interest in his case. I have previously written to the Secretary of State to ask him to meet Peter Duffy. So far that request has been declined, but I will continue to put on pressure, and perhaps those on the Treasury Bench will pass on that message to the Secretary of State.

My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow North East is a tireless campaigner. He will not be dropping the issue of the Caley, which must be saved. These are vital skills and jobs that should be at the heart of the future of railway engineering in Scotland. I know he will be raising that issue continuously.

My right hon. Friend the Member for East Ham (Stephen Timms) takes up injustices in his constituency and raises them in this place. I certainly agree that student intellectual property should be protected.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Lloyd Russell-Moyle) is not just a champion of youth work, which he raised in this House yesterday, but, as he proved today, of schools in his constituency.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ilford North (Wes Streeting) has campaigned since 2015 on the issue of taxis. As chair of the all-party group on taxis, he produced an excellent piece of work. I hope that legislation will be forthcoming from the Government.

My hon. Friend the Member for Poplar and Limehouse (Jim Fitzpatrick) raised genuine concerns about e-scooters, exploitative leaseholds and cladding on high-rise buildings. I hope they have been heard by those on the Treasury Bench.

My hon. Friend the Member for West Ham (Lyn Brown) usually raises local issues in this debate, but her passion for social justice and human rights went far beyond the boundaries of West Ham today. I hope Foreign and Commonwealth Office Ministers heard her words.

My hon. Friends the Members for Oxford East (Anneliese Dodds) and for York Central (Rachael Maskell) raised the climate emergency. As temperatures have hit 39 degrees, knowing that we have caused great damage to the planet we live on is unavoidable. I call on the Government to take decisive action to meet the climate emergency—ban fracking and invest in renewables by supporting the solar industry and reinvigorating onshore wind, so that we play our role. My hon. Friend the Member for York Central also talked about communities being at the heart of planning decisions.

I think my hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Siobhain McDonagh) touched all our hearts when she told us about the situation with her local children's hospice. I would like to put on the record my admiration for the staff at both Brian House children's hospice in Blackpool and Derian House in Chorley and for the work they do. We know that children's hospices need far more support and this is not an isolated incident.

As for the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon), I do not think any Adjournment debate in this place would feel truly complete without his contribution. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I thank him for it.

I take this opportunity to thank all Members for taking part in this debate. I wish everyone a very good summer, including you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Please pass on my best wishes for the summer to your fellow Deputy Speakers and to Mr Speaker.

Our staff work very hard behind the scenes. I pay tribute to John Percival and Liam Budd, who work in my Westminster office. They are the unsung heroes of this place and they are aptly represented by the Unite parliamentary staff branch, which is doing its best to ensure that they get a better deal. Constituency office staff are at the frontline of the work we do as Members of Parliament. I am sure the whole House will join me in paying tribute to the work they do to support our constituents. I would like to thank Darren Mason, Alison Tarpey-Black, Sam Harrison and Adam Slater in my constituency office.

I thank the Doorkeepers and the security staff. I wish them a very happy summer. I am sure they will be delighted—once we've gone, I am sure their jobs get much easier. I wish everyone a happy, healthy and peaceful summer. I know we will continue to work hard on behalf of all our constituents.

4.48 pm

The Lord Commissioner of Her Majesty's Treasury (Jeremy Quin): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Lancaster and Fleetwood (Cat Smith) and to reply from the Treasury Bench.

This afternoon's debate took place at a time when the Westminster hothouse was even hotter than normal—over 39° C. Hon. Members will I am sure be keen to return to their communities to serve their constituents in cooler climes and, I hope, with cooler temperatures. Not all of us, however, can boast the sun, the sea and the splendid ice cream of which the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mrs Moon) is so justly proud.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May) reminded us in her speech yesterday that our primary role in this place is to do the best to look after our constituents. I thought that point was encapsulated very well by the hon. Member for Glasgow North East (Mr Sweeney), but it was apparent in all the passionate contributions made this afternoon by all the Members present. I am just sorry, Madam Deputy Speaker, that my winding up cannot possibly do them all the justice they deserve.

I found out to my surprise the other day that some Members in our sister Parliament in Canberra sit for constituencies named after people rather than geography. If the same principle applied to our parliamentary procedures my vote would be—the hon. Member for Lancaster and Fleetwood alluded to this—for the evening Adjournment debate to be referred to as “the Strangford”, whereas my hon. Friend the Member for Southend West (Sir David Amess) has made this particular debate his very own. We always await his contribution with interest and he never disappoints either this House or the many constituents whose problems he brings before us. I recall being taught at school that without cities, civilisation could not rise. It is similarly axiomatic that without hearing of Southend's claim to be a city, this House could not rise either.

In opening the debate, my hon. Friend raised many points that will be best answered, I fear, by the Departments concerned, but I was glad to hear him talk about school funding, which is a very active issue in my Horsham constituency as well. I hope that, like me, he was encouraged

by the positive and robust comments made by our right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in his statement this morning.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Jeremy Lefroy) is a dashing Member of the House and it is no surprise to hear that he joined the police in a successful raid on drugs perpetrators. He also raised the importance of housing regulations, particularly in the context of environmental standards. That passion is shared by the Government. I remind him of the words of my right hon. Friend the Member for Runcymede and Weybridge (Mr Hammond) in the last Budget and I am sure that my hon. Friend will continue to push on this issue.

My hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Fiona Bruce) raised the dreadful issue of trafficking and prostitution—an issue that was brought home to me by the charity Streetlight in my constituency. I understand that her report on this was launched at 4 o'clock this afternoon. I admire her for being in her place; it is a fine example of multi-tasking in this Chamber.

My hon. Friends the Members for Stirling (Stephen Kerr) and for Moray (Douglas Ross) always speak with such passion and effectiveness on behalf of their constituencies and of Scotland as a whole. I visited my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling in his constituency—it was a great pleasure—and I look forward to visiting Moray in due course and hearing more about the benefits of the city deal.

My hon. Friend the Member for South Suffolk (James Cartlidge) spoke with great passion about an issue in his constituency on which he is hugely engaged. He has put his developers firmly on notice.

Turning to my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow East (Bob Blackman), on 3 April this year, we celebrated the first anniversary of his Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 coming into force. He spoke again on homelessness, among other issues, and we all value the contribution that he has made on homelessness. He said that the House will rise with a zing in its step this afternoon after the tremendous performance of the Prime Minister—a statement with which I wholeheartedly agree, but not every Opposition Member might.

Turning to Opposition Members, there were many great speeches on the other side of the House this afternoon. The hon. Member for Clwyd South (Susan Elan Jones), the chairman of the all-party group on charities and volunteering, said in a brilliant speech that she would be satisfied if, as a result of her contribution, just one person started helping the RAF Benevolent Fund. I am certain, having listened to her speech, that it will have been far more effective than that.

Turning to my Sussex colleague, the hon. Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Lloyd Russell-Moyle), one of the highlights of the parliamentary year for me was listening to his Adjournment debate back in November, on World AIDS Day, when he spoke with such passion. He raised a point of great passion again today—his schools—and I would love to debate it with him. Now is not the moment, but I am certain that he will pursue that in his normal, assiduous way.

The hon. Member for Ilford North (Wes Streeting) made a speech of two halves. I preferred the first half—the optimistic half—but he spoke with great passion throughout. I know—because I know him—that whatever his views on my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister,

[Jeremy Quin]

he will bear no ill will or ill harm to any Member of this place, but the hon. Gentleman made his point in his customary manner.

I had the privilege of briefly serving under the right hon. Member for East Ham (Stephen Timms) when he was a Minister in the Treasury. He had a reputation then as being a courteous, detailed and effective Minister. He is clearly deploying the same skills in this place on behalf of his constituent—a case that seems very strange and which I am sure he will continue to pursue.

The hon. Member for North Tyneside (Mary Glendon) spoke movingly of those facing alcohol dependency issues and the importance of the alcohol charter.

The hon. Members for Keighley (John Grogan) and for Oxford East (Anneliese Dodds) expressed the passion of many—of all our constituents—on the issue of climate change. The hon. Lady, in particular, referred to the challenges being faced by those in the developing world because of climate change, which affects us all.

The hon. Members for Bridgend (Mrs Moon), and for Preston (Sir Mark Hendrick), and indeed the hon. Member for Glasgow South West (Chris Stephens), in his summing up on behalf of the Scottish National party—I remember vividly replying to his maiden speech all those years ago—all spoke about or touched on universal credit. I am familiar with many of the issues that they raise, not least through the Horsham District food bank and Citizens Advice in my constituency. Universal credit is a better system than that which preceded it, but that does not mean that it cannot be improved. I urge all hon. Members to continue to raise, as I know they do, individual cases with the Department concerned.

The hon. Member for Bury South (Mr Lewis) forcefully called on the Government to look again at avoidable deaths from epilepsy, in the context of a constituent who had suffered a personal loss. I hope, as does he, that real good can come out of her campaign, and out of the tragedy to which he referred.

The hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Nick Smith) spoke with great knowledge—and pith, which was very welcome in this debate—on pension mis-selling. I am sorry that the knowledge is the result of a dreadful scam having been inflicted, it appears, on his constituents and members of the British Steel pension scheme. We all utterly condemn the scammers. I am sure that we will hear much more from him on this subject.

The hon. Member for Glasgow South (Stewart Malcolm McDonald) made a compelling speech on Ukraine and Russia, and was supported in that by the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (John Woodcock), who followed him, and who also raised concerns about the University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust that I am sure will have been heard by the relevant Department.

The hon. Member for Glasgow North East spoke with passion about the imminent closure of the Caley railway works in his constituency. I wish him well in his discussions with the Scottish Minister with responsibility for transport, and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will remain in close contact with my hon. Friends in Government.

The hon. Member for Poplar and Limehouse (Jim Fitzpatrick), with whom it is a pleasure to serve on the all-party parliamentary group on credit unions, spoke effectively, as ever, on a range of issues regarding housing in Tower Hamlets—a subject that he always speaks on with great authority, and will continue to do so. The hon. Member for West Ham (Lyn Brown) speaks well on behalf of her constituents; today she chose a broader theme and a global outlook, but spoke with equal passion, determination and force.

We heard a little bit of history from the hon. Member for York Central (Rachael Maskell). She put her hopes for the future of the beautiful city that she represents in the context of its deep historical roots as Eboracum and Yorvik. She spoke passionately of York as a living, breathing, vibrant city, where planning works on behalf of all York's citizens.

Many hon. Members will be very aware of the benefits to school students of a proper diet and breakfast. The hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Siobhain McDonagh) spoke convincingly and with great knowledge of what sounds like a tremendous scheme in her constituency, and with huge passion on the Shooting Star children's hospice. As she pointed out, no Adjournment debate would be complete without a contribution from the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon). Just for fun, and for our benefit, he contributed in both English and Ulster Scots, and we were grateful for it. He revelled in his passion for the land, and raised the acute issues faced by many of his constituents who work on it. We were grateful for his contribution.

Many hon. Members raised the dreadful plight of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe. Even while we are not sitting, she and her family will firmly remain in our thoughts, as the Foreign Office continues to work on their behalf. There were many valuable points raised that I regret I have not had time to address; I am sure that they will be spotted and picked up by the Department concerned. It remains for me to thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, your fellow Deputy Speakers, the Clerks, and all the officers of this House for all their work—all the officers who keep us informed, briefed, fed and watered, and, above all, safe.

My hon. Friend Member for Southend West referred to the importance of education. We will all have had teachers who helped guide us here. I think of one of my English teachers as I wish all hon. Members a brief “time for frightened peace to pant”,

as we prepare for fresh-winded “accents of new broils” when this House resumes. Have a good summer.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): I thank the hon. Gentleman for his kind words. I thank everyone who has taken part in this debate. May I, on behalf of all the occupants of the Chair, wish all hon. Members a busy but peaceful recess—not a holiday. I also want, on behalf of us all, to thank everyone who works here in the Palace of Westminster. You work so hard to make our work easier, and we really appreciate everything that you do to support us. We hope that you all have peaceful and happy holidays.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House has considered matters to be raised before the forthcoming adjournment.

PETITIONS

**Open Countryside in Penkrige and Bloor Homes
Appeal Decision**

5 pm

Jeremy Lefroy (Stafford) (Con): I present this petition on behalf of residents of Penkrige and of Staffordshire more widely. It has been signed by 41 members of the community of Penkrige, but a similar online petition has the names of more than 1,100 residents, mainly from Penkrige but also from Staffordshire and further afield.

The petition states:

The petition of Residents of Penkrige and Staffordshire,

Declares that we object to Bloor Homes planned development of 200 homes in Penkrige after the developer won their appeal against the South Staffordshire Council's decision to refuse the development in July 2018; further that the people of Penkrige and Staffordshire do not wish this development to go ahead due to the following points: 1) Penkrige has met and exceeded housing targets for the current plan period, South Staffordshire exceed the requirement for a 5-year housing supply as they did when the planning application was rejected in July 2018; 2) Lyne Hill Meadow development of 400 homes is still being constructed, currently phase 3 of 5; 3) In 2018 the Site Allocation Document was signed off by the Planning Inspectorate, which confirmed following the Lyne Hill development there is no residual requirement for additional houses in Penkrige; 5) Construction would involve the needless destruction of Open Countryside, valuable agricultural land and wildlife habitat; 6) The village infrastructure does not have capacity for this increase; the high school is full for the year 19-20 and there is a 6-week waiting period for appointments at the Medical Centre; The development increases the flood risk on the main A449 road, which is also a diversion route for the M6 between J12 and J13.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Secretary of State and inspector, to overturn this decision

And the petitioners remain, etc.

[P002496]

Better Air Quality

5.2 pm

Lyn Brown (West Ham) (Lab): I rise to present a petition concerning the dangerous levels of air pollution in London on behalf of the students and staff of Godwin Primary School in my constituency. I recently met a very impressive group of student representatives who had organised the petition, which has been signed by every single student in the school. They had all kinds of different and inventive ideas about what to do about air pollution, including cancelling the Silvertown tunnel, and they had some very exciting ideas on the science of what could be achieved. The one thing that I can safely say is that they were united in their anxiety about polluted air and in their absolute determination to do something about it.

The petition states:

The petition of Staff and pupils of Godwin Junior School, Forest Gate,

Declares that we are deeply concerned about the air quality in the area around our school and London in general; we are concerned about how air quality impacts on our rights to the best possible health and a safe, clean environment under Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child; further that it is unacceptable to us that the number of children who suffer from breathing difficulties such as asthma and bronchitis is increasing as a result of poor air quality; further that it is unacceptable to us that 443 schools in London are in a location where the air quality levels are illegal; further that nearly 10,000 deaths a year can be attributed to air pollution; and further that we all have a right to the best possible health and a safe, clean environment to live, work and study in.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to dedicate more time and resources to find longer term solutions to improving air quality.

And the petitioners remain, etc.

[P002476]

Spinal Muscular Atrophy

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

5.5 pm

Sir John Hayes (South Holland and The Deepings) (Con): There is no fairness to fate, no right to good fortune: new life is a miracle, and great health is a blessing.

I do not normally speak from a text, as you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, having known me since we both entered the House in 1997, but the subject which I wish to address today is technical and medical, and is highly significant, and given that the Health Department is one of the few Departments in which I have not served as a Minister, I thought I had better stick to a script.

Spinal muscular atrophy is a genetically inherited neuromuscular condition which results in the irreversible damage of motor neurons and progressive muscle wasting. It is a complicated and often debilitating disease linked primarily to genetic mutation in the SMN1—survival motor neuron—gene.

There are three types of SMA. The age of onset and severity of symptoms can vary considerably. Many sufferers will experience extensive disability, and without early intervention numerous lives are damaged and, indeed, cut tragically short.

I know all of this because of my young constituent, 12-year-old Rae White. But there is hope on the horizon for Rae and other sufferers, as the first dedicated treatment, Spinraza, offers hundreds the possibility of an improved quality of life. Clinical trials have already demonstrated the enormously exciting potential benefits of the drug, delivering meaningful improvements to the motor neuron function of patients.

While individuals with SMA have the SMN2 gene, they lack the SMN1 gene, leaving them unable to produce the full-length proteins that work effectively within the body. Spinraza has been developed to address the absence of this survival motor neuron protein. Its synthetic antisense oligonucleotide acts as an enabler, allowing the SMN2 gene to produce full-length protein, thereby alleviating the symptoms of SMA.

Thankfully, the administration of Spinraza is via an already established procedure known as intrathecal injection, an injection into the spinal canal. This procedure is always performed under the direction of a healthcare provider experienced in administering lumbar punctures, with patients sedated or under a general anaesthetic.

The promise of this drug and its potential benefits to those who suffer should not be underestimated. Families of children who have received the drug often report noticeable profound improvements from the very beginning of treatment. During the clinical trials, monitoring committees on rare occasions say it is no longer ethical to treat people with a placebo, and such was the case with this particular drug. It proved so effective in clinical trials on children with SMA type 1 that the trials were stopped early to enable all the children to access the drug as quickly as possible.

Positive signs have also been observed during trials for treatment of other types of SMA, resulting in significant improvements in motor function in children

with SMA type 2 and type 3. In April 2019, a three-year study of 28 children aged between two and 15 showed remarkably improved outcomes compared with the natural progression of the condition if left untreated. In particular, a two-year-old child with SMA type 2 gained the ability to walk independently after receiving Spinraza, and two children with SMA type 3 who had lost the ability to walk before taking the drug regained it during the study. One can only imagine the value of the restoration of ability for those children and the joy for those who love them.

Moreover, a clinical trial is ongoing in pre-symptomatic infants with genetically diagnosed SMA who are considered likely to develop SMA type 1 or 2. As of July 2019, children treated with Spinraza continue to achieve motor milestones that are unprecedented in the history of the condition, including 100% of children sitting without support and 88% walking independently. Crucially, trials have shown that the earlier the patients start the treatment, the greater the benefit.

All this considered, it is with much sadness that we must reflect on the less than desirable state of play now. Not all those who suffer from SMA have been able to access this pioneering treatment. Indeed, there has been a great deal of confusion surrounding eligibility. My colleagues, my hon. Friend the Member for North East Somerset (Mr Rees-Mogg) and the hon. Members for Wolverhampton South West (Eleanor Smith) and for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy), have raised touching testimonies from their own constituents who are facing similar challenges to those of Rae White. I was touched when young Rae's mother Tanya came to meet me and offered the moving description of her elation at the original announcement by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence—NICE—and NHS England, promising that Spinraza would be made available to all.

Perhaps it would be helpful at this juncture if I said a word about how new medicines are approved. There are two stages to the approval process. First, the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency—MHRA—tests their quality, safety and efficacy. The quality is tested in respect of a medicine's purity; the safety in respect of possible side effects; and the efficacy determines whether it does what it is supposed to do. This is a well-established 50-year process that is recognised as robust and reliable. Subsequently, in a much newer process, NICE examines in tightly populated clinical conditions the cost-effectiveness of making the drug available to a wider population of relevant sufferers. This is, in essence, a matter of health economics, with NICE measuring the capacity of the drug in question to add what are called "quality-adjusted life years".

The problem with that process is that the formula is too crude to effectively distinguish, in what I might call human or social terms, between treating a 12-year-old girl like Rae or a 60-year-old man like me. In practice, efforts end with a balance being struck between efficacy and cost-effectiveness in the form of a managed access agreement. Indeed, in the case of Spinraza, such a managed access agreement was released, revealing that potential patients would have to fulfil a set of access criteria in order to get this life-changing treatment. As we can imagine, that caused panic and pain for those families who, having had their hopes raised, then had them dashed as they realised that many would not in fact be given access to the treatment.

Kerry McCarthy (Bristol East) (Lab): It is just so cruel. There was a party to celebrate the fact that my 18-year-old constituent Jake Ogborne would have access to Spinraza. There was no mention of eligibility criteria, but suddenly he was told that he would not be eligible because he had not been able to walk in the past 12 months. He lost his ability to walk about 18 months or two years ago. I raised this in Prime Minister's questions. I got a response that basically told me what we already knew and just set out the rules on this. It is immensely cruel for an 18-year-old to be faced with a decision like that.

Sir John Hayes: Yes. The condition, as the hon. Lady suggests, is often degenerative. In cases such as the one she describes, which, as I mentioned, is not the first time she has raised it, a young person who would normally develop as we all did could be left with arrested development or, even worse, declining capabilities. Indeed, that has happened to my constituent too.

The hon. Lady will know that, following strong advocacy by families of SMA patients, Muscular Dystrophy UK, TreatSMA, Spinal Muscular Atrophy UK and many clinicians, NICE and NHS England made amendments to the managed access agreement. While amendments are far from unwelcome, the disappointing truth is that the new criteria will still exclude some SMA patients desperate for treatment in the way she and others have articulated.

The intensely difficult battle fought by SMA patients has highlighted deeper flaws in the system. Families report feeling that they have been pitted one against another as advocacy groups are forced to decide whether to push for wider accessibility, and as a consequence risk delaying treatment for those eligible, or, alternatively, to take what is on offer and exclude a minority of the SMA family.

Life can be intensely difficult. All our bodies are complicated and vulnerable, intricate and fragile. We are regularly reminded, are we not, that they can go wrong in a multitude of hard-to-understand ways. I have argued many times in this House that a society should be gauged by how it cares for, protects and promotes the interests of its most vulnerable members.

Mary Glendon (North Tyneside) (Lab): I congratulate the right hon. Gentleman on securing this important debate. I, too, have a young constituent, Sam McKie, who has SMA type 2. I hope the right hon. Gentleman agrees that the issue is that, whatever has happened so far, we need to know that NICE will look at the fact that the drug can halt further deterioration. As he says, we are all weak mortals, but if that deterioration is halted, people can have some quality of life, whatever type of SMA they have.

Sir John Hayes: Exactly. That is why, in the exciting conclusion to this speech, I shall make demanding suggestions. I think they are demanding because of the demands of those who need this drug, not because of any particular interest I might have in this matter beyond a passion to ensure that my constituent and others like her get what they need so desperately.

Rachael Maskell (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for introducing today's debate. We have had many debates in the House

on the procurement of drugs. I have been working with health economists at the University of York who are leading in this field. They very much recommend the model now being adopted by Canada around a national rebate scheme, which takes away some of the tension over cost that we seem to return to time and again. Is not that a way forward that the Government should at least explore?

Sir John Hayes: The hon. Lady had the great pleasure of shadowing me when I was at the Department for Transport, and I have had the greater pleasure of listening to her on so many subjects. She speaks with such knowledge, understanding and wisdom. Once again, she has shown all those things today.

The Government and the new Prime Minister must do as much as they can to ensure that those with rare diseases have every chance possible to live the very best lives they can. So, here is exactly what to do: first, as Spinraza has been shown to be both safe and effective, the NHS should provide the treatment for all those who would benefit from it; secondly, in addition to making Spinraza available for all, the Minister should set up a rare drugs fund, similar to the successful cancer fund, to ensure that those battling debilitating degenerative diseases are supported at every stage of their journey; and thirdly, I ask the Minister to implement an immediate review of the criteria used by NICE to determine access to new medicines.

We all want to do the right thing. I described earlier what I said was a crude approach. These things develop; they metamorphose. This is a chance to look again at how we can administer treatment to have the best effect on those in the greatest need. Hegel said:

"Life has a value only when it has something valuable as its object."

Chamberlain said:

"In great deeds something abides."

There is no better great deed, no more noble object, no more abiding purpose than the care for those in the greatest need. I ask this Minister to make her abiding object a war on want, a campaign against suffering, a crusade for those in pain—Madam Deputy Speaker, nothing less will do.

5.21 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Seema Kennedy): What a pleasure it is to speak in the final parliamentary debate of what has been an historic and tumultuous term for all of us.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for South Holland and The Deepings (Sir John Hayes) on securing the debate on such a timely day, because we have had news on Spinraza in the last 24 hours. He outlined very movingly the symptoms of spinal muscular atrophy, which has been raised before in this House. The hon. Members for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy), for York Central (Rachael Maskell) and for North Tyneside (Mary Glendon) are particular champions for sufferers.

SMA is a terrible disease that can have a terrible impact on the children who suffer from it, their families and the wider community. We in the Department know how important it is for them to be able to access effective treatment. It is a rare disease. It affects about

[Seema Kennedy]

100 babies born each year. It is estimated that it affects between 1,200 and 2,500 children and adults in the UK. Until recently, there were no licensed treatments for it, so the condition has been managed using nutritional support, physiotherapy and social care.

Spinraza, as my right hon. Friend outlined, has been licensed across Europe for the treatment of SMA since 2017 and is very effective. However, it is extremely expensive and has been undergoing assessment by NICE to determine whether it would be an effective use of NHS resources. I say to him that QALYs do take account of wider costs—not just physical costs but social care costs. As far as I am aware, there is currently no difference in the quantitative evidence. He gave the examples of a man in his mid years—at 60—and a child.

I will go on to talk more broadly about the NICE process, but I am really pleased that only yesterday, NICE published its final guidance, meaning that this debate is very timely. The guidance recommends the use of Spinraza for many patients with SMA through a managed access agreement, which has been negotiated between NICE, NHS England and the manufacturer, Biogen. This makes Spinraza available to the NHS at a discounted price. Importantly, it also sets out arrangements for collecting evidence on the long-term impact of Spinraza, because at the moment the evidence is quite immature. The managed access agreement is one of the most comprehensive deals in the entire world and it brings Spinraza to one of the widest cohorts of eligible patients in any country. It was signed and supported by Spinal Muscular Atrophy UK, Muscular Dystrophy UK and TreatSMA. I put on the record my thanks and my tribute to all those organisations for the support they have given patients and families with the illness. That very welcome development has involved hard work and flexibility from all parties to reach this point; if only all parties in all the debates I have to speak in on this matter were as flexible.

Sir John Hayes: The Minister makes a good point about the managed access agreement and the amendments to it that she described. But the real issue here is whether Spinraza would benefit every single sufferer. If it would, it should be universally available.

Seema Kennedy: I know that there is an issue with some people suffering from SMA type 3, but I am not the person who would make the decision on whether Spinraza was effective or not; that is why NICE is there.

Children with the most severe form of SMA type 1 are already benefiting from treatment with Spinraza. Following yesterday's announcement, eligible patients with types 2 and 3 will begin treatment as soon as possible within the next three months.

NICE has concluded that there is not sufficient evidence at this stage for the managed access agreement to cover some patients with SMA type 3 or any patients with type 4; that is why we are still carrying on collecting evidence. I realise how dreadfully painful that is for those not able to access Spinraza. The majority of patients will be eligible under the managed access agreement.

The parties to the agreement have agreed to keep the eligibility criteria for treatment under review during the five-year term of the agreement, so those criteria may be further extended in future if more evidence of benefit emerges over time. NHS England and I have acknowledged that the inclusion criteria associated with the managed access agreement could have been more clearly communicated when it was announced.

I turn to the NICE process altogether. This is an important system. It makes independent, authoritative, evidence-based decisions, which is essential so that taxpayers can be assured that the price we pay for new medicines reflects the value that they bring. It also helps ensure rapid access to effective new treatments for NHS patients. It has been going for 20 years and is internationally respected. There are both established and new pharmaceutical companies developing medicines for rare diseases, which takes an awfully long time, based here in the UK, and medicines can be brought to the market through the NHS very quickly. The Department is keen to press on with that.

We have a UK rare diseases strategy, which was set out in the NHS long-term plan. Genomics is a particularly important area, in which we want to innovate so that we have more comprehensive and precise diagnoses and allow patients to access the right drugs. We are committed to that. The NICE process has recommended more than 80% of the medicines appraised and 75% of medicines for rare diseases for some or all of the eligible patient population, but of course the processes must evolve. They have to keep going, taking into consideration developments in science, healthcare and the life sciences sector. That is why NICE keeps its methods and processes updated through periodic review, which includes extensive engagement with stakeholders, including patient representatives, drug manufacturers and clinicians.

Mary Glendon: Has the Department given any consideration to the MAP BioPharma report released earlier this year, which looked at how the appraisal process could make a fairer playing field for rare diseases?

Seema Kennedy: Yes, the Department has looked at that report. NICE recently initiated a review, and I assure Members—as I did when I answered the urgent question on Tuesday—that it will be wide-ranging and carried out with extensive engagement with stakeholders. I shall be keeping a close eye on it if I remain in this job—and even if I do not.

This has been an important debate. I thank my right hon. Friend the Member for South Holland and The Deepings, who always speaks so passionately on behalf of people who are sick and on behalf of the most vulnerable—those children who have no voice for themselves. I reassure Members that access to effective new treatments will always be a priority for the Government.

I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for your service to us in the Chair, and wish all right hon. and hon. Members and all who work here in the Palace of Westminster a very revivifying recess.

Question put and agreed to.

5.30 pm

House adjourned.

Westminster Hall

Thursday 25 July 2019

[Ms KAREN BUCK *in the Chair*]

Mental Health Act 1983

1.30 pm

Neil Coyle (Bermondsey and Old Southwark) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House has considered reform of the Mental Health Act 1983.

It is an absolute pleasure to serve under you in the Chair, Ms Buck. I thank everyone who has come along to speak on our last day here before the summer recess and in 38° heat—we are used to 38 Degrees in our inboxes, but not in the Chamber. I also thank all the organisations that have supported this debate. In particular, I owe deep thanks to Louise and the whole team at Rethink Mental Illness for supporting me in preparing for the debate, but a huge range of organisations work on this issue day in, day out, in many cases supporting people in very difficult circumstances. They include Agenda, the Mental Health Network, the Royal College of Psychiatrists, Young Minds, SANE, the Mental Health Foundation, VoiceAbility, the Centre for Mental Health, the Association of Mental Health Providers, Mind, and Southwark Carers, which is represented here today. I thank you for everything that you do, on a daily basis, to support reform of the Mental Health Act 1983 overall and for what you have done to support this debate specifically. I also thank the individuals with direct experience and their families, friends, carers, supporters and loved ones. Their personal testimony and experience are what is driving the need for change.

The current Mental Health Act came into force in September 1983. Margaret Thatcher was still Prime Minister—what she would make of the current one I do not know, but that is a different issue. Labour had lost the general election that year with the “longest suicide note” in British political history—but luckily we have learned the lessons of the past. The iron curtain was still drawn. It was the year that Kim Jong-un was born. It was the year that my predecessor in Bermondsey and Old Southwark, Sir Simon Hughes, was getting started on a 32-year stay, until I won the seat back for my party in 2015. I note that the biggest selling single in 1983 in the UK was Culture Club’s “Karma Chameleon”.

For anyone unfamiliar with it, the Mental Health Act is the law in England and Wales that allows someone to be detained and treated for a mental illness without their consent. That is commonly known as sectioning, but for the purposes of today’s debate, I will refer to it as detention. The Act is designed to prevent people experiencing mental health crises from harming themselves or other people, and the Act can be the mechanism that prevents someone from taking their own life. It is hugely valuable when it works. I am sure that everyone here would agree that society and the state should protect the most vulnerable when they are unwell. But the current legislation is decades out of date.

The legislation came into force when I was just four years old, and I had already realised by that point that my life was very different from that of other children. My parents had four children together between 1976 and 1980, but mum then developed schizophrenia—a mental illness that causes muddled thinking or delusional thoughts, and changes in behaviour. The causes of schizophrenia are still very much unknown, but even less was known about the condition in the early ’80s and treatment was rudimentary to say the least. But because of mum’s condition, talking about mental illness has been part of my life for as long as I can remember. That has been the case throughout my family because of our circumstances. It has shaped my life.

Some of my earliest memories are not necessarily the easiest to talk about, but this is one of the earliest memories I have. After mum’s mental health broke down, my parents split up. We stayed with mum initially. She was unable to care for us properly. With the best of intentions, on a cold day when she could not work the heating, she lit a fire in our living room. That fire caused huge damage. The scars from the fire stayed with us literally—physically—because we could not afford to make the necessary changes for some time after that.

Mum kept me out of school, convinced that I was ill; there was no illness. For many years, I was convinced that I had been kept in an incubator after being born, because mum convinced me that I had had lung problems at birth. I found out later that that was not true.

Dad eventually got custody, and the four of us grew up with dad, but on visits to mum, she would be unsupported and unwell. I remember staying over and her giving me a bowl of cereal with what I thought was orange juice on it—the milk was so off that it was orange. But mum had thought that that was sensible; she was just trying to feed us. She did not know, because she was so unwell.

Mum had another son; I have a half-brother called Sebastian. She was unable to look after him because she did not have support. He was initially fostered, but mum’s behaviour became too problematic. I went to see her once and the front door had been broken in. She told me that there had been a burglary, but nothing was missing, and it turned out that the police had had to be called because she had taken Sebastian from the foster carers and they had had to break in to take him back. He was formally adopted at five years old, and I have not seen him since.

It may sound strange or scary to some, but this was my normal; this was my childhood. We are all socialised by our surroundings and families, and the personal situation for me and for many others who grew up in difficult circumstances helps to develop resilience, I think. It has also given me greater empathy, both as a child and now, particularly when I see constituents who are struggling with similar mental health circumstances of their own. I represent a constituency that has a higher prevalence of mental health conditions and psychoses.

Nick Thomas-Symonds (Torfaen) (Lab): I commend my hon. Friend not only on the speech that he is making, but on the very moving way, if I may say so, in which he just spoke about his personal experience and how it informs his views today. Like him, I have had constituents who are dealing with these issues; and like him, I think that we have come to the point at which the

[Nick Thomas-Symonds]

Mental Health Act does need to be reviewed, particularly because of—this is the point that he has been making—the impact it has on the immediate family. How can we go forward such that the wishes of the person who is being detained are taken into account and the family’s wishes are taken into account, in a way that provides protection for the vulnerable but also recognises people’s particular needs and choices?

Neil Coyle: That is very much what I will be coming on to and what I hope we will hear more from the Minister on; it was the subject of an independent review.

I was talking about the prevalence of mental health conditions in Southwark and people I have seen at constituency surgeries. These statistics for Southwark are from the South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust, which is my local mental health trust. Close to 4,000 people have what it defines as a serious mental illness; that does not include things such as dementia. Almost 48,000 people are currently experiencing a common mental health condition. Across the borough, 22,000 people have both a mental health condition and a long-term physical condition. And almost 4,000 children in Southwark have a mental health condition.

Janet Daby (Lewisham East) (Lab): I thank my hon. Friend for making a speech that is very powerful and very personal. The number of mental health nurses in England has fallen by 6,000 in the past 10 years. Does he agree that we need the correct number of staff, and staff with the correct expertise, to meet the needs of the service in supporting people with mental health issues?

Neil Coyle: I absolutely agree and will come on to some of those figures.

I referred to the children in Southwark who have mental health conditions. The NHS’s overall target for ensuring that children and adolescents can access mental health treatment is just 35%. That is remarkably low, and I hope the Minister will have something to say about it today. In the meantime, while that is the national standard, Southwark’s Labour council has set an ambition to ensure that 100% of children and adolescents can have access to mental health care. As part of that commitment, the council has made £2 million available for local schools to support the emotional wellbeing and mental health of pupils. It is also developing a mental health hub service for young people. That is in partnership with—jointly funded by—the local clinical commissioning group.

As I have said, I think that my personal experience has given me an additional strength in working with local people and families who are affected by these issues, but being open about my family experience does not mean that I have not seen discrimination or stigma at first hand. I was about 10 or 11 when I said to a friend at school that Mum had schizophrenia and he asked whether that meant I had two mums. That was a surprising reply, but obviously there was a lot of confusion then about what schizophrenia actually was. Some of it is still out there.

Sadly, one thing that remains is the perception that people with schizophrenia are somehow more dangerous. Actually, mum’s experience and that of many people with schizophrenia is that they are more likely to be

targeted, because their erratic behaviour when they are unwell can draw the attention of others, who might target them for robbery and other offences.

Mr Kevan Jones (North Durham) (Lab): I thank my hon. Friend for the way in which he is opening the debate and particularly for his comments on schizophrenia. If they have the right support, there is no reason why anyone with schizophrenia should not live a normal life, including being able to work.

Neil Coyle: I completely agree. Sadly, the figure for people with schizophrenia in work remains at about 5%. It is just 5%, because the support simply is not there and the medication and treatment are not there on a routine basis to ensure that they are able to work.

Figures suggest that one in four of us will experience mental ill health at some point in life, often because of bereavement or a relationship breakdown. I pay tribute to all the organisations involved in the Time To Change campaign, which has done brilliant work to challenge the stigma and discrimination that affect people with mental health conditions in employment and elsewhere.

The change in language and awareness of conditions is one reason to seek reform now. For example, the Mental Health Act 1983 is defined as:

“An Act to consolidate the law relating to mentally disordered persons.”

The language around mental health has changed much since the current law was enacted. We also need to consider its far reaching powers.

The independent review of the Mental Health Act, published seven months ago concluded:

“The Mental Health Act gives the state what are amongst the most significant powers that it has; the power to take away someone’s liberty without the commission of a criminal offence and the power to treat that person even in the face of their refusal. Because of that, we think that is important that the purpose of the powers is clear, as should be the basis on which they should be used.”

It is hard to disagree with that conclusion, especially given the number of people who are affected by those extensive powers.

Debbie Abrahams (Oldham East and Saddleworth) (Lab): I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing this debate, and on his personal and emotional contribution—I believe that adds everything. People living with dementia also fall under the Mental Health Act. There are concerns around section 117 and the right for aftercare support once someone is detained under the Mental Health Act, particularly those living with dementia. Does my hon. Friend share my concerns on that?

Neil Coyle: Certainly, there is insufficient support for a whole range of people. We have sadly seen a roll-back of support, independence of choice and control in a number of areas, including social care support, health services and direct benefits for some disabled people, particularly in the past nine years.

The extensive powers, which I described, were used to detain 50,000 people last year—a 47% increase in the past decade. The only other people detained in this country are those in criminal custody. Those citizens have safeguards to protect them from going to jail, but we do not have the same safe standards of support and safeguards for mental health care. Those who commit a criminal offence have a police investigation, the CPS

evidence threshold, a trial, the right of appeal and advocacy throughout, but for the 50,000 detained under the Mental Health Act few such safeguards exist, despite the deprivation of liberty, choice and control.

We can turn this situation around. The independent review of the Mental Health Act, chaired by Professor Sir Simon Wessely, recommended that four principles be written into a revised Act. First, it recommended that choice and autonomy, even for someone detained under the Act, must be respected, enabled and enhanced wherever possible. Secondly, it recommended that the compulsory powers contained within the Act should be exercised in the least restrictive way possible. Thirdly, it recommended that services and treatments should be of therapeutic benefit and delivered with a view to minimising the need for Mental Health Act powers to be used. Fourthly, it recommended that the individual must be respected, and that care and treatment must be provided in a manner that treats them accordingly.

I seek the Minister's views on those principles being incorporated in forthcoming plans. If those four principles had existed when my mum was detained—she has been sectioned more times in my lifetime than I can remember—I would have had more reassurance that her needs, rights and wishes would have been the starting point for the care and treatment she received. Sadly, that was not the case.

This is the first debate to be held on the Mental Health Act since that review was published, which is astonishing, given the level of use of the powers in the Act and the level of support for reform. The review made 154 recommendations. The Government accepted two immediately and agreed to publish a White Paper by the end of this year to bring forward full legislation. I welcome that; there is no one who does not want to see that. However, given the paralysis caused by Brexit, and the new Prime Minister and Cabinet, can the Minister confirm that that timetable has not slipped?

Janet Daby: Does my hon. Friend agree that a new mental health Act must prioritise children and young people? The statistics relating to young people are cause for concern.

Neil Coyle: It certainly should, but we should not have to wait for new legislation—some measures can be taken before that. Given that the White Paper is due by the end of the year, legislation may not come soon enough to help some of those young people who are experiencing problems now.

I hope the Minister will indicate that the Government's rhetoric on parity of care will be matched by action on preventing the need for detention. Sadly, all the evidence points in the other direction. Parity of care—the requirement to treat mental and physical health equally—was enshrined in law in 2012 and became part of the NHS constitution in 2015. Although mental health accounts for 28% of the overall disease burden, as the NHS terms it, it received just 13% of NHS funding, according to the Centre for Mental Health. In cash terms, the King's Fund has shown that between 2012 and 2017, funding for acute and specialist hospitals grew by almost 17%, while that for mental health trusts grew by just over 5.5%.

The Royal College of Psychiatrists has found that, taking into account inflation, the real-terms income of mental health trusts across the UK has fallen since 2011. It says that 62% of mental health trusts in England

reported a lower income at the end of 2016-17 than in 2011-12. Sadly, only one trust experienced a rise in funding in all five financial years. The Royal College of Psychiatrists has also reported that mental health trusts received £105 million less in 2016-17 than in 2011-12, at today's prices. There is no parity of funding, even though the Government are legally committed to it.

The 40% rise in detention over the past decade has come at the same time as a loss of overnight beds—between 2010 and 2017, the figure went down from more than 25,000 to less than 20,000—and a 15% decrease in the number of mental health nursing posts. Demand is rising as a result of detentions, but the number of staff has diminished and there is also less space available. The Care Quality Commission, which regulates mental health services, has reported that previously preventable admissions are now not being prevented because of cuts to less restrictive alternatives, such as community mental health services. There has also been an increase in the number of people with at-risk factors when it comes to detention, such as social exclusion and untreated drug or alcohol misuse.

Clearly, it is not in someone's best interest to be detained if that is avoidable. A breakdown of mental health and behaviour can be deeply damaging for individuals, and their families and loved ones, but detention is extremely costly, especially compared with drug and alcohol treatment services or other interventions and support in the community. The average cost of each detention is estimated to be just over £18,000. The 50,000 detentions over the past year cost an estimated £900 million. That money could have gone so much further in earlier interventions to prevent detention.

Of course, there are also costs to how people are identified or present themselves in crises that result in detention. Sometimes they are homeless. I know the Minister has done a lot of work on that. We have met on several occasions and I know that she views homelessness as a public health issue—an issue that overlaps with the topic of this debate. Homelessness as a result of mental ill health increases physical health issues, which result in costs to the NHS.

Sometimes people in crisis are identified by the police. The last time my mum was sectioned—I think it was in 2016—she had had a car accident in which she hit a bollard. No one was injured, but she was prosecuted for the accident. My family and I—including my sister Alex, who I know is watching—had sought help for mum. We knew that she was becoming unwell and that she was not taking her medication, and we tried in advance to alert people to her need for support and to get her back on track, but that did not happen. She had agreed to plead guilty when the case went to court—she was guilty; she hit the bollard and no one else was responsible—but when she was asked how she would plead, she said that she could not be guilty because she had been wearing blue that day. Of course, that made no sense to anyone and resulted in the ordering of a psychiatric assessment, which was a pathway back into mental health care.

That was not necessary. Police and court involvement cause unnecessary cost to the taxpayer. If earlier interventions had occurred at the request of family members, that could have been avoided. I ask those hon. Members who have not been out with their local police and emergency responders to please do so. The

[Neil Coyle]

last time I did it in Southwark, the police responded to a surprising number of 999 calls that involved someone with a mental health condition. That is not just anecdotal evidence; it is backed up by national statistics.

Troublingly, police statistics show an increased use of section 136 of the Act. That power is used by the police exclusively to remove “mentally disordered persons without a warrant.”

Between 2015-16 and 2017-18, the use of that power in Southwark doubled, from 60 detentions to 121. That number fell slightly last year, but the shocking overall rise shows the price of underfunded mental health services, with the police often picking up the pieces in situations that should be handled by healthcare specialists and community interventions. Of course there will be some who are unknown to services, but most are not, and there are some who present with issues relating to suicide. Tackling the majority of cases upstream should be the target. I hope the Minister will state how that will be done through a White Paper or new legislation.

I welcome the previous Prime Minister’s commitment to end the use of police cells to detain people who are experiencing mental ill health. I hope that that commitment will continue under the new Government, because a police cell is no place for someone who is experiencing a mental health crisis. Although there has been a 95% fall in the use of cells and custody facilities since 2011, in the latest figures from 2016-17 they still accounted for almost 4% of detentions. I hope that the Minister will set out when the Government expect the number of people going through the system to be zero.

The point that I am trying to ram home is that overreliance on sectioning and detention can be bad for the individual and their families, but also for the taxpayer. We can do better than that. It is not just a matter of the loss of liberty; the Care Quality Commission has also sounded the alarm over risks for people when they are detained, including compulsory treatment and sexual assault. It reports that almost one fifth of patient records—double the proportion in the previous year’s study—

“showed no evidence of consideration of the least restrictive options for care.”

It also stated:

“We have seen limited or no improvement in the key concerns we have raised in previous years.”

That is the regulator saying, “Not only have we identified the problem this year, but we told you about it in previous years, and still no improvement has been made.” Its evidence shows that 1,120 sexual safety reports were made in a three-month period in 2017, of which 457 were about sexual assault or harassment of patients or staff. Some of our most vulnerable citizens are at risk of sexual assault while they are detained under the state’s powers. That is an absolutely appalling record in any civilised society.

These problems all undermine mental health treatment and use of the Act and make it no surprise that research commissioned by the Mental Health Alliance shows that individual experiences of being detained under the Act are far from positive. It surveyed more than 8,000 people, and the majority of respondents who had been detained did not believe that the Mental Health Act sufficiently protected them from inhuman or degrading treatment. Some 61% of respondents who had been detained disagreed with the statement, “People are currently

treated with dignity when detained”, as did 41% of mental health professionals. The unity behind the case for reform and true parity of care could not be clearer. I hope that the Minister will cover those issues and confirm more of what the Government aim to put in their Bill when it appears, including human rights provisions.

At the Disability Rights Commission in 2004-05, I helped to bring organisations of and for disabled people together behind the principles that were then put in the Mental Health Act 2005:

“A person must be assumed to have capacity unless it is established that he lacks capacity.

A person is not to be treated as unable to make a decision unless all practicable steps to help him to do so have been taken without success.

A person is not to be treated as unable to make a decision merely because he makes an unwise decision is made.”

Our right to make bad decisions is enshrined in legislation. I apologise to any smokers present, but they make a bad choice every time they light a cigarette, and arguably the Conservative party has chosen badly in selecting the right hon. Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Boris Johnson). The fourth and fifth principles are:

“An act done, or decision made, under this Act for or on behalf of a person who lacks capacity must be done, or made, in his best interests.

Before the act is done, or the decision is made, regard must be had to whether the purpose for which it is needed can be as effectively achieved in a way that is less restrictive of the person’s rights and freedom of action.”

We have precedent in legislation, and we need to support that approach again in reforming the Mental Health Act, with a resolute belief in patient-centred care, with as much choice, control and dignity as is humanly possible.

People’s experiences of being detained vary wildly. It cannot be right that some people are treated worse simply because the place where they become unwell does not have access to the right level of support. We need more standardised access to care, and more standardised care when it has to be provided. I recognise that detention cannot always be avoided, and that it has welcome results when people come out better than when they went in, but even when it is necessary, it must be done better—and there are ways to do that.

Advance decisions were one of the review’s two recommendations that the Government accepted. It is crucial that patients be involved in planning their care as much as possible. The Care Quality Commission’s research shows that under the current legislation, a staggering one in five patients detained have no input whatever in their care plans. It examined the plans in place for those patients and found that most of them were of poor quality, lacked planning and had no evidence of patients’ consent to treatment when they were admitted to hospital. Introducing advance choice documents so that people can set out their wishes about future care and treatment, and giving them more legal weight than they have under the current system, would help to solve that problem and improve care for thousands of people.

I will give a quick practical example for anyone who needs it. Medication for schizophrenia has improved dramatically. Some of the medication that mum used to take would cause regular, sustained vomiting, which caused teeth loss and worse. Different treatments are

available. If she were sectioned and put back on that medication, knowing the side effects, it would obviously make the treatment worse for her. I hope that the Minister will give a strong indication about the Government's plans for advance decisions and the ability to make choices that can improve the treatments available.

When a person is detained under the Act, they have a "nearest relative" who has certain rights to be involved in their care. Many family members and patients value the fact that relatives are given a statutory role, but that relative is chosen from an outdated hierarchal list that is based on age, rather than on the views of the individuals involved or on whether they have a good relationship. The Government accepted that recommendation from the review. I hope that the Minister will have more to say about that today—[*Interruption*—]—and less about stopping Brexit, which is the chant outside that may have been caught on the microphones.

Those who are detained under the Act have effectively no legal say over their treatment and no automatic right to advocacy in the event of their detention. The fact that such rights are not enshrined in the legislation illustrate that reform is badly needed. Establishing a right to an advocate for all mental health in-patients, whether voluntary or detained, without having to ask for one, would also radically improve care, as would the statutory inclusion of a patient's advance wishes in their treatment plan. I hope that the Minister will give an indication on that matter today as well.

I will cut down the bit of my speech about resources, because they have already been mentioned and I know that other hon. Members want to speak. However, cuts have had serious implications, including for the distances that people, including children, have to travel for treatment: they are often taken hundreds of miles away from their friends, family and community. That cannot be acceptable. Wider cuts to council budgets and the public health agenda have also had an impact, and my constituency has experienced the knock-on effects. We lost an organisation called CoolTan Arts, which used to provide creative and employment support for many disadvantaged people with mental health conditions.

My very real fear is that the bad old days have crept back. For too long, Ministers have ignored the problems. There have been cuts to services, and we are seeing more ill-trained or morale-sapped staff; an overuse of agency crews; rising use of detention, which locks the problem away out of sight; and compulsion rather than empowerment. That must change. The new Prime Minister must listen to what is said in this debate; I hope he will. The White Paper that has been promised must be delivered and must reflect the spirit and ambition of the independent review.

New legislation must also be passed to update the Act. It is not just about getting a better piece of legislation; more importantly, it is about better treatment for the thousands of people with mental health conditions and their families up and down the country. There is cross-party support for this work: 49 colleagues have signed early-day motion 1242, which

"calls on the Government to reform the Mental Health Act...during this Parliament".

There is appetite in the Commons for that reform, so I hope it will be delivered.

We have a window of opportunity to improve thousands of people's lives. I hope that the Minister and the new Cabinet and Government will take it.

1.58 pm

Dr Julian Lewis (New Forest East) (Con): Thank you, Ms Buck, for calling me so early in this debate. I am sure that I speak for everybody who listened to the remarkable speech of the hon. Member for Bermondsey and Old Southwark (Neil Coyle) when I say that it was a privilege to do so. We should all be immensely grateful to him for illustrating the important policy points that he had to make by means of his agonising experiences in his immediate family in his very early years. We all thank him for it.

Given how many hon. Members wish to contribute, I will speak very briefly. I note that the hon. Gentleman's speech was briefly interrupted by some shouting outside the Chamber to do with Brexit; it seems to be a common theme that mental health debates tend to happen at times when they are overshadowed by other issues. For example, when I became a Member of this House in 1997, I came second in the private Member's Bill ballot. I chose to introduce the Mental Health (Amendment) Bill, which was designed to achieve improvements for people who suffered catastrophic breakdowns such that they needed to be admitted to acute mental health units.

At that time, the person who came first in the ballot chose to address a subject of massive national importance, namely the banning of hunting with hounds, and I could not help but notice the contrast between the packed main Chamber on the Friday that was considering the welfare of foxes and the rather more thinly occupied main Chamber a week later, as was customary, when we were trying to consider the welfare of human beings. It was ever thus.

The points at issue then are, to some extent, still points at issue now. They have already been touched upon, at least in part, in the excellent opening speech that we have all heard. My particular concern was the need for there to be separate therapeutic environments for people who had to be admitted to acute units who suffered from very different types of mental illness. In other words, the idea that somebody suffering from acute depression should be cheek-by-jowl with somebody suffering regular psychotic outbursts was obviously a recipe to make a very serious situation even worse.

While I was doing the research for that debate, it was drawn to my attention by staff at acute units that their particular nightmare was the thought of what would happen if there was inadequate staffing coupled with mixed-sex wards. I was really rather shocked and shaken today to hear the statistics cited by the hon. Member for Bermondsey and Old Southwark about the level of danger of sexual assault among in-patients, because for quite a number of years I and various other colleagues waged a campaign to abolish mixed-sex wards in mental health in-patient facilities. At first there was talk of separate bays, if I recall correctly, which by no means would have answered the necessities of the problem. And successive Governments kept saying that they would do it, and even that they had done it, so it is particularly disturbing to hear about the level of concern that still exists about this issue.

The question of inadequate numbers of beds has already been touched upon by the hon. Gentleman. It has to be said that, for once, this is not the responsibility or fault of Government, because after the closure of so many of the large asylums, the pendulum—in my opinion, and I am not an expert; I have to say that I am not a medical doctor—swung too far the opposite way.

[Dr Julian Lewis]

I remember, in the New Forest area, having to fight a bitter campaign—which ultimately failed—to prevent a 35% reduction in in-patient beds in acute units. If I remember correctly, two of five units were closed. We were prepared to compromise and say, “Close one of the two units. Close 16 of the beds, rather than 32, and see how you get on,” but the authorities would not listen and they forced the closures through. It was the Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust, which later became notorious in the mental health sphere for other reasons, that forced through the closure of all these beds, and the system has been rammed and overflowing, and under excessive pressure, ever since.

There was another knock-on effect of the swinging of the pendulum too far back from the correct policy of closing the larger asylums, and that was that, by having fewer permanent facilities, we lost the ability to have what was technically—or maybe not very technically—known as the “revolving door”. This was the idea that, yes, if we could get more people back in society, so that they could make their own way and live their lives freely and without having to be in-patients, the very existence of a network of permanent establishments—albeit for other purposes—meant that there were always plenty of opportunities, so that if somebody felt that a trough was coming they could seek help easily for, as it were, almost a top-up of treatment, just for a few days. That would then set them back on track and it meant that they would not suffer—

Neil Coyle indicated assent.

Dr Lewis: I am delighted to see the hon. Member for Bermondsey and Old Southwark indicating his agreement. It meant that they would not then suffer a much worse breakdown, which would have meant that they would have to be incarcerated, for want of a better word, for a much longer period.

Debbie Abrahams: To prevent people, including people living with dementia, from having to be admitted to hospital, there needs to be community support and after-care support once people are discharged, to ensure that they can be kept as healthy and independent as possible in the community for as long as possible.

Dr Lewis: The hon. Lady is absolutely right, as long as we recognise that what is needed is a range of facilities. Even the most ardent advocate of doing away with in-patient beds would, if pressed, admit that there will always be some people who at some point absolutely need to have some in-patient treatment.

If there are some people who need to go in for a considerable period of time, and hopefully there are a lot more people who do not need to be admitted to acute units at all, it follows almost logically that there will be some people who are on the borderline between the two, who can get by in society with a degree of self-awareness—either their own or that of their immediate family—and that when the warning signs appear, provided there is that network of specialist care with beds for very short-term stays, they can receive what I call a “top-up”, or, if we were talking about servicing a vehicle, something that will prevent a much greater collapse from happening later, with all the consequent horrors.

The question of what happens when people are admitted to acute units arose on a second occasion. I mentioned the first occasion, when I tried to introduce my private Member’s Bill in December 1997 and it was overshadowed by foxhunting. On a second occasion—on 9 December 2010, to be precise—I had secured an Adjournment debate on what happens about the information that is given to someone’s nearest and dearest when an adult is sectioned and goes into an acute unit. That occasion was on the day of the key debate about the trebling of student tuition fees, so once again we found mental health being somewhat upstaged by other matters that were of national importance. However, that is no reason not to persist or not to continue to try and emphasise to Ministers how these issues will never go away until they are finally tackled.

On that occasion in December 2010, I raised the case of the daughter of my constituents, Mr and Mrs Edgell. Sadly, their daughter—who was called Larissa but known as Lara—had taken her own life in 2006. For two years prior to that, the medical authorities had refused to share information about her with her parents; because she was an adult in her thirties, they refused to share vital information about her suicidal thoughts with her parents, on the grounds of patient confidentiality.

It subsequently turned out that there were very good guidelines that said that such information should be shared. So, I wrote to the then Minister with responsibility for care services, the hon. Member for Bury South (Mr Lewis), saying that there was clearly a breakdown in the system if adequate rules existed but were not being put into practice locally. The rather unsatisfactory answer that I received at the time was that the responsibility lay with the local medical authorities to ensure that the central guidelines were implemented.

As I say, that was at the end of 2010, so it was a long time ago. I wonder whether the Minister will be able to reassure me that there is now more central direction. In the case of Lara and her parents there was inadequate sharing of vital information, under the mistaken belief that patient confidentiality trumped the fact that an adult patient was incapable of making her own decisions. I would like to know whether that situation has been rectified, or whether we are still dependent on local medical institutions and authorities to apply a central guideline that ought to be better known.

This week, I received a letter from Lara’s mother, who asked me to attend this debate. I can do no better than to read from what she says, not so much about what happened to her daughter but about the continued interest that she has in the workings of the mental health services. She says that she would like to make her own recommendations; given what happened so tragically in her immediate family, we owe it to her to give serious consideration to those recommendations, which are as follows:

“1. The 1983 Act should be revised to prioritise the dignity of individuals who come to be in the Service’s orbit.

2. Such individuals should have their values and world views respected and have a significant say in the manner of their treatment.

3. They should have the option to refuse certain treatments.

4. Mental hospitals must be places where patients feel safe: there have been numerous allegations of staff members being abusive, provocative and/or intimidating.

5. Use of force should be absolutely minimised. This includes physical restraint, seclusion, or forced medication.

6. A reduction in 'sectioning'.

7. A reduction in stigma"—

and finally:

"8. All aspects of the Mental Health Service should be more open, and subject to independent scrutiny from time to time."

I will conclude by making one left-field observation relating to the armed forces. The Select Committee on Defence, which I have the honour of chairing, has been recommending for some time that we establish a centre of excellence for the mental injuries suffered by those who put their life on the line to defend this country, preferably alongside the national centre for physical rehabilitation at Stanford Hall. We have now raised this issue twice with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, who has given us a reasonably encouraging response. However, once again, we feel that he is coming up against resistance because of the philosophy that people must be treated locally when at all possible, not admitted as in-patients in centralised locations. That is causing a pushback against our idea.

Our idea is based on the fact that those who suffer injury in combat situations have experienced a peculiar and unique form of trauma, different from those that ordinary mental health professionals can be expected to understand. I am sure that my hon. and gallant Friend the Member for Plymouth, Moor View (Johnny Mercer) will want to expand on that topic, if he is lucky enough to catch the Chair's eye. We believe that there is a case for a national centre of excellence, and that the welfare of members of our armed services who suffer mental injury should be no less important to us than the welfare of those who suffer other, physical forms of injury in the cause of defending our freedom.

2.14 pm

Kerry McCarthy (Bristol East) (Lab): As always, it is a pleasure to see you in the Chair, Ms Buck. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Bermondsey and Old Southwark (Neil Coyle) on an incredibly powerful speech that was very detailed and knowledgeable about this issue. Obviously, my hon. Friend was speaking from personal experience, which was very brave of him.

It is clear from the findings of the independent review of the Mental Health Act, published last year, that the current legislation needs significant reform. There has been a 47% increase in detentions under the Act over the past decade, while the proportion of people living with a serious mental illness remains relatively unchanged, so clearly there is some imbalance there; it cannot be right that the number of detentions is going up. I echo the points that have been made about the link between this issue and the cuts to, and failings of, other services in the community that might be able to help at an earlier stage. Perhaps that is one reason why people are ending up in the most serious of circumstances; that is, being detained.

Being detained in a secure mental health unit is obviously going to be an intimidating and frightening experience for anyone. However, it is particularly intimidating for people with learning disabilities and autism, especially young people with those conditions, so I will focus on those groups in my speech. I raised this issue at Health questions on Tuesday, and the Minister—not the hon.

Member for Thurrock (Jackie Doyle-Price), but another Minister from the Department of Health and Social Care—gave a very thoughtful response.

One of the things that the Minister said was that learning disabilities, autism or other special needs are often not diagnosed until a child is detained in a mental health unit, which again shows the failings. Child and adolescent mental health services are incredibly under-resourced, and schools are really stretched when it comes to education, health and care plans and working with children who show signs of mental health problems. It is so important that we put proper resources in, so that we can give those children the help they need as early as possible. I am sure that the Minister responding to today's debate, the hon. Member for Thurrock, agrees with that.

Under the Act, people with learning disabilities and autism can be sectioned with no mental health diagnosis if they are displaying challenging behaviour. The independent review found that the Mental Health Act was

"being used inappropriately for people with a learning disability, autism or both, to deal with a crisis that has arisen because of a lack of good community care or placements...It is particularly intimidating for a person with autism, learning disability or both to be removed from a place they are familiar with or from people they know, even if at the time there seemed little alternative...Instead of improving their mental health, the environment (including relationships with staff) has made them worse, not better."

One of the common characteristics of autism, for example, is being wedded to routine, and being uncomfortable with unfamiliar circumstances and stimuli that those people would perhaps not get in a more protective environment. That can be particularly challenging.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission echoes such concerns, stating:

"The Commission is concerned about the lack of suitable provision for people with learning disabilities and autism, who may be in restrictive institutional settings because there is insufficient community-based support. The Government failed to meet its minimum target to reduce the number of people with learning disabilities and autism detained in inpatient settings, and at the end of March 2019 there were still 2,260 children and adults living in these institutions. On average, they had spent almost 5 and a half years detained away from home. There were more than 2,600 restrictive interventions recorded against inpatients with learning disabilities and autism in a single month, including physical, chemical and mechanical restraint, seclusion and segregation. Of these, 875 interventions were used against children."

Most of those people should never have had to go into an in-patient unit, let alone be subject to those types of restrictive intervention. They are ending up in such units because of challenging behaviour due to unmet needs in the community. Those needs, as I have said, should be met with vital investment in community mental health services.

From my experience of people who have come to my surgeries, other casework that we have been dealing with and what I have picked up from visiting institutions, it seems that mental health services suit certain people because of the pathways developed in the NHS, but others do not fit into that category. For example, a child with learning disabilities was rejected for anxiety counselling, and they were later diagnosed with autism. To do the standard CAMHS anxiety counselling, someone has to have a certain ability to rationalise their actions and think about how they operate. That cognitive behavioural therapy-type approach was not suitable for that child, but that meant that nothing was available, because that was the pathway for young girls suffering from anxiety.

[Kerry McCarthy]

I had another case where a constituent was told that she was too traumatised by a recent experience to go through the counselling on offer through her GP. She clearly was not in a serious enough condition to be sectioned, however, so it seemed like she was caught between two things. She clearly needed help, but she was deemed to be too serious a case to get the help that was available. We need to look at the people, rather than just trying to fit them into categories and, when they do not fit into categories, rejecting them from the system, almost as though we are saying, “Come back when you are a lot worse, and then perhaps there is something we can do for you.” That has to be the wrong approach.

Going back to children in particular, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has expressed specific concerns about the adequacy of therapeutic community-based services for children. Because of that lack of community provision, children are being detained when they should not be. According to NHS Digital, at least 1,777 people aged 17 or under were detained under the Mental Health Act in 2017-18. Of those, more than a thousand were admitted to a non-local bed, in many cases more than 100 miles from home. Some children and young people under care of Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire CCG had to travel up to 243 miles away from home for mental health care. That cannot be in the child’s best interests and will add to the sense of isolation and anxiety, and it can also prevent their families from being properly involved in their care.

A recent Children Commissioner’s report found that many parents feel they are being shut out of decisions about their children’s care and are not always informed about incidents involving their children. Serious incidents had happened in hospital without families even being told. Some families had even faced gagging orders where they had been prevented from speaking out about their children’s care. The independent review calls for better safeguards to protect children and young people, ensuring that they are treated in hospital only when necessary and that their rights as a child are clearly set out. There is a need to establish clear tests as to whether children and young people are able to consent to hospital admission or treatment and whether they should be involved in decisions made about them. Clear roles need to be established for parents in care planning and treatment.

The review also states that there needs to be more advocacy available for children and young people. That is particularly important where conflicts arise between the clinical team about how to meet the best interests of the young person, including where contact between young people and their parents is seriously restricted—in some cases, the mental health crisis might be the result of chaotic family circumstances at home or ill treatment—or where the wishes of the young person conflict with the wishes of the adult.

Every in-patient child or young person should have a personalised care plan that includes their views and wishes and access to an advocate. They should be regarded as a child in need under the Children Act 1989 so that parents can ask for help from their local authority.

As the British Medical Association lead for mental health, Dr Andrew Molodynski has said:

“Warehousing unwell people in locked wards far from home goes against the very nature of mental health rehab—to help them reintegrate back into society.”

Unnecessary detention of vulnerable patients is not only unhelpful in terms of their recovery, but an ineffective use of taxpayers’ money. Too much money is being given to private firms to look after people with serious mental health problems in units often hundreds of miles away from their homes due to a shortage of NHS beds. That figure was £158 million in 2016-17 and £181 million in 2017-18—an increase of £23 million.

Last year, an extensive study of mental health rehabilitation by the Care Quality Commission found that stays in private beds cost twice as much as in the NHS because they tend to last twice as long. It found that the annual cost of rehab was £535 million and that private beds were on average 30 miles away from patients’ homes, whereas in the NHS they are only nine miles away.

One of the cases that I have been dealing with recently is that of a child who is in a mental health unit 150 miles away from home, but the unit closest to her home is in special measures and not accepting new patients. However, the unit she is in is ranked as outstanding and she seems to be making good progress. Clearly, when parents are faced with such a choice, they want their child to go to the best unit possible, but that can put huge pressures on a family, in particular when they have other children, as well as jobs and lives. They might also not have the money to decamp to somewhere so they can visit their distressed child each day. There is a real lack of support in the system for families placed in such circumstances, with their whole lives disrupted by trying to be in two places at once.

Another problem is that the quality of care in hospitals can be highly variable. The Whorlton Hall case demonstrated just how awful situations can be, and how badly people can be treated in some places. In a recent investigation into children with learning disabilities or autism living in mental health hospitals, some families told the Children’s Commissioner about the excellent support that their children had received—it is important to put on the record that there is good care out there—but others had shocking stories to tell. For example, one family said that their son had not been washed for six months while in hospital. Basic care needs were not being met.

Despite improvements in recent years and the drive towards parity of esteem between physical and mental health services, it has not been realised. The aspiration is noble and shared by both parties, but we need to invest far more in our mental health services for people to get the support they need. I welcome the fact that the need for better community services was highlighted in the recent NHS long-term plan, and I am pleased that the Government have committed more funding to severe mental illness and to greater use of alternative mental health crisis provision, such as crisis cafés. However, an overhaul of the Mental Health Act is clearly needed if that investment is to be used in the best interests of patients by ensuring that their dignity and rights are protected and that they are treated in hospital only as a last resort.

The previous Prime Minister committed to new legislation to bring the Mental Health Act into line with a more modern understanding of how best to treat mental health. She confirmed that a White Paper would be published before the end of the year. The Minister is probably wondering whether she will be in post by the end of today, but even if she is moved on to greater things, I hope she asks the new Prime Minister to give that the same priority as the previous Prime Minister did.

2.27 pm

Johnny Mercer (Plymouth, Moor View) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Buck; thank you for calling me to speak. First, I pay tribute and give my thanks to the hon. Member for Bermondsey and Old Southwark (Neil Coyle) for securing the debate. Some of the best days we have in this place are when people recount their personal experiences and what drove them to the interests and causes they have in this place. It was remarkable listening to his experiences, which reinforced why we need to move what we do on mental health away from having a good conversation to actually changing things in a way that means something in the communities we serve.

With a new Prime Minister just two days into the job, it is a welcome opportunity to put this important issue on the agenda before summer recess. I look forward to the Government delivering on the White Paper that they have promised to publish by the end of the year. Mental health is an area that I have been trying to make a difference on since I came into this place. I have spoken openly about my own experiences of obsessive-compulsive disorder. I have said before that while I might like to pretend it is a distant memory, those who know me well know that it is not.

Reforming the Mental Health Act 1983 matters to me because I think it is important that we give specific, considered attention to the people whose mental illness is so severe that the state needs to step in to protect them or potentially other people. When people are unwell they need support. The 1983 Act provides that, but as I recently discussed at an all-party parliamentary group on mental health event on that very topic, that support is not always as beneficial and therapeutic as it might be.

Members will know that I am chair of the all-party parliamentary group on mental health. At the event I mentioned, we were pleased to welcome Sir Simon Wessely as one of our speakers. His speech was very informative about some of the key changes that the review recommends and where we are at politically in making the new vision a reality for those who suffer with their mental health in our communities.

One thing that stood out to me in Sir Simon's address to the group was that, while rates of detention have increased, the rates of severe mental illness have remained relatively stable. Gold standard studies such as the adult psychiatric morbidity survey show that, so how do rates of detention shoot up by 47% in the last decade when the rate of mental illness among the population is almost unchanged? Something is not working, and I welcome the review's recommendation to raise the bar and tighten up the criteria for detention.

We were also privileged to hear at that meeting from Georgi Lopez, a young woman who bravely shared her experience of being detained under the Mental Health Act with members of the APPG. Her powerful testimony made it clear that legislative reform is required to change things for the better. I will share some of Georgi's story with the House to illustrate how the Act negatively affects some people's lives when they are vulnerable and very unwell. I thank the hon. Member for Bermondsey and Old Southwark for sharing his experiences of the Act. We must keep such stories in mind when we talk about the potential of the forthcoming White Paper.

Georgi is 23 years old. She was first detained under the Act when just 17, and was detained for the majority of the next four and a half years. Georgi was diagnosed with anorexia nervosa shortly after completing her A-levels. She had been preparing her application to the University of Oxford. Shortly after her AS exams, she was taken to A&E, as she was severely dehydrated and malnourished. Her parents were given an ultimatum: to have Georgi voluntarily admitted to a psychiatric hospital or for her to be sectioned. They chose voluntary admission.

For the first few weeks in a psychiatric hospital, Georgi complied with all the treatment she was given, but following her first meeting with a psychiatrist she was told that she would be assessed to be detained under section 3 of the Mental Health Act. She was also put on highly sedative medication. She and her parents objected to her being detained because, up until that point, she had followed her treatment plan as asked, without need for coercion or detention. They were not listened to and she was detained.

Hon. Members can imagine how someone who has done everything that they have been asked to do to manage their condition would feel on having that control taken away from them, with little to no reason given. Georgi dealt with that loss of power by declining to take the medication that she had been prescribed. She was then forcibly injected with sedatives. That experience shows why Professor Wessely's report is aptly titled "Increasing choice, reducing compulsion".

I later heard about Georgi's second experience of detention, which was completely different. She said that she was treated like a human being, and the staff were very interested in her past, her interests and her aspirations. Her care team involved her and her family in every decision about her treatment. Although it took her some time to rebuild her trust in the system and the Act, she believes that she owes her life, health and happiness to that positive experience, where she had choice and autonomy.

Georgi was clearly right when she told our APPG that her first experiences of treatment were neither caring nor conducive to her recovery. I agree with her, but her second experience, where her team involved her in her own care and helped her to rediscover herself and her identity, shows that it is possible to provide good psychiatric care. Georgi is in fact now an aspiring psychiatrist. People think that it gets easier to share your story; it does not—it always takes courage and bravery. I hope that by listening to Georgi's varied experiences of the Act we can see that, although it is possible to provide care that involves patients in decision making, that does not always happen.

The Act shapes the culture and practice in mental health units. We need to change it so that Georgi's positive experience of the Act is standard across the country. I fully support reform and I am pleased that the Government have committed to a White Paper by the end of the year. We need to seize the opportunity to get this right, and I am sure that our new Prime Minister will show leadership on this issue, which is important to my party and my constituents.

2.33 pm

Mr Kevan Jones (North Durham) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Buck. I put on record my thanks to my hon. Friend the Member for Bermondsey and Old Southwark (Neil Coyle) not only

[Mr Kevan Jones]

for securing the debate but for the way in which he introduced it. I agree with the hon. Member for Plymouth, Moor View (Johnny Mercer) that someone speaking so powerfully brings to life what might be dry words on paper in an Act. To hear the experience that my hon. Friend and his family have been through highlights why it is important that we get things right.

My hon. Friend described how the Mental Health Act 1983 gives the state draconian powers to detain individuals and take away their liberty, not because they have done anything wrong but because they are mentally ill. As he said, 50,000 of our fellow citizens go through that process every year. There is something wrong if we are using the Act 50,000 times a year. I am sorry, but I just do not accept that in 2019 that is the only way we can deal with someone in mental health crisis who, rather than being a danger to anybody else, is possibly more of a danger to themselves.

Like others, I accept and welcome Professor Simon Wessely's report. As my hon. Friend said, some of us remember the 1983 general election. It was a long time ago, but there are some similarities, as he said, with the current political world. Importantly, things have changed, including our attitudes on a whole range of things. The key issue that comes out of Sir Simon Wessely's report is the need to put the individual at the centre of everything. The hon. Member for Plymouth, Moor View gave a very good example of how, when we get it wrong and do not put the individual at the centre, things are bad for that individual. Clearly, his constituent was treated inhumanely. We must put people at the centre. That is difficult, as people who are in mental health crisis can have great difficulty in making decisions, but that does not mean that they have lost capacity in all circumstances. That is one of the things that Sir Simon raised in the report.

The use of the Act should be a last resort, not the first course of action in dealing with people who are in mental health crisis. As the report says, we also need to involve the individual in decision making. That can be difficult; I accept that people can refuse treatment. However, if it is properly explained and people are involved in the decision, there are better outcomes for them individually and in-patient time will be reduced.

I have spoken before about advocacy. Owing to the draconian powers that the Act bestows on the state, it is important that the individual has access to independent advocacy. I welcome the recommendation for people to have to opt out of having an advocate. That puts the onus on the state to have independent advocates trained and available, and to ensure that people know how to access them.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bermondsey and Old Southwark also raised the issue of family members, which can be very difficult. The report's suggestion to move towards having a nominated person is the way forward. In the past, assumptions have been made that an individual wants certain relatives involved; on a number of occasions they do not want that, and it may not be in their best interests. The right hon. Member for New Forest East (Dr Lewis) made the point that we need to try to involve family members where we can, because they are an important part of supporting the individual and ensuring that they get the help they require.

I am concerned about a lot of issues related to the Act, including the need for a timetable for implementing the recommendations. A White Paper has been promised. I do not criticise the Minister because, as I have said before, since she has been in post she has been a strong advocate for mental health issues. However, this matter has to be a priority. I know we can get blindsided by big issues regarding Brexit, but the implementation of these changes is important and should be a top priority.

The report states that we need to investigate why the Mental Health Act is used more against members of black, Asian and minority ethnic communities than others. I accept that there may be a stigma attached to mental health issues in certain BAME communities and that it might give rise to particular questions, but that topic needs an inquiry all of its own. Unless we get answers to why the Act is being used more in those communities, we will not be able to make the necessary changes.

Why is the Act being used more? Perhaps there is a simple answer. Ever since we closed the asylums in the early 1980s, we have put neither the investment nor the policy in place to support people with long-term enduring mental health conditions in the community. That is about money to pay for the support that individuals need, but it is also—my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy) raised this point—about pathways, how people get into the system, and the disconnect between the various agencies with which people come into contact.

The all-party parliamentary group on social work has just conducted an inquiry on that subject. I am not going to steal the thunder of my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton North (Alex Cunningham), who chaired the inquiry. It was very informative, and I was privileged to be involved in it. The disconnection and lack of integration between local councils and the health service is clearly an issue, and it is not necessarily just down to money; it is also to attitudes. The system needs to be put back together. It is no good telling somebody who is in a mental health crisis, "I'm sorry, but you are not my responsibility; that is a local authority issue," if they present to the NHS or vice versa. That needs to be put right.

In County Durham we have a very good integrated system of local government and NHS care, which works very well. If we are to put that wraparound care around individuals such as the mother of my hon. Friend the Member for Bermondsey and Old Southwark, it must be integrated; it must be joined up. It cannot be fragmented.

Is the problem all about the availability of beds? I would say no, it is not. The right hon. Member for New Forest East is right that we have cut beds back too quickly, thinking that we do not need them and that we can manage people in the community when we cannot. The argument that follows is, "The answer to this is more beds." Well, I am sorry, I do not think it is, personally. What I want is a good community-based model to support people in the community. That is going to take money. It needs a clear, worked-through policy. It has to include local authorities and it has to include housing. One of the biggest issues that people leaving in-patient beds face is the question of where they will live, and it is not surprising that many of them end up on the streets in our communities. We need a joined-up approach.

As I said earlier this week in another debate on mental health, we must have a joined-up local system that includes not just the agencies I have mentioned, but the

community and voluntary sector. If we are going to support people in the community, in my experience it is often best done by voluntary and community sector organisations. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bermondsey and Old Southwark said at the beginning of the debate, many of those organisations are under pressure because grants are being cut. We need a joined-up approach.

While I am on my hobby horse about the voluntary and community sector, can such organisations bid for contracts from clinical commissioning groups and local authorities? In many cases they cannot, because they are not big enough. The contracts are drawn up in such a way that they are not available to those organisations. In terms of value for money and local input, that would be very important.

We must also support and develop staff in the sector. During the inquiry, we met some amazing, inspiring young people who were entering social work and majoring in support for people with mental health issues. In Durham a few weeks ago, I had the privilege of meeting some of the young people who were taking part in the Think Ahead programme—I think it was started by one of the Minister's predecessors—which aims to get social workers trained in mental health work. Most of those I met said it was a very rewarding field to get into, when it was properly supported.

What about other Government policies? We need joined-up policy at the local level to support individuals, but we also need to make sure that mental health is hardwired into Government policy. I have said that on a number of occasions, and I will do so again. For example, if someone in the community has a long-term mental health condition, fails her personal independence payment assessment and is sectioned—I handled a similar situation a few weeks ago—what does that cost the taxpayer? It is no good for the individual and it is no good for the taxpayer. Under mandatory reconsideration, the PIP was reinstated. We have to make sure that consideration of mental health issues is built into policy and that the policies of other Government Departments are not creating problems for individuals.

Finally, as we know, many individuals in prison have mental health problems. The current system for transferring individuals from prison to mental health facilities is not working. That is another issue that I have raised previously. Those on indeterminate or fixed sentences who come up for assessment by the Parole Board face a double jeopardy situation. They have to have a mental health assessment by both a mental health tribunal and a Parole Board. That cannot be right. It leads to, on average, an extra 18 months in prison, where proper treatment and proper planning is difficult. It does not help them or the system, and it costs more to keep them in prison. We need a system where one single assessment would be enough to make sure that those people get the support they require.

This is about money and it is about reforming the existing system, but we must also ensure that both national and local policies enable a joined-up, wraparound service. With the right investment and the right political will, we can get there. We are not going to go back to putting people in institutions or asylums; people should be able to live a happy, contented and safe life in the community, with the wraparound care that they deserve. That is what we should be providing, as a decent society.

2.48 pm

Mr Steve Reed (Croydon North) (Lab/Co-op): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Buck. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Bermondsey and Old Southwark (Neil Coyle) for a very moving opening speech. It was a very brave speech, because he was sharing difficult personal experiences, and that made it all the more compelling.

I want to focus on the use of restraint, which is one of the four key issues that the review covers. Last year, Parliament passed my private Member's Bill, which became known as the Mental Health Units (Use of Force) Act 2018, but is better known as Seni's law. I was very grateful to the Minister for her support on the Bill, which introduced a system for reducing the use of abusive and coercive restraint in mental health settings. It establishes in law, for the first time, some very important principles, including the need for trauma-informed care. Some of the principles in the Act, which was of necessity relatively narrowly drawn, could and should be applied more widely. That is the point I hope to impress on the Minister this afternoon.

Perhaps I can remind colleagues of the human story behind Seni's law—the Minister knows it, but other colleagues might not. Seni Lewis was a young graduate aged just 21. His parents found him having a traumatic mental health episode at home one Sunday morning, something he had never experienced before. They took him to the local hospital, expecting to find the care that he needed and deserved. He ended up at the Bethlem Royal Hospital, where his parents stayed with him until late evening before leaving to go home. Seni became very alarmed when he found out that he was alone, and he tried to leave. The hospital staff decided to section him and therefore tried to stop him leaving.

There were never any allegations that Seni threatened or assaulted anyone, but the hospital called the police. It ended up with 11 police officers dragging Seni, with his hands cuffed behind his head and legs in braces, into a seclusion unit, where they took turns sitting on him as he was pinned down on the floor. Seni's spinal column was broken and he went into cardiac arrest, then into a coma. He died shortly afterwards.

Looking at the pictures of people who have died in mental health detention, we see many young black faces like Seni's. Widely held prejudices about young black men and psychosis, drugs and aggression lead them to be subject to more severe treatment than other patients. In extreme cases such as Seni's, it leads to death. It is a form of institutional racism, and we need to call it out and confront it.

I first met Seni's parents three years after his death, just after I had been elected to Parliament in a by-election. They came to see me three years after this terrible incident because there had still been no inquest into his death, no public explanation of how or why their beloved son had died, no learning to prevent similar deaths in the future, no closure and no justice for Seni's deeply distraught family. It was only after a very long public campaign and the intervention of the then Minister for mental health, the right hon. Member for North Norfolk (Norman Lamb), and the then Home Secretary, the right hon. Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May), that an inquest was finally opened, seven years after Seni's death. It found that Seni had been subject to severe and

[Mr Steve Reed]

prolonged restraint that had caused his death. It castigated the police and the mental health services and warned that, without change, other people in the mental health system would die in the future, just as too many have died in the past.

Seni's law began as a cross-party attempt to start the process of change by creating a new national system for recording the use of restraint in mental health settings. We will soon be able to see what is happening in different mental health trusts and hospitals, and compare like with like to identify and spread best practice in reducing the use of abusive and coercive restraint. However, the same system needs to be extended to all settings where people with mental ill health might be subject to restraint, and I invite the Minister to comment on any plans she has to do that.

[DAVID HANSON *in the Chair*]

The review makes it clear that we need to do more. Deaths in mental health settings should be investigated in the same way as deaths in any other form of state detention are investigated. When someone dies in prison or in a police cell, there is an automatic external investigation by an independent national body, which publishes a final report and shares what it has found. However, when someone dies in a mental health setting, as Seni Lewis did, there is no such fully independent investigation. In Seni's case, the health trust investigated itself, and lessons that needed to be learned were not learned. Owing to errors by the Independent Police Complaints Commission, the Metropolitan police were able to block an inquest for a full seven years after his death. It should not be possible for the organisation under investigation to control the scope, timeliness, quality and content of the report on their own potential failure, because of the risk of a cover-up.

I pay special tribute to the powerful campaigning work on this issue that has been carried out by the charity Inquest. I fully support its demand for non-means-tested legal aid to be available to families at inquests, so that there is a level playing field between the bereaved family and the well-funded organisations accused of potential wrongdoing. Such investigations must be conducted by fully independent bodies that command the confidence of the public and bereaved families. By failing to learn from preventable mental health deaths, we condemn other vulnerable people to the same tragic fate.

Seni Lewis died in the most horrific circumstances, and his parents then had to fight for justice over seven years, just to find out what had gone wrong. Seni's law stands as a testament to his life, but it is time to go further. The review of the Mental Health Act 1983 creates an opportunity to do so. We need to ensure that every bereaved family can get the justice they deserve. We need to ensure that, through a fully independent system, every lesson we need to learn is learned and acted on, so that we can keep every vulnerable person with mental ill health safe in future.

2.55 pm

Alex Cunningham (Stockton North) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Hanson, and to follow not just the contribution from my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon North (Mr Reed), but the other speeches. Great expertise and understanding

has been brought to the debate. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Bermondsey and Old Southwark (Neil Coyle) on securing the debate, and I thank him for sharing a very powerful and personal testimony as well as offering solutions to the crisis in mental health. So often we can blather away in places such as here in Westminster Hall; we can talk about the problems, issues and suffering, but sometimes we do not offer solutions. It is our job to come up with solutions, and my hon. Friend the Member for Bermondsey and Old Southwark and others have offered some.

As some colleagues might know, I have the privilege of chairing the all-party parliamentary group on social work. As my right hon. Friend the Member for North Durham (Mr Jones) said, we recently undertook an inquiry on the role that social workers play in upholding the principles outlined in the independent review of the Mental Health Act 1983, and on how that role can be recognised and enhanced in new legislation.

I believe that social workers are regularly, if not always, undervalued, yet their work is incredibly valuable in supporting and helping the most vulnerable people in our society—be it children at risk, older people in need of a bit more support, or families who experience breakdown and need the independent support that a social worker can provide. Of course, social workers also support people with mental health needs, although many people do not realise the tremendous role that they play in that. They ensure that mental health problems are not a barrier to anybody achieving the things they want, and that people get the appropriate treatment and care that they need.

Back in 2018, I met with two approved mental health professionals in my role as the chair of the APPG on social work. They are known as AMHPs—perhaps it is something to do with their electrifying personalities. They explained that there was a need to promote the role of social workers in mental health services, and I now understand why that is necessary. The legislation and policy often skim over the work of social workers, perhaps because it is so varied and hard to pin down.

In December, the independent review of the Mental Health Act 1983 published its report and recommendations. In preparation for a Government response, the APPG decided to have our own inquiry and add to that great piece of work. Some 9,000 social workers work in a defined mental health role, accounting for about 4% or 5% of the core mental health workforce, and 95% of AMHPs are social workers. I know it will take more than legislation to embed the kind of changes we would like to see, and work will have to be done by CCGs, local authorities, the NHS and social work leadership—to name but a few—if we are to succeed and get the change that is needed. I am hopeful that the APPG's report and recommendations will act as a staging post on the way to cultural and legislative change.

Mr Kevan Jones: Was my hon. Friend impressed, as I was, when we met various people giving evidence to the inquiry? The best practice was where local authorities and the NHS were co-located and working closely together, rather than when it was being divided.

Alex Cunningham: Yes, that was most certainly the case. I shall remark on that a little later in my speech. I was really concerned to find that the number of joint

working arrangements was diminishing rather than increasing across the country, but I will address that a little later.

I was surprised to hear in the evidence sessions that health and social care integration, which the Government are officially pursuing, is going backwards. My right hon. Friend spoke about that in detail. A key message from the APPG is that the Government need to urgently examine how they can better support the integration programme, arrest the decline and ensure that people work together. Social workers in health and in local authorities need to work much more closely together.

Integration in mental health services is about bringing the social model into healthcare settings, where social approaches sometimes struggle to gain acceptance and respect when compared with the medical model. We do not suggest replacing one with the other but, as integration implies, a full marriage of the two models so that the needs of the individual are met in one place. Better still, a properly integrated social model would make sure that treatment and care planning were guided by the person in their own context, rather than fitting them into a pre-existing diagnostic box. Such an approach means greater consideration of the social determinants of mental ill health—factors such as socio-economic background, education, housing and family dynamics. We have heard examples of that throughout the debate.

The APPG report made several recommendations. The new mental health legislation should open with a definition of the social model and the importance of addressing the social determinants of mental illness alongside biological and psychological determinants; it should explicitly name social workers as the key professionals doing the work; Ministers should ensure that the team preparing new mental health legislation also produces guidance on how it is intended to interact with other legislation such as the Mental Capacity Act 2005 and the Equality Act 2010; the CQC should be mandated to provide an annual report to Parliament on the progress of health and social care integration; and social work leadership—this is particularly important—on trust and CCG boards is necessary. I think it is more than necessary; it is essential. They are professional people with a major and specific role and they should be at the table where the decisions are made.

The report also recommended that new mental health legislation must have greater regard to both health and local authority resources. My right hon. Friend the Member for North Durham talked about the lack of resources within the system. CCGs should be held transparently accountable for their duties under section 140 of the current Mental Health Act, or any new legislation, making sure that there are enough beds in the right places. The people detained under section 3 of the Mental Health Act should be reviewed by a social worker, and families and carers of all people detained away from home because of a lack of local provision should be provided with financial support. That point was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy), who talked about the effect that it can have on families when a family member in crisis is 150 miles or more away. A national dataset on the number of Mental Health Act assessments should be established as part of the DHSC mental health services dataset. Those recommendations are not

unreasonable. I hope that the Department for Health and Social Care will take note and address the gaps where professionals say that they are.

I recently had the opportunity to serve on the Bill Committee for the Mental Capacity (Amendment) Bill, and key issues that I and other colleagues raised still need to be looked at. During the passage of that Bill, I was quite surprised to find out that the Bill had not been subjected to any pre-legislative scrutiny, despite its central role of redeveloping the laws of this country for depriving people of their liberty. I said that I thought the Government needed to pause and think again about the implications of the plans that Ministers were putting before us, listen to the countless charities, other organisations and professionals who work with the legislation every day, and come back with a Bill fit for purpose. It should not have been about a basic political argument between the Government and the Opposition. It is about a debate between the law makers and the people, some of whom at a particular time in their life can be subject to some of the most restrictive legislation that we have. Sadly, at that time the Minister did not listen, and the legislation we are left with will need to be reviewed before too long. I feel the same about moving forward with reviewing our legislation in general around mental health, and perhaps putting new legislation to this House, but whatever it is, it needs to reflect wide views.

The legislation that we create or amend affects the most vulnerable in our society, as I have said before, but it should be considered with extra care and attention. I do not think that we did that in the recent Bill Committee, so we must include those who know what they are talking about, such as the professionals, the experts and the social workers—those who have worked on the frontline of mental health care and know where the gaps are and how we can ensure that we do better for those who receive care under mental health provision. We must and can do better. I hope that as we move forward, Ministers will listen and get it right.

3.6 pm

Barbara Keeley (Worsley and Eccles South) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Hanson, as it was to serve under Ms Buck earlier. I join others in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Bermondsey and Old Southwark (Neil Coyle) on securing this debate and echo his comments about the moving way in which he opened the debate. He started with his own family experience and then made a very powerful speech. I am sorry that you missed it, Mr Hanson. We heard contributions from the right hon. Member for New Forest East (Dr Lewis) and the hon. Member for Plymouth, Moor View (Johnny Mercer), as well as my right hon. Friend the Member for North Durham (Mr Jones) and my hon. Friends the Members for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy) and for Stockton North (Alex Cunningham). I am sure we all want to thank Sir Simon Wessely and his team for their work in reviewing the Mental Health Act.

The wide range of perspectives in the debate is welcome. It shows how wide-ranging the work is and how it touches on so many different aspects. One thing on which we can all agree is that the current Mental Health Act is not working. It is too often overly restrictive and fails to give people the support they need, as we have heard. Before I discuss the contents of the review, I

[Barbara Keeley]

want to mention why it is so important that we get this right, because being detained under the Mental Health Act, although it is sometimes life-saving, can be immensely damaging if it goes wrong, and we have heard already about how it can go wrong. I, too, am going to talk about a case: the case of Matthew Leahy.

On 7 November 2012, Matthew was admitted to a mental health hospital under the Mental Health Act. On 15 November, he hanged himself in his room at the hospital. The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman has identified failures in Matthew's care that may have led to his death, but they have taken seven years to come to light. My hon. Friend the Member for Croydon North (Mr Reed) talked about delays. They are exasperating, concerning and impossible for families who have to live with the loss of a loved one. Some of the failures in Matthew's case were truly shocking. He complained that he had been raped in the mental health hospital. The ombudsman found that had Matthew not phoned the police himself, it is not clear that staff on the unit would have done so. Anyway, the police failed to take action.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bermondsey and Old Southwark referred to the level of sexual assaults on patients—an appalling record, as reported by the CQC. It should be of deep concern to us that that is happening. Staff also failed to act when Matthew reported, and he had physical injuries that could have been caused by rape, which should have been a major cause of concern. It is also deeply concerning that his care plan was falsified and other paperwork was lost. Although he had a care plan for his first 72 hours in the unit, staff produced a fuller care plan only after he died. That that should have happened when he was apparently under the protection of the state is unacceptable. We must ensure that we know what went wrong in his and other cases of death so that we can act to prevent it from recurring.

There have also been issues with the subsequent investigation. The initial report by the NHS partnership contained inaccuracies about how Matthew's care had been planned. Across the board, the partnership failed to learn the lessons of Matthew's death, which compounds the tragedy of that young man taking his own life while he was in the care of the state. As my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon North has said, there should be independent investigations of deaths that occur in mental health hospitals. I know that the Minister has been asked before to set up an inquiry into Matthew Leahy's death. I ask her to commit to doing so now, so that we can learn the lessons from that tragic event and prevent such a thing from happening again.

Sir Simon's recommendations will not solve every problem with our in-patient mental health services, but the Opposition believe that they would improve them, and would remove many of the major issues with the Mental Health Act. Although we have a little time, we cannot focus on all 154 of the recommendations. I just want to discuss the principles that he felt should be central to the operation of the Act. My hon. Friend the Member for Bermondsey and Old Southwark outlined those four principles in his opening speech.

The first principle is choice and autonomy. Of course, it should go without saying that, wherever possible, we give people control over what is happening to them. I am glad that the Government have committed to

introducing advance choice documents. Those will be central to ensuring that people can exercise choice over what happens to them. We have heard in many of today's speeches why that is important. I ask the Minister to confirm today, if she can, when those plans will be brought forward. There will be instances when people cannot exercise the choice themselves, so Sir Simon's proposals for the new nominated person role and increased use of advocates will ensure that in those circumstances people are still able to influence their care.

During the passage of the Mental Capacity Act 2019 there was a great deal of discussion, involving my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton North, about advocacy. We must ensure that local authorities are fully funded to provide those vital services. It would be a travesty if someone were denied a voice because of budget constraints at their local council. Can the Minister tell us whether the Government will provide additional funding for advocacy to ensure that that does not happen?

The second principle is that of least restriction. It seems self-evident that we should try to ensure that people retain as much of their freedom as possible, but we have heard of the number of ways in which that does not happen. It might mean supporting people to enter mental health hospitals voluntarily rather than their being detained, or ending the use of seclusion and segregation and the terrible cases of restraint that we heard about.

The third principle is therapeutic benefit. Again, it should be self-evident that everything done under the Mental Health Act should be clearly aimed at helping the person in question to recover. If it is not, what is the justification for detaining them? My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol East talked about people with autism and learning difficulties in mental health hospitals, and we have to question how often their detention for periods of five years, or five and a half years, helps them at all, and whether any of what happens to them could be talked about as treatment.

Finally, Sir Simon emphasised the importance of treating the person as an individual. In particular, that section of the review focused on the current experiences of young people and people from BAME communities in mental health facilities. We have heard about that in speeches today. My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol East talked about the lack of support for families of children with out-of-area placements. Sir Simon recommends that, while those still exist—my party pledges to do away with them—financial assistance should be available when a young person is admitted to a placement away from their family. We are committed to ending inappropriate out-of-area placements, but my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol East talked about a case where, if a facility was the only one that would be able to provide the care, a parent would choose it. However, that support and financial assistance must be available. It is not right to cut off a young person's support network when they need it most.

My right hon. Friend the Member for North Durham also talked about why the powers under the Act are being used more with people from BAME communities, and we must focus relentlessly on the facts.

Mr Kevan Jones: Does my hon. Friend agree that we cannot leave the matter where it is? We need an inquiry into it. Sir Simon calls for more research, but unless we have an inquiry we will not be able to get the policy changes to identify what is, clearly, going wrong.

Barbara Keeley: Indeed, and what my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon North has said, today and in speaking about the Mental Health Units (Use of Force) Act 2018, has helped us to focus on the issue of the number of times when young people—particularly from BAME communities—are subject to the Mental Health Act, segregation and restraint. It is not acceptable. None of those cases is acceptable, but it is totally unacceptable if one group seems to be singled out in society for such measures—particularly tragically in the case of Seni. I applaud my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon North for taking that one case and pushing it through to legislation, and the Minister for supporting it.

All the principles I have outlined are important. It is only by following them that we can ensure that a reformed Mental Health Act will work in the interest of those it is designed to help: people with mental health conditions. Will the Minister confirm whether the Government will accept recommendation 1 of the review, that the four crucial principles be put on the face of the Act? We had a bit of a battle during the passage of the Mental Capacity Act 2019 in getting the Minister to accept that things should be on the face of the Bill, but things such as advocacy are pretty important, and it will not be acceptable if they can be overlooked or treated as a budgetary problem.

Alex Cunningham: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of our particular concerns was the way that the proposals related to young people and the fact that although there appeared to be safeguards that might look after adults, the protection for young people, and provision to give their families the necessary help to support them, was thin?

Barbara Keeley: Indeed, and we did try valiantly to get the Minister to accept amendments, but she would not. There is concern. It is a good thing to include 16 and 17-year-olds in the legislation, but not if there are no safeguards. There are real worries. In many cases that I have looked at, and where I continue to try to support families, parents feel ignored and helpless. They feel that mental health hospitals act without reference to the people who know the young person best.

One area in which Sir Simon did not make recommendations was the definition of a mental disorder. Specifically, he concluded that it was not appropriate for his review to decide whether autistic people should remain within the scope of the Act purely because of their autism. I agree with Sir Simon that that is a complex topic, but we should not let it be an excuse for inaction. Autism is not a mental health condition, but the Mental Health Act treats it as though it is. As a result, there are 1,150 autistic people in in-patient mental health facilities. A proportion of them will have mental health conditions that require treatment, but it should never happen that someone is detained purely because they are autistic or because they present with behaviour that could be challenging. I know of many cases where that is happening.

We all saw the deeply disturbing BBC “Panorama” programme on Whorlton Hall, which revealed the shocking treatment that autistic people were subjected to while detained in mental health hospitals. I am sure we would all agree that that treatment is simply unacceptable, but we must do more to prevent it. The best way of doing

that is to ensure that people are not put into in-patient environments unnecessarily. If someone does not have a mental health condition that is being treated, they should not be held under the Mental Health Act. Can the Minister confirm that when the Government bring forward the proposals in the review, they will go further than Sir Simon and commit to ending the outdated practice of treating autism in the same way as mental health conditions?

It is eight months since Sir Simon’s final review was published, although it does not seem like it. He made more than 150 recommendations. We did not expect the Government to respond to all of them straightaway, but in eight months they have responded to fewer than a dozen recommendations. The other 140 apparently have to wait for the White Paper. We have heard about more reviews from the new Prime Minister this morning. All we seem to get is more rounds of consultation and more reviews, but Sir Simon consulted widely during the review. His review was informed by the experiences of 988 people, including 467 service users—the inclusion of service users is praiseworthy—and evidence from 75 organisations and 90 professionals working in the field. I hope that that included social workers. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton North for making such a strong case for the involvement of social workers; I agree with him.

The only reason I can see for further consultation would be if the Government were planning to go further on some of the recommendations than Sir Simon did—for example, in removing autism from the scope of the Act. Can the Minister confirm whether that is the case? If not, can she tell us why she feels that the consultation that Sir Simon carried out is insufficient? Surely it would be better to publish a draft Bill and carry out pre-legislative scrutiny in the normal way than to do what has become known as kicking the can down the road. Six months ago we were promised a new set of guidance on the Mental Capacity Act, but that has not been mentioned at all since then. Those are the things that should be coming forward.

We have also been told that there will be a mental health White Paper to implement the findings of the review—we find ourselves waiting for Green Papers and White Papers. Someone could be forgiven for looking at that and thinking that the Government simply do not care about people waiting for much-needed reforms. I know that the Minister cares, but do her Government care? Can she give us a date for the publication of the Government’s mental health White Paper? It is popular to say a season or the end of the year, but a date is more useful to work with. I realise that it is a time of great uncertainty for Government Ministers—I hope that we will see this Minister in her place in future—but a firm date would help us to hold the Government to account should they let their focus slip.

People with mental health conditions have been let down for too long. The review represents a rare opportunity to make changes that have cross-party support—the consensus in this debate has been encouraging—to a system that does not work properly. I hope that the Minister, and the incoming Government, do not waste this opportunity by delaying it further, which would leave people stuck in a system that is harming, not helping, them.

3.20 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Jackie Doyle-Price): This is probably as well informed and good a debate as I have ever had to respond to. I hope I can do justice to all the good points that have been made, because we have covered all the key issues relating to how we better support people with mental ill health.

I associate myself with the comments about the personal speech of the hon. Member for Bermondsey and Old Southwark (Neil Coyle), which he made in such a dignified way that I was incredibly moved by his story. What struck me about the experiences that he detailed was that they were his normal, which brought it into stark relief that we are talking about the real day-to-day lives of human beings. It is incredible to hear what people have to cope with on a daily basis. He reminded us that the 1980s had the best pop music, and I was reminded of the “Karma Chameleon” lyric:

“Every day is like survival”.

When we are talking about people with severe mental ill health, every day is like survival, so I thank him for that.

The hon. Gentleman’s speech covered everything that we need to tackle and I do not disagree with anything he said. Obviously, some of the charges that he levelled at me are challenging and I do not want to duck them. Everybody is impatient that we are perhaps not doing as well as we would like in helping people with mental ill health. I share that impatience, but I will not promise that it can be sorted overnight. We are rolling out a significant increase in services and in the workforce to deliver them, which takes longer than anyone would wish.

I will try to address the points that have been made. It was a great pleasure to hear from the hon. Member for Croydon North (Mr Reed) and to support him in delivering Seni’s law. In connection with that law, he has reminded us that when deaths happen to people who are detained by the state, we absolutely owe it to their loved ones, and to the person who died, to be open with them. The truth is often anything but, because the associated institutions of the state collude to protect themselves. Other Ministers and I are determined that we are the servants of the people, and those institutions that are there to deliver services for the people should remember that and should engage in a spirit of openness.

I have met Seni’s parents and I could not admire them more for the dignity with which they have borne their experience and the good use that they have put it to. I genuinely feel guilty, however, that we have let them down. Hon. Members will be pleased to know that we have a ministerial board that investigates deaths in custody and what can be learned from them, but I emphasise that we—including colleagues in the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice who, along with me, sit on those boards—are becoming rather concerned that not enough progress has been made. I am glad to be in continued engagement with Inquest, which does a fantastic job advocating on behalf of bereaved families. We need to do more to learn from events when they go wrong.

Mr Reed: It is clear from the Minister’s comments that she cares passionately about the issues that we are talking about and for which she has responsibility. A consultation on the serious incident framework started

in March 2018 with a promise that the findings would be published in spring 2019. From the temperature today, we know that we are way past spring and into summer, but we still do not have a date for when they will be published. Can the Minister share a date by which we might expect that to happen?

Jackie Doyle-Price: I cannot give the hon. Gentleman a straightforward answer to that question but I will write to him with a commitment. It is very boring, but Brexit has diverted officials in the Department. Obviously, no-deal preparations in the health service are a matter of public concern, so we need to make them, but we still need to get on with business as usual. It is an important issue.

The hon. Member for Worsley and Eccles South (Barbara Keeley) mentioned the case of Matthew Leahy. I will go away and reflect on that, but I will give the same message as I gave in response to Seni’s law. Generally, we need to get a proper grip on how we learn from deaths that happen when somebody is in the state’s care, because that is clearly unacceptable. We have coronial reports of all those occasions. People should not be waiting the length of time that they are waiting for inquests. When inquests happen, again, there is usually representation from the various institutions involved and the family can be left feeling very under-represented against a mass of organisations trying to avoid liability. We need to tackle that properly.

We have had those discussions at the ministerial board. My ministerial colleagues in other Departments and I want to get a grip on how we properly hoist in the learnings from coronial reports. I look forward to engaging with hon. Members on that, but I will write to the hon. Lady specifically on the issue of Matthew Leahy. It is worth noting that we are looking at the principles of sexual safety in wards, which is not just about getting rid of mixed-sex wards. People are very vulnerable in those situations and it is all about the care regime.

Dr Lewis: Can the Minister tell us in simple terms what the situation is regarding the continuation or discontinuation of mixed-sex wards in mental health acute units?

Jackie Doyle-Price: On mixed-sex wards specifically, I cannot tell my right hon. Friend what the proportion is, but we are ensuring that the guidance on sexual safety on mental health wards is being rolled out. I will write to him specifically on that, if he will indulge me.

Barbara Keeley: An important point is that Matthew Leahy phoned the police to report the rape, but they concluded that it was part of his delusion—that was the reason they gave for not taking action. In the case of Whorlton Hall, the police also did not act on reports of assault, although assault was clearly going on. The Minister needs to take that problem up with the Policing Minister. It is not acceptable that what someone says is ignored if they are autistic or detained under the Mental Health Act 1983, because the level of sexual assault is disturbing, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bermondsey and Old Southwark (Neil Coyle) said.

Jackie Doyle-Price: That is an excellent point, and it plays into a general prejudice that people who are in detention are just an inconvenience to be managed. In the context of Sir Simon’s review, the whole ethos that

any reform we make should be about empowering patients brings with it obligations to challenge other aspects of the system, not just the care providers. The hon. Lady is right to say that I need to take that up with the Policing Minister, which I will do as part of rolling out our preparations for the White Paper. I understand the hon. Lady's lack of confidence when I say that the White Paper can be expected before the end of the year, but that is certainly my ambition, notwithstanding the fact that I know she has been waiting rather a long time for another paper that she was promised.

I can reassure the hon. Lady on the extent of the work that Sir Simon has done and the engagement we have had, especially with service users. Rather like the hon. Member for Bermondsey and Old Southwark, those service users shared with us their personal experiences, often reliving significant distress. Given that they have participated and that we have raised their expectations, we would, to be frank, be letting them down if we did not address that. I do not think that would be in any way forgivable, so, as long as it is on my watch, we will be pushing ahead.

As the hon. Member for Bermondsey and Old Southwark said, we are dealing with legislation passed in 1983, so although this appears to be a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reform this legislation, I hope that that is not the case. The situation is probably more symptomatic of the fact that we have not given this matter as much attention as it deserves, but clearly that has changed. The world has changed in terms of how we debate mental health, and that is welcome. Chiming in with the discussion we have had today, I am keen that we take this matter forward with consensus.

I pay tribute to the leadership that Sir Simon has shown in this review. As well as not ducking the controversial aspects of examining the legislation, he has engaged in dialogue and dealt with them in such a way that it is accepted that Members, peers, service users and professionals need to consider them. I am incredibly grateful for what he has done.

We talk more about mental ill health now, but when it comes to severe mental illness—the hon. Member for Bermondsey and Old Southwark spoke about schizophrenia—that is something that reveals incredible prejudice in people. As we have heard, if someone is able to manage their condition, they can live a full and independent life, but the key is being able to manage the condition with the appropriate support. We still have a lot to do in educating the public and society about the real impact of severe mental illness.

There are so many issues, but I will try to address them all in the time I have. The hon. Member for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy) asked about out-of-area placements for people with autism and learning disabilities. I must say that this is something that really bothers me. Far too many people remain in institutional care and in out-of-area placements, and nowhere is that more true than in the field of learning disabilities and autism.

It is interesting, once we dig under the issue, to see that we have been very successful in getting people with learning disabilities out of in-patient care and into the community. However, that has been matched by a bigger increase in the number of people with autism finding their way into in-patient care. That tells me—I do not think this will be a surprise to anyone in the Chamber—that

we are not doing enough to diagnose autism early enough, and as a consequence we are not equipping people with the skills to be able to live independently.

The ultimate result is that we end up putting people in in-patient care. Quite often, those people are forgotten about and it becomes very expensive to keep them there, so not only are we failing people by not having services for them early enough, but we are adding significant cost to the taxpayer and, frankly, doing harm, because the longer those people stay in in-patient care, the more their ability to live independently diminishes. As far as I am concerned, that is a major failing that we need to address.

Kerry McCarthy: I thank the Minister for that. There are two aspects that I have come across. First, it is often when a child reaches their teenage years, which we know are difficult for any child with all the turmoil that is going on physically and mentally, that the anxiety takes over and they eventually go into crisis, and things that perhaps should have been picked up sooner are only picked up then. Secondly, that seems to be particularly true for girls. We know that it is more difficult to diagnose girls with autism than to diagnose boys. I was told yesterday, although I do not know whether this figure is true, that one in four girls in mental health units with anorexia is diagnosed with autism. There is a lot of work to be done in the early years, before they reach that crisis point in their teens.

Jackie Doyle-Price: I agree with every word that the hon. Lady says. One of our expectations of the new mental health support teams that we are rolling out into schools is that they will be able to work with schools and to spot people who might be in trouble. She is right that, with girls particularly, autism is under-diagnosed, and by the time the challenges start to have an impact on mental health, it is much more difficult to give people appropriate support. Early diagnosis is key.

I am pleased that we are now setting up a unit within the Department of Health and Social Care to look at neurodiverse conditions and what more we can do to improve service provision for them. I am also pleased that NHS England shares my concern about this and that we can expect more work on it, but there remains a lot to do and I do not shirk from admitting that.

Barbara Keeley: There is also the financial difficulty that my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy) referred to. Private hospitals that autistic people and people with learning disabilities end up in tend to be very expensive—we know that the placements can be as much as £730,000 a year. The answer is to fund placements in the community. Years ago, when we were moving people out of long-stay mental health institutions, there was a dowry system. The Government do not have a dowry system to help with this, so Transforming Care failed because there was no mechanism to transfer funding from the NHS, which is taking the hit on cost, to cash-strapped local authorities. If local authorities are to continue being cash-strapped, and I hope they are not, some mechanism is needed there. My party has pledged to put in £350 million a year of transfers to make that happen. Does that idea recommend itself to the Minister? I know she is bothered about this.

Jackie Doyle-Price: I partly agree with the hon. Lady. The answer is better help within the community, but I come back to the point that the right hon. Member for North Durham (Mr Jones) made so well. It should not be about beds or in-patient care. The fact that we still have that, and that it is increasing, is a mark of failure. I do not think it should be addressed by reinvestment in in-patient care in the community. The key is putting the support in earlier, and that is what we must aim toward.

The hon. Lady mentions that many of the providers are private, and she is right. One of the challenges I am setting NHS providers is how we can be more innovative, co-commissioning with local authorities to ensure that we have more supported accommodation available in the community, recognising that there will be a saving across the system. I am very clear; I will take it on the chin that local authorities have had more financial challenges than the NHS has as we have tackled public spending, but ultimately, we must think about that person and ensuring that they have holistic care. Silo-based decision making is not doing the people who need our help any good. That is still a work in progress.

The hon. Member for Stockton North (Alex Cunningham) is right about the role of social workers here. I have regularly debated with hon. Members about the workforce challenges that we face in delivering improved mental health services. NHS England is very clear that that will be developed only through new multidisciplinary models of care, in which social workers will play a part. We can also make much better use of people with lived experience in delivering care for people with mental ill health, not least because engaging with mental health professionals can be very intimidating and threatening, particularly for somebody going through a crisis, and someone with lived experience can bring a very different perspective to that relationship. Much more can be done about that. That underlines the point that hon. Members made a number of times about the need for appropriate support services.

Alex Cunningham: I wonder whether I can prise from the Minister a commitment to look at the fact that there has been a deterioration in the number of authorities that are working with our health partners. Integration is deteriorating, rather than increasing. The model must be better, and all professionals must work together.

Jackie Doyle-Price: That is a fair challenge. We certainly will. One of the difficulties when there is a financial challenge arrangement is that people retreat into their silos and say, "This bill is your problem." That is not good enough. We have to be better at challenging them when that happens.

I am very clear that commissioners need to be much more imaginative. There is often a tendency to over-medicalise some of these issues. We have heard today that wrap-around services can be delivered much better by the voluntary sector, with better value for money and in a less intimidating way. That can often be more reliable than relying on in-NHS services.

There are two aspects to homelessness. It can often be symptomatic of a mental health issue or addiction; it is symptomatic of the fact that the person needs help. Equally, it exacerbates the issues that those people have. We have made resource available to tackle the holistic needs of rough sleepers, but again we are treating the

problem at the crisis end. People struggling with their housing situation will be more likely to need help, so we need to look at what else we can do to support people at that stage.

I was challenged on when we will end the use of police cells to detain people under the Mental Health Act. I want that to be written on the face of the Act, so that there is a clear binding commitment to do that. We have reduced it by 95% so far with places of safety, so I am confident in saying that detention in a police cell is a rarity these days; nevertheless, we need to guarantee that.

On in-patient care and out-of-area placements, it is clear that people recover more quickly if they are closer to their family and friends. As the hon. Member for Bristol East said, there is sometimes a need for specialist support. We need to look at how that interaction happens with NHS England. Specialised commissioning and delivering a very narrow service will inevitably lead to out-of-area placements, but are we doing more harm than good? Should the best be the enemy of the good? NHS England commissions a quantum; it does not scrutinise individual commissioning decisions. That is more likely to happen if it takes place locally. That is still work in progress.

Alex Cunningham: Recognising that specialist provision might be 150 miles away, will the Minister accept the recommendation from the APPG inquiry that families who do not have the means should be funded so they can visit and spend time with their loved one?

Jackie Doyle-Price: I cannot commit to delivering that, but I can commit to looking at it. I hope that is good enough for the hon. Gentleman.

Kerry McCarthy: In the case that I was talking about, the problem was not just that the treatment was so specialised that it was that far away, but that that was when the bed became available. It is a bit of a lottery. The one closest to home was not taking in new patients because it was in special measures. There would have been other places closer. If the person does not accept a bed when one becomes available, they may have to look after a distressed child for an awful lot longer.

Jackie Doyle-Price: This comes back to housing. One challenge is getting access to a bed, and another is when the person comes to leave, because we need to discharge people into safe living environments. Are there enough supported housing solutions? No, not always, so the bed remains full. I am having conversations with colleagues in local government to see what more we can do to deliver more supported housing so we can get the pathway going. We could fix it by making more beds available, but that is not really the answer. I am concerned that the longer we leave people in in-patient care, the more harm we do. We have to get that movement through the system. Hopefully, if we do that, people will be less likely to grab the first bed because they can be confident that more will become available more frequently. That is where we need to get to. I appreciate that right now it feels desperate.

There is an issue with quality. The Care Quality Commission has a challenge in deciding whether more harm will be done by taking enforcement action on a place rather than working with it to improve. We see

that writ large in TV programmes such as “Panorama”. There is a massive disparity in the quality of care. I challenge the CQC to be a lot more aggressive when we see poor standards of care.

The hon. Member for Bristol East mentioned private providers. People have heard of The Priory. They hear that celebrities go there and they think it is a centre of excellence. The truth is that the care there is less than optimal, but someone with a loved one who needs hospital treatment will not know that. We need the CQC to have a lot more teeth in terms of improving what comes out of its inspections. The system generally needs to support it in doing that.

Mr Reed: I am grateful to the Minister for giving me another opportunity to ask a question. While she is on housing, there is a growing issue of vulnerable young people and looked-after children being placed in unregulated, semi-supported homes or hostels. Some of them have severe mental ill health. When they are placed in such settings, they do not receive the support they require and become a danger to other people residing there. That happened in the awful case of Lance Scott Walker, a looked-after teenager in the care of Islington Council. He was placed in a hostel in Ealing, where he was stabbed to death by another young person with schizophrenia. It is clearly inappropriate for young people to be put in those kinds of setting. Is the Minister intervening with local authorities and the Department to try to prevent a repetition of that case?

Jackie Doyle-Price: I thank the hon. Gentleman for sharing that case. I was not aware of it. Some local authorities are not as good as they should be in discharging their responsibilities as corporate parents. It is clearly their duty to ensure that looked-after children are housed in an appropriate setting. That issue lies outside my purview, but I will take it up with colleagues in the Department for Education to ensure that we are properly enforcing our obligations towards looked-after children in relation to housing. That is clearly a concern to us.

Gosh—I have so much to get on to. The hon. Member for Bermondsey and Old Southwark talked in particular about Southwark and rightly challenged me by saying that seeing perhaps only 35% of children was not enough. I agree, but I have been really impressed by the efforts made by Southwark on mental health support for the school population. It illustrates the importance of good leadership and working collaboratively with other organisations. I was pleased to visit Charles Dickens Primary School—I do not know whether it is in his constituency.

Neil Coyle: It is. They have great expectations for the children.

Jackie Doyle-Price: It is a fantastic school. It was amazing how the principle of mental wellbeing ran through the whole school from walking in to the point where the kids pick up a sticker that reflects their mood and put it on the whiteboard, so straightaway the teacher could look out for those who were feeling a bit distressed. The other amazing thing was the teaching assistants, who instead of being based in each classroom all had specialisms and did lots of one-to-one activities outside the classroom. Even more importantly, there was a facility to reach out to parents pre-birth—obviously families tend to go and see schools. I was hugely impressed,

and that goes to show how we should be encouraging innovation and imagination with regards to these services. In fact, it is probably the poster organisation to show that mental health is not everybody else’s problem; it is all our problem. The ability for such engagement in school is fantastic, so well done Charles Dickens Primary School.

Members will be pleased to know that Sir Simon Wessely has worked with the sector, and interest groups in the sector, in coming up with his proposals. I am also in regular dialogue with them to discuss the principles. In the spirit with which we all approach reform of the Mental Health Act, we obviously want to keep people safe, so there needs to be the power for potential detention, but most importantly we need to protect the rights of patients and empower them. That is the principle that I really want to underline.

Barbara Keeley: We have moved past the point of discussing people with autism and learning disabilities. I take on board the Minister’s concern, but I wonder whether she could answer my question. Under a reformed Mental Health Act, is she looking at—or minded to look at—changing how people with autism are included as if they have a mental health condition? That is important to a lot of people, and Sir Simon did not rule on it.

Jackie Doyle-Price: We need to look at issues about autism in the round. The hon. Lady is right that it is currently treated as a mental health issue for the reasons outlined by the hon. Member for Bristol East: it is not diagnosed until a mental health issue materialises. That is really the issue. I would like us to use the 10th anniversary of the Autism Act 2009 to reboot our approach to ensuring that we are looking out for people with autism. In a way, we must go through the same journey with autism and learning disabilities as we have with mental health. That does not really answer the question from the hon. Member for Worsley and Eccles South.

Barbara Keeley: It is about the legislation.

Jackie Doyle-Price: As far as legislation is concerned, ultimately people with autism who are suffering from mental ill health will be detained under the Mental Health Act. Perhaps we ought to pick up how that interacts with other legislation as we develop the White Paper. The overlap is a clear problem.

I have paid tribute to Sir Simon Wessely. We are all about making sure that our reforms deliver genuinely person-centred care. We should be removing coercion and control as far as we can.

My hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Moor View (Johnny Mercer) talked about Georgi Lopez, who addressed the all-party group and whom I had the pleasure of meeting. She tells a compelling story about her contrasting experiences. She readily concedes that on one occasion being detained under the Act was the best thing that could have happened to her, but on another occasion it did her genuine harm. In fact, Members who read Frank Bruno’s book will find exactly the same story. It is almost as if once someone is on that pathway and under detention, they will always be seen through that prism. We need to tackle the underlying prejudice. People who are suffering from mental ill health are vulnerable; they are not an inconvenience. Any services provided by the state need to be working with them to support them, not to do them harm.

[Jackie Doyle-Price]

Our overall objective when we asked Sir Simon to look at the Act was to reduce the rising number of people detained under it. I hope that underlines the spirit with which we are approaching the inquiry. We also asked him specifically to address the disparities in how the Act is used, highlighting in particular the impact on black and ethnic minority groups, but also on women. It is of great credit to him that he went much further than that and led a full review of the entire Act. Again, that raises the expectations on me to deliver fundamental reform—but that is fine; it is what I am here to do. He did so with such speed, and having taken so many with him, that he has provided exactly the right conditions to approach reform.

Sir Simon built relationships with service users and carers, and I am riding on the back of them. I meet those people regularly to hear directly from them about their responses to his recommendations. We will continue with that. I have been struck by some of the experiences shared with me by service users and family members, which bring home how disempowering it can be. I often talk about the arrogance of medical professionals who, when someone turns up and says, “Fix me,” send them along. That dismissiveness can be more so in mental health than anywhere else. We need to ensure that we put in a regime that treats people with dignity and respect.

At the heart of this issue, the current Act has much too big a disempowering effect, which does too much to remove people’s autonomy and not enough to support their decision making and influence over their own care. It is dehumanising. We should look at detention as the last resort, because it does genuinely do harm. That is not to be critical: staff will act with the best of intentions, but a lot of it depends on culture. When Georgi Lopez shared her experiences, she talked about the two very different cultures of the organisations in which she was detained. When the CQC visits such places and assesses whether they are well led, it must assess the culture and whether patients are genuinely empowered.

I do not think we should duck the fact that sometimes we will have to detain people for their safety and that of others, but we need to ensure that we have the right guarantees in place. I am struck by something that Sir Simon always says: from the moment of detention, release planning should start there and then. A credible care plan is all about getting people back out and re-empowered. It should be based on consent and empowering the patient.

As has been mentioned, Sir Simon’s report contains 154 recommendations. I will work with the Ministry of Justice on a joint White Paper from both Departments, which will come forward by the end of the year. We have already started to implement the recommendations that we can, and I hope that Members are reassured by how, last week, the previous Prime Minister re-emphasised her commitment to making sure that we tackle the issues regarding black and ethnic minority detainees. I know she will continue to have a full interest in these issues from the Back Benches. I reassure the hon. Member for Worsley and Eccles South that if she sees no sign of a White Paper, she has a good ally on the Government Benches to hold the Government’s feet to the fire. I look

forward to engaging with all hon. Members on those recommendations when we come forward with our White Paper, for which we should also consider the issues that have been highlighted during the debate.

As I have said, we want to modernise and ensure that people who are detained under the Act receive better care by improving patient choice and autonomy in their treatment. We will introduce statutory advanced choice documents to enable people to express, in advance of detention, their view on the care and treatment that works best for them.

It is important to talk about the role of family, because we have agreed that patients should be able to identify a nominated person who will have the power to look after their interests under the Act. At the moment, the next of kin is the default. I have heard compelling evidence from patients who have said that that is not always appropriate. Family members can often be a source of abuse or additional pressure and harm, so patients want to be able to nominate someone, which seems extremely sensible. I recognise that that will cause some controversy.

Dr Lewis: The Minister says that that seems extremely sensible but if, for example, somebody is seriously mentally ill and imagines that their parents mean them harm when they are actually doing everything they can in support, should the parents be locked out from knowing what is happening to their child?

Jackie Doyle-Price: We will have to have that debate. My right hon. Friend articulates the opposing position to what I have heard. I regularly hear his example when I chair the national suicide prevention panel. We have had dialogue with NHS organisations and there is a consensus statement setting out the framework by which reports can be given to family members. Equally, patients who are detained under the Act should be able to say which family members should not be consulted about their treatment. For example, we see women who are victims of domestic violence and abuse by their partner and find themselves detained under the Act; their partner would normally be their next of kin, but it would not do those women any good for that person to be contacted.

Dr Lewis: I quite agree, but my debate was nearly nine years ago. Is it not a bit late in the day for the Government to say, “Well, we are having a conversation about this?” At the time, there seemed to be some quite sensible rules, but the main problem was that the local mental health authorities were not applying them. If anything, it seems that we are further away from our objectives than we were nine years ago.

Jackie Doyle-Price: I think my right hon. Friend misunderstands me. We have a consensus statement that governs how NHS organisations and practitioners should deal with people at risk of suicidality, although there is concern among bereaved families that it is not always followed. Equally, in delivering a service that empowers patients, those patients should be able to identify their nominated person. Those discussions take place much more frequently when people set up new relationships with NHS practitioners. When they change GP, for example, they are invited to nominate a person, in case there are any safeguarding issues.

Dr Lewis: I hesitate to intervene one last time. I fully accept the Minister's point about abusive partners, but what if the person is desperately, seriously ill and delusional, and the mother is not allowed to be told information about their offspring, because they are technically an adult? At what point do you decide that the person has lost capacity to identify correctly with whom information should or should not be shared?

Jackie Doyle-Price: That highlights the importance of having a nominated person earlier in the journey. I do not disagree with my right hon. Friend, but he highlights the difficulty of our work to get the balance right between keeping someone safe and respecting their wishes. I fully anticipate that when we produce the White Paper on this issue, he and I will probably have another debate about it. It is important that we get it right, with the safety of the patient in mind while empowering them to make their own decisions.

I have already mentioned that we will end police stations being places of safety under the Act, and that will be included in any legislation. On equalities, we are working with the NHS to introduce the first ever race equality framework to ensure that mental health care providers work with local communities to improve the ways that patients access and experience treatment. An important point is that although we are concerned that under the Act there are far too many detentions of people from black and minority ethnic communities, it is possible that is partly because they find it difficult to access services. We need to address that properly.

To help to address that, we are also launching a pilot programme of culturally appropriate advocacy. Clearly, we will need to make that resource available to ensure that people have access to it. The review said that we need to learn a lot more about that whole issue, so we will work with the National Institute for Health Research, which will launch a call for research later in the year to give us more answers. Jacqui Dyer MBE is our Mental Health Equalities Champion, and she will play a leading role in taking forward the review's recommendations on tackling the injustices faced by black and minority ethnic services users.

I have spoken for quite some time; I hope I have covered most of the aspects mentioned. On the issue of funding, I have probably bored everyone senseless by saying that we are determined to deliver a much-expanded service, and our focus must be on developing those community services. We have made resources available to do exactly that through the long-term plan, but that is not to say that the issue is not still challenging. However, I hope we will be able to do much more in the community for people with severe mental illness, so that we can treat them in the community rather than have them go into crisis care.

To illustrate that with an example, if we can get people out of beds and into the community, the ability to look after more patients is really stark, so it starts to pay for itself. I discussed that with a clinical director from the NHS, who said that if they remove three people from in-patient beds and have them in the community, the productivity is so much greater straightaway. We rely on good local leadership to crack that and make it happen.

I have covered most of the things I wanted to. I will just reiterate my thanks to all Members who have participated in a very good debate, and I look forward to having discussions on the White Paper as it develops.

David Hanson (in the Chair): The hon. Member for Bermondsey and Old Southwark has the opportunity to wind up, if he so wishes.

4.8 pm

Neil Coyle: I thank all colleagues for their comments and personal experience. When I worked at the National Centre for Independent Living, the charity ran Experts by Experience across social care. I hope that the Minister takes note of that—it sounds as if she is talking about involving survivors, service users and carers in future plans. I thank the Minister for her frank admission that we need to do more. Again, I thank all the organisations involved.

Some people are commenting online that too few of us are here in the Chamber, but lots of work goes on outside such debates as this one. For example, my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton North (Alex Cunningham) and my right hon. Friend the Member for North Durham (Mr Jones) referred to the all-party group on social work. The hon. Member for Plymouth, Moor View (Johnny Mercer) also works on mental health outside that group, and reference was made to the previous legislation of my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon North (Mr Reed).

I asked the Minister 10 things, I think, most of which were covered in her response, but I will follow up on some. On children's access to mental health care, it is great to acknowledge the leadership of Charles Dickens Primary School in Southwark, but that 35% target is a national one, and it would be good to know from the Minister what more is coming in the system. On the principles in the independent review, she mentioned gratefulness, an indication about the principles, and she just touched on the advocacy issue. It is important to note that the piloting of the culturally appropriate advocacy is more limited in scope than the review intended, so it needs to be expanded to everyone, whether informally through in-patient care or to people detained. The model should be an opt-out one, which was the preference of the review.

The Minister confirmed that the White Paper will still be on time. My right hon. Friend the Member for North Durham talked about when legislation might appear, and perhaps the Minister will indicate that in correspondence. She touched on resources, the need to expand the service offer and how it pays for itself—how she is making the case for parity of resource allocation in the system would be good to know. She spoke positively about the nominated person and better involvement of nearest relatives, and that is really welcome. That person is of course chosen when someone is well—that is the key difference. No matter how ill someone becomes later on, or how badly they suffer delusions, the person whom the patient chose when well is important.

Earlier upstream interventions were mentioned by my hon. Friends the Members for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy) and for Oldham East and Saddleworth (Debbie Abrahams), and others. The Minister commented that the high level of detention through not getting that right was a mark of failure. The spirit of the plans is to get that level down. It would be good to see more.

It was brilliant to hear about the custody cells, which will be included in any legislation. That is a brilliant commitment. On sexual assaults, I think that the response

[Neil Coyle]

was that we need to learn more. I welcome the earlier campaign of the right hon. Member for New Forest East (Dr Lewis) to end mixed-sex wards, but such incidents are still occurring. More needs to be done, just as it does on the issue of deaths. There was a specific request for an inquiry, and it would be good to know the Minister's view of that.

On standardised support and care, my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol East told us about the family of a child with autism having to make that decision on whether to travel. The Minister said that too many are in that position, and it is something that the CQC should look at. Given that the CQC may only gain the powers and resources that she mentioned through Government, I think a stronger case needs to be made for that.

On advance decisions, there were some positive comments but I will come to an end. The lyrics of “Karma Chameleon” were mentioned by the Minister, and Prime Ministers might “come and go”, but the people who need their lives transformed and who need better mental health care experience the outdated legislation every day. I hope that after the White Paper we will see real pace to deliver reform.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House has considered reform of the Mental Health Act 1983.

4.13 pm

Sitting adjourned.

Petitions

Thursday 25 July 2019

PRESENTED PETITION

Petition presented to the House but not read on the Floor

Greater Manchester Spatial Framework

The petition of Residents of Boothstown,

Declares that they and other affected parties are opposed to GMA 31 of the revised Greater Manchester Spatial Framework which removes the land east of Boothstown from the Green Belt; and further that development on this land would be to the detriment of the quality of life and wildlife to the residents of Boothstown.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to do all in its power to stop this land being removed from the Green Belt and protect this green space from development.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—*[Presented by Barbara Keeley.]*

[P002509]

UK bid to host UN climate conference 2020

The petition of residents of the constituency of Gloucester,

Declares that climate change is a serious and pressing concern and needs urgent attention from the Governments of the world.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to ensure that London hosts the upcoming COP 26 Climate Change Conference in 2020.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—*[Presented by Richard Graham.]*

[P002508]

OBSERVATIONS

CABINET OFFICE

Climate change

The petition of residents of the constituency of Eddisbury,

Declares that climate change is a serious and pressing concern and needs urgent attention from the Governments of the world.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to ensure that London hosts the upcoming COP 26 Climate Change Conference in 2020.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—*[Presented by Antoinette Sandbach, Official Report, 18 June 2019; Vol. 662, c. 206.]*

[P002468]

Observations from the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Michael Gove):

Climate change is the biggest challenge of our times. The Government are committed to tackling the threat that climate change poses, through its domestic and international action.

To this end, the Government have legislated to reduce UK net emissions to zero by 2050. The Government are also bidding to host the 26th Conference of Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in partnership with Italy. Our presidency of COP26 would seek to bring about transformative change in global action to tackle climate change.

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